

### **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

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## Avalanche buries BRO camp, 25 trapped

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Ibex 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 snowfall 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 Welfare (MoHFW) has organised the two-day-long conference.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



The public has seen your work. Let them see vour degree – even if it savs 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.

PNN & AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 28: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled nearly 2 per cent Friday, mirroring deep losses in global markets as the latest announcement of additional 10 per cent tariff on Chinese products rattled investors. February be-

## **FEBRUARY 28, 2025** ANGE: -420.35 (-1.86%) 22,124.70

SHRIRAM FINANCE	+2.01%	
HDFC BANK	+1.73%	TOP
COAL INDIA	+1.28%	GAINE
TRENT	+0.69%	O.A.I.V.
HINDALCO	+0.32%	<b>(T)</b>

**NSE NIFTY** 

came the fifth straight month of the indices witnessing loses.

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

per cent. The Nifty dropped 4,152.65 points or 15.80 per cent from its lifetime high of 26,277.35 hit September 27, 2024.

According to analysts, relentless foreign fund outflows and concerns about the US economic outlook made investors jittery.

"In the current scenario of US tariff uncertainty, Indian markets will struggle a bit more," said Mahesh Patil, chief investment officer at Aditva Birla Sun Life Asset Management Company, which manages

### Man dies by suicide after ₹16L stock market loss Nashik: A 28-year-old man report-

edly 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 mar ket 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.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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

GDP growth rate

decelerates to 6.2%

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 im pressive 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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Mo-

hanty 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 Kambhampati, CM Majhi, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik among others condoled the veteran actor's death.  $\,$  MORE P2

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-

mitment to diplomacy, citing Moscow's years of broken commitments on the global stage.

It began with Vance telling Zelenskyy, "Mr. President, with respect. I think it's disrespectful for you to come to the Oval Office to try to litigate this in front of the American media."

Zelensky tried to object, prompting Trump to raise his voice and say, "You're gambling with the lives of millions of people."

'You're gambling with World War III, and what you're doing is very disrespectful to the country, this country that's backed you far more than a lot of people say they should have,' Trump said.

It was an astonishing display of open antagonism in the Oval Office, a setting better known



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.

Earlier in the meeting Trump said the US would continue to provide military assistance to Ukraine, but said he hoped that not too much aid would be forthcoming, "We're not looking forward to sending a lot of arms," Trump said. "We're looking forward 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 in ternational support for Ukraine

"Again, just say thank you," Vance interjected to Zelenskyy blasting him for litigating "dis agreements" in front of the press. Trump, though, suggest ed 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. In a joint post on Instagram, the couple shared an image, which shows hands gently holding a pair of white knitted baby booties with delicate ribbon bows.

### SUSHMITA'S FITNESS MANTRA

Sushmita Sen loves to stay on top of her fitness game and inspire others with her intense workout regime. The Main Hoon Na actress revealed that she believes that if one prepares their mind for a workout, the body will follow.



accuracy • reliability • trust

Something unexpected may happen. Though you may not comprehend all that takes place, Ganesha says it is fine. Stay away from stressful activity, as you may need to go out in the evening. Put on the glitter and gloss, as some good music and dance are expected to come your way.

**TAURUS** You are hard working by nature but get highly frustrated when things do not end the way you had imagined, feels Ganesha. This may lead to anger against the system or the order in which things work. You will vent your frustration on your routine by longing for an alternate lifestyle, wishing and hoping for more relaxation and perhaps a grounded and approachable. spontaneous vacation. never indulging in the typical star tantrums. His life was a

There is every possibility that you will keep your partner in the loop while making important decisions today, predicts Ganesha. And this will prevent a grave misunderstanding. Later in the day, you will benefit from the insights of your soul mate. You will tend to be a little bit on the spiritual side today.

Ganesha says you will win over people with your oratory. So it will speed up your work. In the afternoon, you will get news of monetary gain in the office. Be on the guard, minor ailments may bother you, warns Ganesha.

Businessmen and traders need to be wary of their jealous of your progress and will hatch nefarious schemes to pull you down,

### VIRGO

today, very receptive to ideas 🥢 from everyone. However. when it boils down to taking decisions, it will be the stubborn ones that will prevail. Today is also a time to resolve pending issues at work. But in the evening you may enjoy a nice dinner with your beloved and summon the courage to pop that

Ganesha says today you will wish to get away from the monotony of daily life and take a break from your work and go off on a vacation This trip, which you will take, will be beneficial to you and will increase your knowledge and experience.

### **SCORPIO**

It seems like a fruitful day in business, and to deal in money matters, foresees Ganesha. On the career front, you may be occupied with important meetings. Things will work out for you if you manage to strike a balance between your ideas and implementation. Heavy expenditure may be on the cards as you feel tempted to buy jewellery for your beloved, says Ganesha.

### **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 though, says Ganesha. In relationship matters, don't keep high expectation, as they may put you under tremendous pressure.

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### **CAPRICORN**

The day bodes well, especially for public servants. An impending business transaction with the government will keep you busy, and suggestions from friends and peers may prove beneficial, says Ganesha. Professionals, however, need to be more proactive, as their expertise will be tested.

### **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 and break a few of those selfmade rules. Watch how you suddenly become irresistible to one and all, savs Ganesha

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. Meditative techniques will help restore your calm, says Ganesha.



### ered 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 in his prime. He captured the hearts of millions, even long after he stepped away from the silver screen. Indeed, Uttam was a living legend, a magnetic crowd-puller who was well aware of his allure. Yet, despite his towering stardom. Uttam remained firmly

he throngs that gath-

left an indelible mark on the hearts of many. 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.

rich tapestry of events, and he

### Acting not in plan

becoming a film actor was never part of his plan. At that time, only one or two films were made each year, so pursuing cinema as a career seemed unrealistic. However, during his college vacation, he received an offer for Abhiman. Since he was on a break, he had no reason to decline. But that single opportunity changed the course of his life, leading him into the world of acting. In his own words, "Had I planned to enter this field from the start, I wouldn't have waited two years to do my second film." After Abhiman, Uttam voluntarily stepped away from acting for a while. However, he later returned with a renewed sense of

determination

FOR A LAST GLIMPSE

### When he proved a point

Abhiman's shooting, he returned to Kolkata to focus on his studies. During this time, he received an offer for the film Gauri, directed by Dhir Biswal. However, in the later stages, the role was given to actor and filmmaker Prashant Nanda instead. This turn of events deeply disappointed Uttam. Driven by resilience and a strong will, he decided to return to the film industry—this time, with unwavering determination.

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. As they continued working together in several films, Uttam developed feelings for Aparajita. However, it took him nearly five years to persuade her to marry him. Interestingly, he never directly confessed his love but instead proposed marriage outright. Finally, May 17, 1987, they got married at the Municipality Guest House in Bhubaneswar. In 1989, they welcomed their son, Babushan, who went on to become a superstar in the Odia

Balunga, after distributing food to everyone on set, there was not enough left for the last two people. Demonstrating his generosity, Uttam divided his own meal into three portions and shared it with them. This was just one instance of his kindness. Throughout his career, during the shooting of almost every film, he stood by everyone on set-from spot boys to makeup artists-offering support during their difficult times. He not only understood their joys and sorrows but also extended a helping hand whenever needed.

**Uttam Kumar** 

of Odisha: Rituparna  ${f J}$ ust 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. His name is Uttam (Excellent), and so is his

appearance and demeanor. Seeing his smiling face would instantly lift one's spirits, she added. Rituparna was devastated. She said, "Just

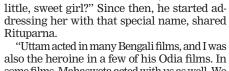
as Uttam Kumar is popular in Bengal, Uttam Mohanty is equally popular in Odisha. He was as handsome as he was charming. In his conduct, he was also excellent! " Speaking to Anandabazar

A die-hard Uttam fan breaches police barricade

to see her favourite actor for one last time

Online, the Dahan actress 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. He used to call me 'Sweet Girl'!" Rituparna had just

entered the acting world at that time. Uttam was very happy to see



some films, Mahasweta acted with us as well. We all had a lot of fun on set." Rituparna reminisced. Uttam Mohanty, who acted in over 30 Bengali films, almost always stayed in a guest house in Lake Market during that period. He used to visit Rituparna's house. Those days of eating and chatting seemed to fly by, recalled the actress. 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. Uttamda's son, Babushan, is also well-known for his talent. I hope that in the future, he will truly carry on his father's legacy.'



A scene from Satya Nagar crematorium

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi pays his last respect

to legendary actor Uttam Mohanty at his residence in

### 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. However, after battling for his life for nearly 20 days, the star finally succumbed on Thursday night. Even though it has been over 24 hours since the news broke in the media, the film fraternity is still struggling to come to terms with the loss. Here's what some members of the film industry have to say about Uttam Mohanty's demise.

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. It was an honor to work with him, who not only guided me but also mentored many actors throughout their careers. There will never be another like him. Sidhant Mohapatra I Actor, MLA

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, assuring them that he would forgo his payment to support the industry.

### Sabyasachi Mohapatra I Eminent Director

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.Om Shanti. Rest in Peace, Uttam Mohanty. Sabyasachi Mishra I Actor

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

### **Archita Sahu I Actress**

**Usasi Misra I Actress** 

the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.

9

5

8 2

9

4

8

**SOLUTIONS** 

SUDOKU

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. Rest in peace Uttam Bhai.. Will always remain in our hearts

To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a

manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains

3

4 9

2

5

5

OP DESK

2

3

### **PEANUTS**



IF YOU'LL HELP ME WITH MY HOMEWORK BIG BROTHER, I'LL BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL

A sea of crowd throngs the residence of late

matinee idol to get a last glimpse

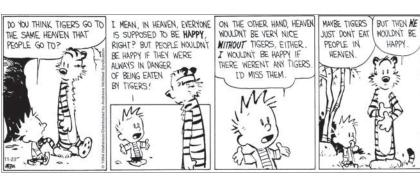




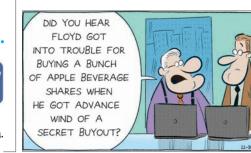
HE GOT BUSTED FOR

IN-CIDER TRADING!

### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**

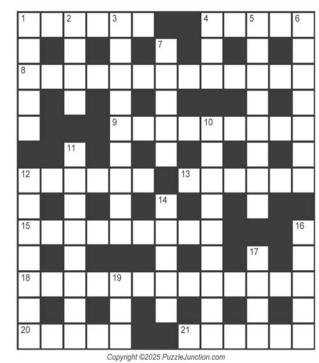


### BREVITY



## POST

### **CROSSWORD**



1 Docket

4 Part of a joint

**8** Yoga pose (5,8)

9 Acquit

12 Curt

Across

13 Muggy

15 Theatre guide

18 Ornamental

tree (7.6) 20 Rope fibre

Down

1 Luminous 2 Small

amphibians

3 Infectious

viral disease of animals

4 Skater

Babilonia

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

5 Pain in the 21 Greek capital neck

> 6 Convent 7 Après-ski drink

10 Radical 11 Warplanes 12 Bellyaches

14 Rocket section 16 King protectors 17 Wild plum

19 Indisposed

## EMBARKED FEES 3 9 6

SUDOKU

8 3 5 2 6 9 7 2 6 1 5 8 3 9

## owntown

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



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

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 Mukt 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 Mukt 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 Avush-

### **Sharp decline in MMR**, IMR lauded

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 sys-

tem. 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

Due to Ayushman Bharat, 90 per cent of cancer cases were detected in early stage, within 30 days and their treatment started, he said.

Nadda said that 200 daycare centres for cancer patients will be opened this year while every district will have at least one daycare centre for cancer pa tients in another year.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who was also present at the meeting, said, "We are firm in our commitment to expand and upgrade medical infrastructure. The PM laid the foundation for a 100-bed National Institute for Yoga & Naturopathy October 29, 2024.'

Further steps have been taken to establish the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research and the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, he said.

The state has decided to strengthen 7,358 Urban and Primary Health Centres (PHCs) & sub centres as Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAM) to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services including yoga and other wellness activities, Majhi said.

"We have made provision to construct a new building for 1,338 AAMs in the coming year's Budget," he added.

Towards a TB Mukt Odisha, a 100-day intensified TB campaign has been initiated through focused interventions in 20 high-priority districts, Majhi said.

Among others, Health minister Mukesh Mahaling, Union Health secretary Punya Salila Srivastava and MD of NHM, Aradhana Patnaik attended the inaugural session of the summit.

ED unearths ₹2.5cr 'scam' in Forest dept



**Initial probe** 

reveals certain

**Forest officials** 

were involved

in using 'mule

accounts' to

'divert' huge

amounts of

money and

'misappropriate'

**funds** 

New Delhi, Feb 28: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Friday said it has unearthed alleged financial misappropri-

ation of ₹2.5 crore in the Odisha Forest department following raids at a range office in Kalahandi dis-

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

probe agency said in a statement that the action came after it received an op-

erational analysis report in a case of 'money mule accounts' from the financial intelligence unit (FIIJ).

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 various 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 re ceived through NEFT from the range office.

This was followed by immedi ate withdrawals through ATMs. statement said.

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

accounts opened the same mobile numbers. The total 'diversion of funds of the Forest depart

ment 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 docu ments and an 'illegal' suspected tiger skin during the searches.

### City, Cuttack get new DCPs

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.

POST NEWS NETWORK

ciaries.

Sundar Rao.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: The

Laxmisagar police Friday ar-

rested 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 benefi-

The accused, identified as

Sanjukta Maharatha, succeed-

ed in tricking the members into

believing that she was in urgent need of cash to perpetrate the

fraud, said Laxmisagar Inspec-

tor-in-Charge (IIC) P Shyam

Rao said Sanjukta, who lives



Woman arrested over

₹3.38L SHG fund fraud

Cuttack, Feb 28: A 60-year-old man and his daughter were found dead

Badambadi police said they have renath Lane here.

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

retary of Gorakhanatha SHG Jayagananatha SHG, Omm Sai

Ram SHG, and Mangala Man-

dap SHG. Between 2022 and De-

cember 2024, she withdrew ₹3.38

lakh in various installments

from the accounts of the SHGs

by forging account details of as

many as 10 beneficiaries. Rao

said on a particular occasion,

Sanjukta had withdrawn ₹2

lakh from Jayagananatha SHG.

when the group members con-

fronted her about the clandes-

tine withdrawals. "Sanjukta

then assured them of returning

the money at the earliest. When

she failed to keep her words for

a long time, the SHG members

lodged a complaint against her

However, the defrauded mon-

ey is yet to be recovered from

Sanjukta following her arrest,

Rao said, adding that she has

been booked under Section 420 of

IPC. She was produced in a court

Friday," Rao added.

Matters came to the light

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.

## Man, daughter 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.

covered 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 Jagan-

## **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 re-



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## downtown



# 59% vehicles in state uninsured

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

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 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 aware-

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

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

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

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 coor-

dination 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, reinforcing 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.

# Science Day event highlights progress in geospatial tech



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 Director ate 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 revolutionis ing 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 Vikshit 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.

### Kingpin of ₹11.62L trading scam held

POST NEWS NETWORK

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 Sa hoo alias Mantu, 30, a native of Chitalpur in Dhenkanal district

Earlier, three of his associates Sidheswar Jena, Ashim Kumar Mishra, and Prafulla Kumar Be -were arrested February 24 in connection with the case, said Cyber inspector-in-charge (IIC Tereskova Mohaptra. A mobile phone and a laptop, along with proofs of cryptocurrency trans actions 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 com plainant, 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 compli ance with SEBI guidelines and the Prevention of Money Laun dering Act (PMLA). Trusting their claims, the victim trans ferred ₹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.

### **OUTR Research** Conclave held

POST NEWS NETWORK

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

CSIR-IMMT director Ramanui Naravan 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.

Naravan 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.

## Mock drill on disaster management held

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: A state-level mock exercise on management was organised, in collaboration with National Disaster Management Authority (ND-MA), at 24 industrial

specialised teams of National locations in 16 dis-**Disaster Response Force,** tricts 3rd Battalion, Mundali and 12 Friday. The **Odisha Disaster Rapid Action** objec-Force teams were deployed at tive of various industries for the the exercise was to

streamline sponse 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 repose 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

Six specialised teams of National Disasmock exercise ter 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 com

missioner Padmanav Behera.



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

### CLASSIFIED

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 Wildife 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.

The announcement follows a record-breaking mass nesting event of Olive Ridley Turtles, with 698,718 turtles nesting along the coast till February 23, 2025, surpassing the previous year's record of 637,000, claimed the data compiled by the Forest department.

According to the Forest officials, the awareness month will feature a series of public outreach campaigns, digital interactive sessions, and expert-led workshops to educate and engage the targeted stakeholders. "Beach rallies will promote pollution-free coastal habitats and safe by-catch techniques, while fishermen training programmes will focus on by-catch reduction, sustainable fishing practices, and the implementation of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) to mitigate accidental entanglements," said an officer.

## **FSSAI** conducts training for street food vendors



AGENCIES

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 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

morning and mainly

BBSR CTC Max Temp 32.5° Min Temp Humidity Rainfall Fog/mist in the



### BOOKING Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech-Tankapani Road-9861341488

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

### **CHHELIGADA PROJECT**

# **NHRC seeks ATR** on displacement of 4,000 tribals



PNN & AGENCIES

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.

The NHRC issued the directive Thursday in response to a complaint filed by human rights defender Radhakanta Tripathy.

In his petition, Tripathy alleged that over 4,000 people, primarily from Scheduled Tribe communities, were forced to leave their villages without proper rehabilitation or compensation from the Odisha government, violating their fundamental rights.

He further stated that only 24 out of 175 displaced families have been rehabilitated, exacerbating the socio-economic vulnerabilities of the affected communities, who are struggling to access basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare.

The complainant urged the apex rights body's interven-

**Vig nabs LAMPCS** 

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 longterm monitoring of rehabilitation schemes and their

implementation. The NHRC directed the Chief Secretary to examine the issue and submit a report within 15 days, treating the matter as highly urgent.

Notably, Chheligada Medium Irrigation Project (MIP) is being constructed across Badjhore river, a tributary of river Vamsadhara near the village Chheligada in R Udayagiri block of Gajapati district.

The multipurpose project envisages the construction of a 250m long and 30m high dam with a central spillway.

Apart from irrigation for 6,000 hectares of farmlands in Ganjam and Gajapati districts, this project will also provide drinking water to Berhampur city.

Additionally, 36 MW electricity can be produced through a mini hydel project in three places Shiali Loti, Kankata and Dekili in Gajapati district.

## 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.

"It was a well-coordinated operation by our teams, and we managed to catch the entire gang," said Lalit Patra, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Bonai. The operation took place in Jarda forest range, where the poachers had been planning a large-scale operation in the forest rich in wildlife.

The arrested poachers are Raj Kumar Pradhan, 35, Ramani Ranjan Patra, 28, Sarat Naik, 50, Bhima Kishan, 27, Narayana Hasti, 41, and Biswanath Hasti,



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

"We had been closely monitoring them for the last three months, gathering intelligence, which ultimately led to their arrest. The operation involved the Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) of Bonai division, range officers from Jarda and Tamra, and an additional 35 departmental staffers," said Patra.

The poachers were found in possession of five country-made guns, a monkey skin, a barking deer trophy, snare traps, a bow and arrows, gunpowder, pellets, two mobile phones, one motorcycle, 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. "My team acted with precision and caution while the poachers were under surveillance," he added.

Patra further noted that, given that two of the suspects are from Sambalpur district, their records will be examined for potential links to poaching activities in neighbouring areas. Further interrogation is expected to shed light on their modus operandi and possible connections with other poachers.

### Man held for patricide

Friday for brutally hacking his father to death with an axe at Pandara Sahi of Takarada village under this block in Ganjam district late Thursday night. The deceased was identified as Tarini Mallick and the accused as Jugala Sial, his son. Tarini was residing with his son, Jugala, and daughter-in-law after his wife's death several years ago. However, Tarini had been unwell for some time. Recently, Jugala's wife had gone to her parental home. Jugala took his father to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for his treatment Thursday. Later that night, Tarini began experiencing severe pain in his leg and asked for some relief. Already exhausted from looking after him, Jugala became frustrated leading to an argument between the two. In a fit of rage, Jugala grabbed an axe and struck his father on the neck, killing him on the spot.

## 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.

The leader of the Opposition in state Assembly made this remark while virtually addressing a protest rally against the Polavaram project, which is being 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.

The rally was organised by the Joint Action Committee on Polavaram, with parties such as the BSP and Dalits actively supporting the anti-Polavaram stir.

Accusing the BJP-led Central government of ignoring his par-

funded by the Centre to serve the political interests of the saffron party. He said the BJP was backing the Andhra Pradesh govern-

ment at the expense of tribal

welfare because the ruling TDP

ty's demands for justice for tri

bals, Patnaik claimed that the

Polavaram project was being

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. He further criticised the Centre's allocation of nearly ₹15,000 crore for the early completion of the Polavaram project, calling it an example of funds being distributed to states based on political considerations, which he said goes against the spirit of the federal

structure. Patnaik warned tha several villages under Padia and Motu blocks would be submerged due to backwater effect if the project's water storage capacity is maintained at 50 lakh cusecs.

However, Patnaik said he was optimistic that Odisha's tribal leader Jual Oram, who is the Union minister in-charge of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MOTA), would protect the interest of adivasis in Odisha and neighbouring states.

### 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. The deceased have been identified as Anshuman Behera, 11, his mother Lili Behera, 35, and the driver of the SUV Uday Singh Sidhara, 40. Anshuman's father, Naimish, 42, and his younger sister, Anshika, 7, sustained critical injuries and are currently undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Bargarh. All are residents of Jhikabahal village under Raigarh district in Chhattisgarh. According to reports, the victims were traveling to Satian village near Padampur. Naimish and his family were on their way to visit his in-laws when the accident occurred. Melchhamunda police, along with fire brigade personnel, rushed to the scene and rescued the victims They were initially taken to Sohela Hospital, where doctors declared Anshuman and Lili dead on arrival.

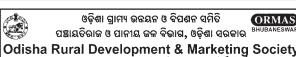


**Ministry of Corporate Affairs** Government of India (National Financial Reporting Authority)

### **Appointment of Chairperson and three full-time Members**

Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India extends the last date of receipt of application in the prescribed format, duly completed in all respects, till 21st March, 2025 (05:30 P.M.)

CBC 07101/11/0020/242



Panchayati Raj and DW Department, Government of Odisha

abricating, Erection of stall with other allied works and Manageme

File No.: ORMAS-Mkt-Event-0001-2024 Corrigendum Notice to the RFP No. 341, dtd. 14.02.2025 Selection of an Event Management Agency for Designing,

of Event for SISIR SARAS- 2025 in Bhubaneswar, Odisha No.CAD-2713: In referring to the RFP No. 341, dated 14.02.202 and subsequent to the pre-bid meeting held on 21.02.2025 at 4 PM in the ORMAS Conference Hall, the queries were clarified and the modifications have been made. The detailed pre-bid clarifications and the Corrigendum Notice can be referred to and downloaded from these websites <u>www.ormas.org</u>/panchayat.odisha.gov.in/ www.tendersodisha

OIPR-19004/11/0010/2425

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया BOI

Sd./- Chief Executive Officer, ORMAS



No.MM-508:

### KALAHANDI NORTH DIVISION NEAR OLD GOVT. BUS STAND, BHAWANIPATNA,

KALAHANDI, ODISHA-766001

E-mail ID: north\_kalahandi@yahoo.co.in, dfo.kalahandinorth@odisha.gov.in, Phone No.06670-230526 Bid Identification No.DFO, KLD 08/2024-2025, dated 28.02.2025 **NOTICE INVITING SHORT TENDER** 

	SI.	Name of the Work	Details			
25	No.					
23	1	Purpose of the Tender	Procurement of Various items			
	]		for the Kalahandi North Forest			
S			Division			
AR	2	Estimated Cost	Based on fund allocation			
ty	3	Date & Time of	01.03.2025 to 10.03.2025			
7		availability of the bid				
		document				
25	4	Last date/time for	Upto 5.00 PM of 10.03.2025			
		receipt of bids in the				
5		portal				
-	5	Date & Time of bid	11.00 AM on Dated 11.03.2025			
nt		opening				
	6	Name & Address of	Divisional Forest Officer,			
25,		the Officer inviting Bid	Kalahandi North Forest Division,			

Pin-766001 Further details can be found in the Detailed Notice Inviting Tenders available on the district website:- https://kalahandi.odisha.gov.in

Corrigendum if any, shall only be published on the above website Sd./-Divisional Forest Officer

OIPR-08107/11/0013/2425

Kalahandi North Division

### branch in-charge

Koraput: Vigilance sleuths Friday arrested Satyanarayan Challan, branch in-charge of the Kunduli LAMPCS under Semliguda block in Koraput district, for demanding and accepting a bribe of ₹3,000 from a millet farmer for procurement of the grains. According to sources, Challan had initially demanded a bribe of ₹45 per bag to procure 117 bags (50 kg each) of millet from the farmer. After negotiations, the bribe amount was reduced to ₹3.000. When Challan refused to accept the millet bags unless the bribe was paid, the farmer approached the Vigilance department. The Vigilance team set up a trap, leading to the arrest of Challan while he was accepting the bribe money. The entire tainted bribe sum was recovered from his possession. Following the arrest, simultane ous searches were carried out at two locations linked to Challan in connection with a disproportionate assets investigation. A case under Section 7 of the PC (Amendment) Act, 2018, has been registered. The investigation into the matter is ongoing.

### 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 Vikshit Bharat". While Col. Prafulla Kumar Mohanty, Former VC (Khallikote University) graced the occasion as chief guest, Kulamani Parida, Professor and Director. Centre of Nano Science and Nano Technology, SOA University, Bhubaneshwar joined the event as the chief speaker. Addressing the gathering, Parida spoke on the challenges in science innovation and lauded FMU for its innovation in maintaining an eco-friendly campus by making it a vehicle free zone and having installed a vermicomposting house on the university campus. Parida stressed on the need to revamping education and research infrastructure, also by strengthening STEM education, to focus on skill development and training programmes. FMU VC Santosh Kumar Tripathy gave the presidential address and highlighted on the importance of science in every discipline and urged everyone to observe this important day. Dr. Subhasisa Bal was awarded with the prestigious 'Fakir Mohan Popular Scientist Award' with a citation along with cash prize money

### 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 TATA STEEL PLANT Yard at Kalinganagar of Khurda Road Division of East Coast Railway that the 25,000 Volts, 50 Hz, A.C. Ove Head Traction Wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section, on and from the same date the overhear 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

SECTION: -Energization of Feeder Line & SSP with single Phase 25kV, 50Hz ac for TSK SSP under Khurda Road Division of Eas

SI.No.	Feeder line No.	From CH.	To CH.	MTR.	TKM
1	Feeder Line - 03	KLNR/57 10/244.32	BS-TSL 03/46 08/244.70	2099.50 (Including C/F)	2.0995
2	Feeder Line - 06	BS-TSL 06/01 10/240.49	BS-TSL 06/46 08/269.30	2062.20 (Including C/F)	2.0622
3	Feeder Line - 05	BS-TSL 10- 05/0110/253.56	BS-TSL 05/12 10/052.77	503.10 (Including C/F)	0.5031
4	Feeder Line - 07	BS-TSL 11-07/01 10/253.66	BS-TSL 07/06 10/227.56	117.10 (Including C/F)	0.1171
5	Feeder Line - 08	KLNR/58 10/236.60	BS-TSL 08/02 10/236.60	44.00 (Including C/F)	0.0440
6	Feeder Line - 09	BS-TSL 09/01 10/253.56	BS-TSL 09/43 08/292.0020	2086.60 (Including C/F)	2.0866
7	Feeder Line - 10	BS-TSL 10-05/01 10/253.56	BS-TSL 10/09 10/595.72	364.60 (Including C/F)	0.3646
8	Feeder Line - 11	BS-TSL 11-07/01 10/253.66	BS-TSL 11/32 11/587.25	1410.00 (Including C/F)	1.410
9	Feeder Line - 13	BS-TSL 13/01 10/253.56	BS-TSL 13/31 11/649.75	1423.00 (Including C/F)	1.423
10	Feeder Line - 14	BS-TSL 14/01 10/263.20	BS-TSL 14/06 10/406.85	223.60 (Including C/F)	0.2236
	-			Total Longth	40 222 TVM

Total Length One no. SSP at (Location no. TSL-10/07B-10) of size -600Sqmtr at Chainage 10/255.74 consisting of 10nos BM (Make Megawir Switchgear Pvt. Ltd.- Sr No 2023070222, 2023070223, 2023070220, 2023070226, 2023070224, 2023070227, 2023070225, 2023070221, 2023070229, 2023070228), 10Nos PT (MAKE-LAMCO Industries Pvt. Ltd. Sr No P2511670, P2511667 P2511668, P2511671, P2511666, P2511672, P2511669, P2511664, P2511673, P2511665), 10 Nos DPI (Make Transelectricals Sr.No... TE 05/24/14, TE 05/24/18, TE 05/24/28, TE 05/24/15, TE 05/24/27, TE 05/24/25, TE 05/24/16, TE 05/24/34, TE 05/24/38, TE 03/77/23), 1Nos AT (Make-Supreme Switchgear-Sr No. SST-20016) is also to be charged along with feeder line.

1.	Secretary to GM/ECoR for kind information please.	16. Sr. DSTE/KUR
2.	PCEE/ECoR/BBS	17. Sr. DSO/KUR
3.	PCOM/ECoR/BBS	18. Sr. DSC/KUR
4.	PCE/ECoR/BBS	19. DEE/TRD/CTC
5.	PCSTE/ECoR/BBS	20. ADEN/JJKR
6.	PCSO/ECoR/BBS	21. CTPC/KUR
7.	PCSC/ECoR/BBS	22. SSE/OHE & SSE/PSI/JJKR
8.	Superintendent, GRP/JJKR	23. SSE(P.Way)/JJKR
9.	DRM/KUR	24. ASTE/JJKR
10.	Sr. DEN/Co-ord/KUR, Sr.DEN(N)/KUR	25. SSE/Signal/JJKR
11.	Sr. DFM/KUR	26. SSE/Elect/G/JJKR
12.	Sr. DOM/KUR	27. Chief C.C./JKPR
13.	Sr. DME/KUR	28. Chief DTI/JKPR
14.	Sr. DEE/G/KUR	29. M/s Siemens Ltd.
15.	Sr. DEE/OP/KUR	

INTRODUCTION OF AC 25 KV TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS

It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 kV AC electric traction over the section of phase-II, Feeder Line & SSP at Tata Steel Plant Kalinganagar, Duburi in Khurda Road division of the East Coast Railway., height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings (Plant gate no. 3 between mast location no. TSL09/26-11 and TSL-09/26-12 and gate no. 4 between mast location no. 2030A and 2031) with clear height of 4.78m above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire (Contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5m between the still long at level receiver. above the rail level at level crossings.

Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances. The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows.

(i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the Railway Line. (ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself.

(iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

**Project Head** M/s TATA STEEL Ltd.

Registered Offiice: Bombay House, 24, Homi ModyStreet, Fort, Mumbai 400 001, India Tel.: 022 66658282 Fax: 022 66657724 (CIN) –L27100MH1907PLC000260 Website: www.tatasteel.com

No

Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jaydev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Ph.:0674-2362249

**Gold Auction** Notice

Gross Wt. in Gram Net Wt. in Gram Total Dues as on 31.01.2025 (excluding unapplied interest Charges, Cost & Expenses)

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. Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including Up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/expenses) by 18.03.2025, their pledged gold ornaments will be auctioned at Concerned Branch Premises on 19.03.2025 at 11.00 AM. For this Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegations or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard. Bank reserves the right to cancel the auction without assigning any reason in case, the bidding price so arrived at is observed to be low or inadequate. Further, if needed be Bank reserves the right to change the date and time of the above scheduled auction or cancel the same without assigning any reasons thereon. Purity and net weight and reserve price of gold ornaments/ coins etc. will be available to intersted bidders on auctior

Name & Address of the Borrower(s)

	BANK	. OF INDIA, BARIMUNDA BRANCH, AT/PO: BARIMUNDA, VIA: PAT DIST.: KHURDA, PIN-754001, MOB.: 8280245168		IANCHE	SWAR,		
1.	512777610000979	Sumitra Barik, D/o- Sankarsana Barik, At/PO: Kalarahanga, Dist.: Khurda, PIN-751024.	107.600	54.100	₹3,12,000.00		
2.	512777610000604	<b>Tukuna Barik</b> , S/o- Sudhakar Barik, At/PO: Kalayanpur, Via: Patia, Dist.: Khurda, PIN-751031.	13.500	11.500	₹52,007.00		
BANK OF INDIA, CHANDRASEKHARPUR BRANCH, PLOT NO.: HIG(S)-01, PRAGATI ENCLAVE, NILADRI VIHAR ROAD, CHANDRASEKHARPUR, BHUBANESWAR, DIST.: KHURDA (ODISHA), PIN-751016, MOB.: 8880255270							
1.	516877610000853	Priyadarshini Mishra, C/o- Purna Chandra Mishra, Santi Niwas, Plot No.: 158/675/1058, Lane-3, Ananta Vihar, Pokhariput, Bhubaneswar, PIN-751020.		117.000	₹6,84,856.00		
BANK OF INDIA, DASPALLA BRANCH, AT: GAJANAN BAZAR, PO: DASPALLA, NAYAGARH-752084, MOB.: 9658494494							
4	555777610000725	Bhagirathi Naik, S/o- Debaraj Naik, At: Poibadi, Tendabadi, PO:	11.600	7.000	₹20,379.00		
1.	555777610000729	Daspalla, Dist.: Nayagarh, PIN-752091.	11.400	7.700	₹35,796.00		
2.	555777610000889	Amarendra Mishra, At/PO: Satapatna, Khandapada, Daspalla, Nayagarh-752091.	8.570	7.200	₹26,259.00		
BANK OF INDIA, CHANDANPUR BRANCH, CHANDANPUR BAZAR, CHANDANPUR, PURI-752012, MOB.: 7020771271							
1.	516477610002994	<b>Dipti Ranjan Parida</b> , Address: S/o- Bhikari Charan Parida, At: Nua Bagalpur, PO: Mahura, Via: Gabakunda, Puri-752045.	2.440	2.110	₹10,800.00		
BANK OF INDIA, SME BRANCH, 102, CUTTACK ROAD, BHUBANESWAR-751006, PH. NO.: 0674-6532153/2571625							
1.	556177610000943	Santosh Padhi, S/o- Bhimsen Padhi, Mandap Sahi, Laxmi Sagar, Bhubaneswar-751006.	13.700	12.800	₹46,967.00		
BANK OF INDIA, RAJKANIKA BRANCH, AT/PO: RAJKANIKA, KENDRAPARA, PIN-754220, MOB.: 9078245246							
1.	557577610000707	Rajashri Behera, D/o- Prashant Behera, At/PO: Barunadiha, Kendrapara	21.010	18.900	₹86.984.55		

	BANK OF INDIA, KENDUPALLI BRANCH, AT/PO: KENDUPALLI, PS: BAIDESWAR, VIA: KALAPATHAR, DIST.: CUTTACK, PIN-754009, MOB.: 8917538535						
1	. 513977610000609	Susanta Behera, S/o- Prafulla Behera, At/PO: Kendupalli, PS: Baideswar, Cuttack-754009.	16.900	15.200	₹64,600.00		
	BANK OF INDIA, NIALI BRANCH, AT/PO: NIALI, DIST.: CUTTACK, ODISHA, PIN-754004, MOB.: 9686716706						
1	. 512477610002376	Durga Prasad Satapathy, S/o- Shyam Sundar Satapathy, At/PO: Abhaymukhi, PS: Balipatna, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, PIN-752103.	8.450	7.480	₹31,813.00		

BANK OF INDIA, BARAMUNDA BRANCH, PLOT NO.: 62A, HIG BDA DUPLEX, BARAMUNDA, BHUBANESWAR, DIST.: KHORDA, ODISHA, PIN-751003, MOB.: 9439006431

 516177610001141 Amulya Kumar Ojha, HIG-6, Dharma Vihar, Khandagiri, Bhubaneswar-751030. 33.120 30.500 ₹1,68,575.00 BANK OF INDIA, AYATAN BRANCH, AT/PO: AYATAN, PS: RAJKANIKA, DIST.: KENDRAPARA, ODISHA-754220, MOB.: 9776844803

Suresh Chandra Mohanty, S/o- Srinivas Mohanty, At: Jayakund, PO: 510877610000553 22.250 18.910 ₹81,582.00 Katana, PS: Rajkanika, Kendrapara, Odisha-754220 Zonal Manager, Bank of India Place: Bhubaneswar



Consciousness is the faculty of becoming aware of anything through identification





## **EV Realities**

esla'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 babus 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. 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

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 are even more valuable. Unlike physical documents, they cannot be lost, stolen, or destroyed. 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.

Despite these advantages, an estimated 850 million people around the world lack legal identification. But growing demand and emerging technological solutions suggest that the goal of achieving universal access to digital IDs by 2030 is within reach.

On the demand side, digital IDs promote financial inclusion, increase economic participation, and help curb benefit fraud. According to McKinsey, digital ID programs could boost a country's GDP by 3-13% in 2030. On the supply side, the past decade has provided valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with digital ID systems. Notably, low-cost tools like the Modular Open Source Identity Platform have shown that such programs can be implemented cheaply and efficiently.

But significant challenges remain. For starters, nearly one billion people without digital IDs are spread across dozens of countries with different governance arrangements, demographic structures, and technological capacities. A one-size-fits-all approach is



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 meronymity—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 government actions. Other initiatives, such as SlashRoots in the Caribbean and Taiwan's g0v 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, largescale 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.

©PROJECT SYNDI

SPECTRUM

David Eaves and

**OF LEGAL** 

**FOR A** 

**MUST** 

**GLOBAL** 

APPROACH.

**ESTABLISH** 

**TO ENSURE** 

**ARE USED** 

**ID SYSTEMS** 

**RESPONSIBLY** 

**SAFEGUARDS** 

**ROBUST** 

Luanna Roncaratti

**FRAMEWORKS** 

**STANDARDIZED** 

**POLICYMAKERS** 

IN THE ABSENCE

### **GEOPOLITICS**

## Pakistan at a crossroads



Piotr Opaliski

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

ocated 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 people 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, coop-

eration in selected areas continues, especially in the fight against terrorism and countering 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 and In

tions 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

# etters

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate,
Bhubaneswar-751010

### 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

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 Sadhasiva Reddy,* BENGALURU

Sir, Apropos, "Hindi mask, Sanskrit hidden face: Stalin," Orissa POST, Feb 28.



## TWO STATES





## Heavy snowfall, rains trigger landslides in HP

As many as 90 roads, including the Kullu-Manali left bank road, Jalori pass road and all roads beyond Nehru Kund have been closed

The National Highway 5 (Hin-

In Kullu, heavy rains inun-

dated Akhara Bazaar and Gand-

hi Nagar areas. Gushing waters

have spilt onto the roads, dam-

aging vehicles parked on the

roadside. The administration

there has restricted vehicular

movement beyond Nehru Kund

due to fresh snowfall at Solang

Nallah, Gulaba, Atal Tunnel

flooded causing panic among

the residents. Water from the

swollen Gandhi Nagar Nallah

spilt onto the roads and dam-

aged a large number of vehicles

As many as 90 roads, includ-

ing the Kullu-Manali left bank

road, Jalori pass road and all

parked on the roadside.

Several houses have been

and Rohtang.



dustan-Tibet road) which was Shimla, Feb 28: Heavy snowblocked at Narkanda in Shimla district has been opened. Howfall and rains in Himachal ever, Deha-Chopal, the roads Pradesh triggered landslides and blocked key roads and naconnecting the Dodra-Kwar artional highways Friday, throwea and the Theog-Hatkoti Highing normal life out of gear in way at Kharapathar village -many areas. which is located at an elevation of 8.770 ft -- were closed.

Intermittent heavy snowfall and rains for the third day have blocked highways. About 200 roads have been closed due to heavy snowfall across the state, cutting off several areas in Kullu, Lahaul and Spiti, Kinnaur, Chamba and Shimla districts from the rest of the state, offi-

Officials said all educational institutions, including colleges, have been closed in Chamba and Manali, However, the CBSE Board examinations would be held as scheduled.

There was a threat of avalanche over tribal areas and other higher reaches above 2,300 metres altitude, and people have been advised to restrict outdoor movement and take necessary precautions, they said.

People have been advised to stay away from river banks and nallahs and avoid outdoor activities, Kullu DC Torul Ravish said. All educational institutions in Kullu district, including colleges and Anganbari, have been closed. Power supply in the district was also affected but it has been restored in the district, except in Manikaran and Manali areas.

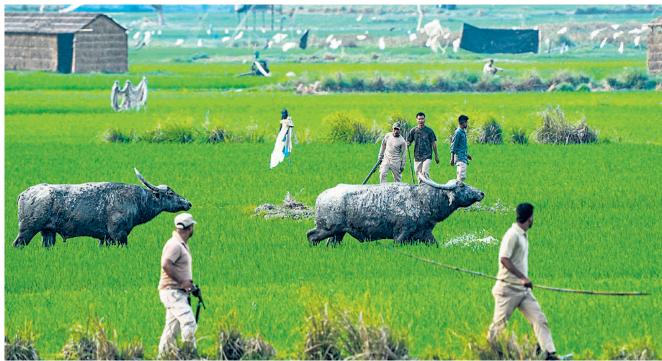
According to police, Shashtri Nagar and Gandhi Nagar nallahs are overflowing and Subzi Mandi at Bhuntar was flooded. While some vehicles were stuck at the spots, the situation otherwise was normal.

Revenue Minister Jagat Singh Negi said snow and rains during this time of the year were welcome but it has also aggravated the threat of an avalanche. He added that people should restrict outdoor activities and be alert, and he urged tourists to stay in a safe place till the situation returns

Negi said 218 roads and three national highways are currently blocked and 70 water and irrigation schemes have been disrupted.

Local administrations have been given a free hand to order the closures of institutions and take other steps as warranted by the situation, the minister said.

A landslide at Banala has disrupted the traffic on Manali-Kiratpur National Highway. Restoration work has vet to commence as shooting stones are hindering the work, police said. Several roads within the tribal valleys are also closed owing to snowfall and widespread rains.



A pair of asiatic buffaloes being chased away by officials near Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, in Morigaon district, Assam

### **BUSINESS SUMMIT**

## Assam receives ₹5.18L-cr investment proposals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 28: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Friday that the state received investment proposals worth Rs 5,18,295 crore, including the MoUs signed at the district level, in the recently concluded business summit.

The investment commitment received from both government and private sectors is 80 per cent of the state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is projected at Rs 6.43 lakh crore till March this year, the chief minister said at a press confer-

"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 re-

ceived," Sarma said.

A detailed agreement will be signed after a proper study of the proposals to ascertain its implementation.

"It is not necessary that all MoUs will translate into investments and a successful strike rate of the implementation is usually 50 per cent but I am hoping for 80 per cent, which will make Assam one of the leading states of the

The Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit was held in the state February 25 and 26.

Providing land and offering incentives are likely to be major challenges in the implementation of these projects but "we will try to mitigate these in the course of time". Sarma said.

'Providing land to those desiring to invest in the state will be a major challenge as government land is limited and nobody will come here and buy land from private owners to set up their enterprises. The signing of the MoUs, however, is the beginning and we will find a way." he said.

Another challenge will come from "offering incentives as we cannot compete with rich states", Sarma said, adding, it

ment cannot take place without proper incentives and infrastructure 'but we will charter the course'.

The Centre, however, has already offered various incentives to the industry sector, and it is already in place which 'we will take advantage of', he added. Another area of concern is the affordability of power as 'power by itself is not a problem as we can buy it from the power grid but the tariff has to be within our budget. If we have the money, we can buy it' he said.

"Land, incentives and cre ating a skilled workforce are a few challenges that we foresee and we plan to categorise the proposals so that we can progress systematically. We may even have to refuse many

## Himachal villages to curb construction near UNESCO Site

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Shimla, Feb 28: For the first time, to regulate unprecedented tourism development in the countryside, four gram panchayats that fall in the biodiversity-rich Tirthan Valley, adjacent to the UNESCO site Great Himalayan National Park in Kullu district, have evolved and adopted a vision document under the Himachal Panchayati Raj Act.

The regulation will be enforced from April 1, officials told IANS Friday. They say now all construction activities in the Tirthan Valley that fall outside the purview of the Town and Country Planning (TCP) Act will be regulated by gram panchayats. They will approve building maps to regulate haphazard constructions.

The gram panchayats -- Sar-



chi, Kalwari, Khadagad and Sajwaad -- fall in the Banjar block. The Panchayat Samiti has passed the combined model plan along with a vision document-cum-model plan from the gram panchayats of Sarchi.

The Tirthan Valley's pristine rivers, the Tirthan and Sainj, are famous for the brown and rainbow trout, and these prized catches can

be found in abundance. Rajendra Chauhan, director

of Sahara Sanstha, said earlier 12 panchayats of Jibhi and Tirthan had passed a resolution at the gram sabha level in 2021 and also passed a vision document that was shared with officials concerned, including the Chief Secretary.

According to the vision document, the Gram Sabha wants to take tourism development in a sustainable and culturally sensitive direction, in contrast to tourism models in other valleys.

'And this latest initiative has been taken to prevent the pollution of the sacred Tirthan River and to maintain the traditional sanctity of other Dev places in the Dev Samaj, which is witnessing unregulated increasing tourism," Chauhan told IANS.

He said that while taking a

lesson from the increasingly haphazard construction in the valleys of the state and the 2023 disaster, some gram panchayats have moved towards regulation of building construction under Sections 14 and 13(h) of the Panchayati Raj Act of 1994.

The model plan for construction work regulation was unanimously approved by the Panchayat Samiti Chairman last month. This will also comply with the orders of the Himachal Pradesh High Court dated January 13, 2023, in Kusum Bali vs. Government of Himachal Pradesh. In this, all the Panchayats were directed to prepare a model plan under the Panchayati Raj Act. The court had also taken note of the haphazard and risky construction going on in the state and had also reprimanded the departments concerned.

## Manipur guv extends deadline for surrender of illegal arms

Imphal, Feb 28: Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla Friday extended the deadline for the surrender of looted and illegal arms until 4 PM March 6 following demands by people from both hill and valley areas for additional time, an official statement said.

"Upon the expiry of the seven-day deadline for the voluntary surrender of arms, there have been requests from both the valley and hill areas to extend the period. I have considered these requests and decided to extend the deadline until 4 PM March 6," the statement read.

It further assured that no



punitive action would be taken against those who surrender their weapons within this period, emphasising that "this is the last opportunity for everyone concerned to contribute to peace, communal harmony, the future of our youth, and the security of our society."

Bhalla had February 20 urged warring groups to voluntarily

surrender weapons robbed from security forces and other illegally held arms within seven days, the deadline of which ended Thursday.

During the seven-day period, more than 300 weapons were surrendered by the public, primarily in the valley districts.

More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and

Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023 The Centre had imposed President's rule in the state February 13 after Chief Min ister N Biren Singh resigned The state Assembly, which has

a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation.

## Arunachal woman converts 200-year-old home into tribal museum

More than just a collection of artefacts, the museum itself is a piece of history—built using ancient Monpa techniques with mud and stone

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar, Feb 28: In a fast-changing world, where traditions are often forgotten, a young woman is ensuring her community's heritage lives on-not in books or behind glass, but within the very walls of her home.

Leike Chomu, a 24-year-old from the Monpa community in western Arunachal Pradesh, has turned her 200-year-old ancestral house into a living museum.

More than just a collection of artefacts, the museum itself is a piece of history-built using ancient Monpa techniques with mud and stone.

"It's about keeping our cul-tural identity alive," Chomu said. The idea was mooted by WWF India as part of its efforts to safeguard the unique heritage of the Monpa community. However, the transformation of the house into a museum was something she took on personally.

From restoring the structure, conserving artefacts and setting up the space to make it accessible to visitors, Chomu has been actively involved in every step.



"For me, this is more than just a project. It is my family's legacy," she added.

With modernisation rapidly changing traditional lifestyles, she wanted to safeguard Monpa knowledge and everyday practices before they faded away.

Instead of creating a conventional museum with only artefacts, this initiative preserves the house itself, showcasing Monpa architecture, lifestyle, and traditions, Chomu said.

Visitors don't just see historical objects. They can experience how the Monpa people lived centuries ago, she added.

After months of dedication, the museum was formally launched October 5 last year. Since then, many tourists and culture enthusiasts have visited.

"They are amazed that the museum isn't just about obiects but the house itself, its architecture, the way of life, and the stories it holds. Visitors

Chomu envisions transforming the museum into a cultural hub where visitors can actively engage with Monpa heritage rather than iust observe it

She plans to introduce storytelling sessions with community elders to share oral traditions, a small library featuring Monpa history and folklore, and eco-tourism initiatives such as a rest area near the museum where visitors can relax and experience traditional Monpa hospitality

**S**he also hopes to collaborate with local artisans and researchers to document and promote indigenous craftsmanship and traditions. Additionally, she aims to create employment opportunities for local women by involving them in museum activities such as handicrafts, storytelling, and hospitality services

appreciate the authenticity, often describing it as a rare and immersive experience that feels like stepping back in time,' Chomu added.

Some have even mentioned that walking through the house gives them a deep sense of connection to the Monpa heritage. Originally from Chug Valley

under Dirang in West Kameng district of the northeastern state, Chomu holds a BSc degree in agriculture with a background in agroecology. Her deep connection to the land and traditional knowledge has fueled her passion for heritage preservation.

'The museum is my ancestral house. I have worked to preserve and transform it into a living museum," she explained.

Restoring and maintaining a 200-year-old structure, while keeping it authentic, was not easy, she noted.

Preserving artefacts, convincing community elders of the importance of showcasing their heritage, and attracting tourists and researchers to sustain the museum in the long run are the hurdles, Chomu

The initial funding and support came from WWF India, but beyond that, she has been managing the museum through personal efforts.

Through cultural tourism and traditional skill development, she wants to ensure that the Monpa heritage remains alive and benefits the people connected to it.

### Assam tea industry welcomes renewable energy policy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 28: The North Eastern Tea Association (NE-TA) Friday welcomed the recent notification of the Assam government's policy which will promote renewable energy and its integration with the grid.

The 'Assam Integrated Clean Energy Policy', which was notified February 24, provides incentives for tea, coffee, and rubber consumers of the state government's power distribution company (APDCL).

"We are extremely happy with this new policy. Tea industry can reap benefits from this policy. We are grateful to Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma for the specific inclusion of tea category in the policy," NETA Advisor Bidy-

ananda Barkakoty said. NETA had earlier organised a seminar on "Prospects for implementation of solar power projects in tea industries of Assam" and following that, all stakeholders had appealed to the state government seeking an annual, instead of monthly, billing cycle for the tea industry which has been addressed in this policy, he said.

According to the policy, the maximum capacity of grid-connected rooftop solar power plant at a single location for tea, coffee and rubber consum ers shall be limited to 1000 kW

Energy banking shall also be permitted on a yearly basis for all consumers of the tea, coffee, rubber category.

Banking means a facility through which the unutilised portion of energy from any of the green energy sources during a billing month is kept in a separate account and such energy accrued shall be treated in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Green Open Access Regulations to be notified by Assam Electricity Regulatory Commission after gazette notification of this policy

document. Barkakoty said that tea industry is seasonal in nature and there is no production during the period from Decem ber to February with negligible production in March.

The solar power generated during the four off-season months (December to March), therefore, remained completely unproductive for the tea industry, he said.

# national



No other country in the world has a 5,000-year-old sanskriti. India has been the spiritual centre of the world, and we have to carry this momentum forward

JAGDEEP DHANKHAR | VICE PRESIDENT

### **FARMERS' PROTEST: APEX COURT TO HEAR MATTER AFTER MARCH 19**

The Supreme Court Friday deferred the hearing over the farmers' protest observing two rounds of talks took place between the Centre and the agitating farmers, who have raised several demands, including the legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops





Advanced translation technology already removes language barriers instantly. Students should not be burdened

with extra languages M K STALIN | TN CM I am also aware that education subject under the Indian Constitu

tion. It is the joint responsibility of the Centre and states to ensure that our future generation gets the best of education, that no child is left without good education and that the generations ahead are not only future ready but also globally ready

RAJNATH SINGH | UNION DEFENCE MINISTER

The Maharashtra government is making special efforts to promote fintech and Artificial Intelligence start-ups as it seeks to make the state a trillion-dollar

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | MAHARASHTRA CM

Chennai, Feb 28: The language row in Dravidian heartland Tamil Nadu further intensified Friday with state Governor R N Ravi wading into issue with his pro-NEP comments that drew sharp criticism from the ruling DMK. Chief Minister M K Stalin hardened his stand against alleged Hindi imposition, saying a third language was unnecessary in the state. Progress lay in innovation

and not in linguistic imposition, Stalin, president of the DMK said and asserted it was unnecessary to force the third language in schools. Governor Ravi, a vocal supporter of the National Education Policy (NEP), slammed Tamil Nadu for its 'rigid' 2-language formula and alleged it had resulted in the southern parts of the state becoming a "neglected backyard," comments that once against ruffled DMK's feathers. The party slammed him for his "hatred" for TN. The Governor, who is touring the southern Tuticorin and Tirunelveli districts, took to 'X' to inform about an interaction he had with representatives from various fields. "Interacted with large number of leaders from cross sections of south Tamil Nadu including education, business, health, hospitality, youth startups, women entrepreneurs, MSME sectors.



Also students from several institutions. It was encouraging to see their positive energy and enterprise transforming lives for the better despite numerous difficulties and systemic

"This region is rich in human and natural resources and yet it feels like a neglected backyard. Despite huge potential for industrialisation, people here feel neglected of opportunities. Problems of substance/drug abuse among youth is serious. There is huge demand for implementation of the NEP 2020. The youth of this region feel hugely deprived of opportunities compared to those from neighboring states due to the rigid two language policy of the State Government. They feel that unfortunately in the name of opposition to

Hindi they are not allowed to study even any other South Indian languages. This is indeed unfair. Our youth must have a choice to study language," the official 'X' handle of TN Raj Bhavan quoted Ravi as saying.

Responding, Law Minister S Regupathy asked Ravi to "not impart lessons to Tamils about their language affinity." He asked if Ravi can specify in which sector was south Tamil Nadu lagging behind and claimed TN has made "uncomparable" strides in education, medicine and economy, against other Indian states. This was evident from Central government data.

Hitting out at Ravi for his remark that one must have a choice to study language, Reghupathy said "we are aware what is choice and what is im-

Meanwhile, CM Stalin continued his tirade against the Centre over NEP and said, 'BJP leaders advocating Hindi insist, 'You must know Hindi to buy tea, pani puri, or use toilets in North India.'

But in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), forcing any language as a third language in schools was unnecessary. "Advanced translation technology already removes language barriers instantly. Students should not be burdened with extra languages," the CM said in a social media update.

Instead, students should focus on mastering their mother tongue and English while gaining expertise in science and technology. "If needed, they can learn any language later. True progress lies in innovation, not linguistic imposition. #Long Live Tamil #StopHindiImposition," Stalin said.

Earlier, in a letter addressed to his party members, STalin said Tamil Nadu would not allow Hindi and Sanskrit to dominate Tamil. The DMK will always be in the forefront in the struggle to protect the state and also its language, Stalin said and reminded them that the anti-Hindi agitation made the then Governor of Madras Province withdraw the 'imposition of Hindi in 1939.

# TN Guv wades into language row SC gives relief to position." "Such drama will not work here," he added. Chennal Reb 28: The language Chennal Reb 28: The language Meanwhile CM Stalin con-



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: In a relief to Isha Foundation, the Supreme Court refused to interfere with a Madras High Court order quashing notices of the TN pollution body over the alleged violation of environmental norms and ordered no action against its yoga and meditation centre.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh upheld the Madras High Court order quashing notices of the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) against Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation over the construction in the foothills of Velliangiri mountains in Coimbatore without prior environmental clearance.

While asking for no coercive action against the yoga and meditation centre, it asked for compliance with all the environmental norms and directions of the TNPCB. The top court, however, said its order was not a precedent for regularising illegal construction as it ruled in the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case.

Tamil Nadu advocate general PS Raman said the government only wanted the order not to be treated as a "permanent gate pass" and shouldn't inhibit any future inspection of the properties and the centre should comply with environmental norms. The bench said there was no immunity or exemption from compliance with environmental norms. The court's concern of the structure.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Isha Foundation, said the state authorities should not be allowed to inspect the centre as the same thing would happen. Raman said the town and country planning authorities should be allowed to carry out the inspection so to prevent the construction of any other building in the area for the area was in the vi cinity of a protected forest.

The bench said a prior nod of the competent authority would be required in case of expansion of the centre. The bench pulled up the state pollution control board February 14 for moving after two years against an order that quashed a showcause notice issued against Isha Foundation for allegedly flouting environmental norms.

It termed the petition filed by the TNPCB as a "friendly match" played by bureaucrats wanting the apex court's stamp on the petition's dismissal. The showcause was issued to the foundation for constructing buildings between 2006 and 2014 without reportedly obtaining mandatory environmental clearances but the Madras High Court quashed it. Holding that the facilities December 14, 2022 set up by Isha Foundation in Coimbatore would fall under the education category, the high court set aside the TNP-

The high court quashed the notice dated November 19, 2021, and allowed the plea of Jaggi Vasudev's Isha Foundation.

### SHORT **TAKES**

### PC George granted bail

Kottayam (Kerala): A court in this district Friday granted bail to BJP leader P C George in a hate speech case. A magistrate court in Erattupetta granted bail to George, who had surrendered before it Monday and was remanded to police custody on the same day. Following the grant of bail, George, who had been admitted to Kottayam Medical College due to health issues, was discharged and stated that he would seek treatment at a private hospital.

### **Student critically** injured in clash

Kozhikode (Kerala): A Class X student sustained severe head injuries in a clash among centre. Five students have been taken into custody in connection with the incident. police said Friday. The injured student, Muhammed Shahabas (16), is currently undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit of Kozhikode Government Medical College Hospital. He remains in critical condition. according to hospital sources. The altercation reportedly stemmed from a dispute during a farewell party at a tuition centre in Thamarassery February 23.

### **SUV-truck collision** leaves four dead

Chandauli (UP): Four people, including a woman and her seven-vear-old daughter. were killed, while five others sustained injuries when their SUV collided with a truck here, officials said Friday. Circle officer Rajeev Kumar Sisodiya said the accident occurred around 11 pm Thursday. The deceased have been identified as Ishtkhai Ahmed (45), Akhtar Ansari (50), Hakimun Nisa (35) and Saina (7).

### Man detained for killing wife

Jaisalmer: A man was detained Friday for allegedly killing his wife due to a domestic dispute in Rajasthan's Jaisalmer, police said. The accused, Shobhare Khan (30), has been taken into custody in connection with the murder of his wife, Kayma (22) and a case has been registered at Khurhi police station in the district, DSP Roop Singh said. Police said that the woman was murdered Wednesday night in Bali Ki Dhani, Ghuriya village, and her body was dumped in a deserted house.

### T'GANA TUNNEL COLLAPSE

### **South Central Railway** joins rescue teams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagarkurnool (Telangana), Feb 28: South Central Railway has joined the rescue teams that are engaged in locating the eight persons who remain trapped in the partially collapsed SLBC tunnel for the past six days, with necessary equipment, a senior official said Friday.

Railways has the expertise in cutting heavy metals using equipment such as plasma cutter and Brocho cutting machine, South Central Railway (SCR) Chief Public Relations officer A Sridhar said.

"District Collector, Nagar Kurnool sought the help of South Central Railway in rescue operation by clearing iron and steel debris that have been hindering the rescue works at the site," A Sridhar told PTI. He further said that the SCR quickly responded to the call and deployed two teams of metal cutting experts in the rescue mission. The first batch led by S Murali, Divisional Mechanical Engineer, consisting a senior Section Engineer, 13 Welders and two technicians from Secunderabad have reached the site and have taken up the required works. The second batch of experts also reached the site to support the first team, last night, he further said.



Vegetable sellers wait for customers on the bank of Dal Lake in the backdrop of ranges covered in fresh snowfall,

## Kangana, Javed Akhtar resolve defamation case

unconditionally withdrew the alleged defamatory statements made by her against Javed Akhtar and undertook to never repeat the same in future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 28: Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut and lyricist Javed Akhtar Friday settled through mediation a defamation dispute between them after a nearly five-year-long le-

Kangana Ranaut gal battle, with the BJP MP apologising for the "inconvenience caused to the screenwriter.

> Ranaut unconditionally withdrew the alleged defamatory statements made by her against Akhtar and undertook to never repeat the same in future.

> A special court here accepted the same and disposed of the complaints and acquitted the duo. After their court appearance. Ranaut posted a photo of herself standing gleefully with Akhtar, and said in the caption that the legal matter has been resolved and that the lyricist has agreed to write songs for her next film. Akhtar had filed



a complaint against Ranaut in 2020, alleging that she had defamed and damaged his 'immaculate reputation' by dragging his name into actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death in an interview with a news channel in July that year.

# Aditya-L1 images reveal solar flare 'kernel'

### Seen as bright areas on the Sun, solar flares are giant explosions sending energy, light and high-speed particles into space, thereby impacting space

weather and potentially disrupting radio communications and satellite operations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Images from ISRO's Aditya-L1 -- India's first mission to the Sun -- reveal a solar flare 'kernel' in the lower layers of the atmosphere, providing new insights into the star's explosive activities, according to an analysis.

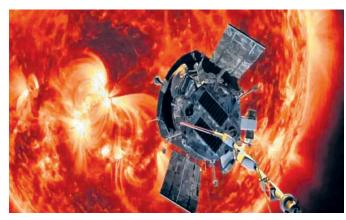
Seen as bright areas on the Sun, solar flares are giant explosions sending energy, light and high-speed particles into space, thereby impacting space weather and potentially disrupting radio communications and satellite operations.

Researchers from the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) in Pune said that February 22, 2024, the Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) instrument on-board Aditya-L1

captured an image of the X6.3class solar flare, one of the most intense kind of solar eruptions.

Lead scientist Durgesh Tripathi, senior professor at IUCAA and principal investigator of SUIT, said the observations, captured in unprecedented de-

tail, unveiled secrets hidden in the near ultraviolet wavelength for the first time. "The solar flare was a powerful reminder of the Sun's dynamic nature," Soumya Roy, a PhD student at the IUCAA and lead author of the analysis published in The Astrophysical



Journal Letters, said.

'The bright kernels we detected suggest a previously unseen response of the lower solar atmosphere, offering new insights into flare dynamics," Roy said. The IUCAA was involved in designing the SUIT in collaboration with institutes, including the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

The Aditya-L1 mission was launched by the ISRO September 2, 2023, and successfully injected into a halo orbit around the first Lagrange point 'L1'. Lagrange points of the Sun are locations in space where the gravitational pull of the Sun and that of other bodies cancel out each other.

At the L1 location, the SUIT observes the Sun 24x7, without any interruption, according to the IUCAA. In the paper, the authors explained that solar flares are regularly observed using X-ray light.

However, detections of solar flares using ultraviolet light. especially in the near to midrange, are sparse, they added. "The results obtained in this (research) letter demonstrate the capabilities of SUIT in flare observations and will help us understand the emission observed in near-ultraviolet," the authors wrote

The study also highlights how complex physical processes are involved as mass and energy is transferred across lavers in the solar atmosphere, the team said. Solar storms, which include solar flares, are known to occur periodically as the Sun's internal dynamo process which creates its magnetic field -- intensifies and weakens.

A cycle of solar activity typically lasts 11 years. The Sun is currently said to be in Solar Cycle 25. Space agencies and organisations, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), US, routinely monitor space weather to provide timely information of disruptions due to solar activity, that can possibly cause communication blackouts and satellite outages.

### **Incineration of Union Carbide factory waste**

begins on trial basis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CB notice.

Indore, Feb 28: The trial incineration of 10 tonnes of waste associated with the 1984 Bhopa Gas Tragedy began in Pitham pur in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district Friday and the initial report on air quality and other parameters is normal, a senior

official said. The trial disposal of 10 tonnes of waste out of the total 337 tonnes is being carried out on the orders of the Madhya Pradesh High Court.

"We started the process of burning 10 tonnes of waste in the designated plant's incinerator at 3pm under strict monitoring of the MP Pollution Control Board. All reports are normal at present. Air quality and other parameters are normal, Indore division commissioner Deepak Singh, who visited the site, told reporters.

The state government has routinely said the waste in cludes soil from the defunct Union Carbide factory, reac tor residue, Sevin (pesticide) residue, naphthal residue and "semi-processed" residue and all scientific evidence points to it being fully safe due to lack of methyl isocyanate gas and radioactive particles. In the intervening night of December 2-3 in 1984, highly toxic methyl isocya nate (MIC) gas leaked from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal At least 5,479 people were killed and thousands were crippled. It is considered the world's deadliest industrial disaster.

The waste is being disposed of as per standard operating procedure set by the pollution control boards of the Centre and MP, said Dhar district magistrate Priyank Mishra adding a live broadcast of the incin eration process has been organised outside the unit in Pithampur.

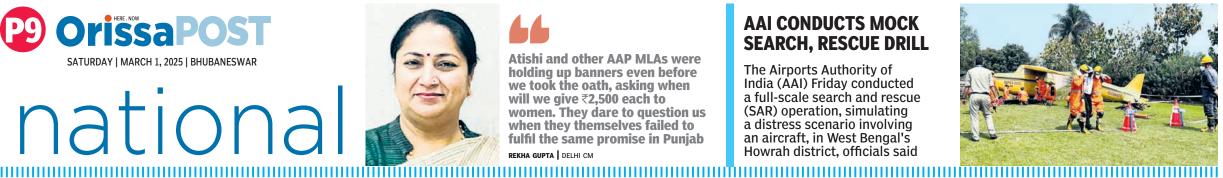
# national



**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



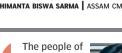


The NDA will win 225 plus seats of the 243-strong Bihar Assembly under the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar



IITAN RAM MANIHI I UNION MINISTER















After 28 Years! 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** 

grips Jehanabad

Jehanabad district after

several crows were found

and found positive for the

avian influenza virus, they

said. "Medical tests have

confirmed that some crows

Line and surrounding areas

virus. Samples had been sent

due to the avian influenza

Magistrate Alankrita

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

Delhi-NCR was cloudy since

morning, due to which the

Pradesh and Haryana were contacted, but sighting of the

Kutch area of Gujarat.

moon was not confirmed from anywhere. Ahmed said that usually the moon is seen in the

Mufti Mukarram Ahmed said

moon was not visible here. He

said that many places, including Gujarat, Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar

Pandev told PTI.

recently died in the Police

dead recently, officials said

Friday. The samples of dead crows were taken from the

Police Lines area in Jehanabad

Jehanabad (Bihar): Scare of bird flu has gripped Bihar's

Bird flu scare

@DrJain21

## 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 Leven** 

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, "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 (PES-CO) 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

### **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 (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 found 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

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 Naga rathna and N Kotiswar Singh outlined the importance of a sensitive work environment for women. After pronouncing the verdict, Justice Nagarathna un derscored the need to be aware of the difficulties faced by wom en. Observing one of the judicial officers had even suffered a miscarriage, the bench touched upon the aspect of pregnancy.

"The freedom from discrim ination 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 per-

# Techie dies by suicide, blames wife in video



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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 Thursday, Manay 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, Manay 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. Manay's sister later saw the video on his phone, leading to the registration of

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,

### forecasts warmer than usual March

**Weather office** 

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 be low normal maximum tempera tures 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 tempera ture of 22.04 degrees Celsius, which was 1.34 degrees above the normal of 20.70 degrees.

### 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 Pakistanoccupied Kashmir (PoK) and are operating from there,

### to a laboratory in Kolkata and these were found positive for bird flu." Jehanabad District

# Agra (UP), Feb 28: In a case

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.

"We will consider Niketa's

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

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 Surva Kant and N Kotiswar 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 Tadvi, 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, Tadvi, a student at TN Topiwala National Medical College, died May 22, 2019, after she was subjected to purported discrimination by three doctors in her

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, said the University Grants

Commission (UGC) had for-

petitioners, and were upload-

he 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

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

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

mulated draft regulations, which took care of majority gestions and objections from of the concerns raised by the the public. Jaising said 40 per

ed on its website inviting sug-

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 cen tral, 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 SC/ST) had killed themselves in IITs and other institutions after facing such discrimination.

# international



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

EMMANUEL MACRON

### 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. The country's fertility rate fell below 1.0 for the first time in 2023, and preliminary estimates show that it was unchanged last year, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Indranee Rajah said in parliament Friday





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

for the safety and future of

ARDULLAH OCALAN I KURDISH LEADER

The detainee and the seized funds will be handed

over to the investigation division at the General **Directorate of General Security** VASSINE JABER | FINANCE MINISTER, | FRANCE

I wasn't there to litigate about who's right and who's wrong, though Iwould continue to defend his views,

Francis as one who cares about the flock of Christians under his under his leadership and the spiritual direction of the faith

JD VANCE | VICE PRESIDENT, US

# 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.

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.

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

There is no sign of agreement, either among or between Israelis and Palestinians, or between Western and Arab governments, over Gaza's future. That uncertainty is complicating efforts to negotiate a lasting resolution.

prisoners as well as steps toward

a permanent end of the war.

Hamas called Friday for the international community to 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.

A senior official of the Palestinian Authority, State Minister of Foreign Affairs Varsen Aghabekian, also said Friday that she would like the ceasefire phases to move ahead as originally planned.

"I doubt anyone in Gaza will want to go back to war," she said in Geneva

The Cairo talks are being mediated by Egypt and Qatar

■ Ceasefire phase one expires Saturday

- No agreement on longer-term plans for Gaza
- Israel and Hamas split over extension

with US support. US President Donald Trump said Thursday there were "pretty good talks going on"

Asked whether the ceasefire deal would move into the second phase, Trump said, "Nobody really knows, but we'll see what happens". The Gaza war is the latest in decades of conflict between Israel and Palestinians.

It began Oct 7, 2023, when fighters from the Islamist group Hamas stormed border defences from Gaza and attacked Israeli communities, killing around 1,200 people and seizing about 250 as hostages, according to Israeli tallies

The Israeli military campaign in retaliation has killed more than 48,000 people, according to Palestinian authorities while destroying large swathes of the tiny, crowded territory and leaving most of its 2 million

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

The United Nations has described images of both emaciated Israeli hostages and released Palestinian detainees as distressing, saying they reflected the dire conditions in which they were held.

Hamas has staged shows of strength during hostage releases, parading them in front of cameras. Israeli authorities have made released detainees wear clothes bearing pro-Israeli slogans.

Israel is now negotiating to extend the first phase of the ceasefire deal by 42 days, according to the Egyptian security sources. Israeli government officials said earlier this week that Israel would attempt to extend the initial phase with Hamas freeing three hostages a week in return for the release of Pales-

### **Sanjay Bhandari wins** appeal against extradition to India

PRESS TRUST OF 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 de fence sector is wanted to face charges of alleged tax evasion and money laundering.

Lord Justice Timothy Holroyde and Justice Karen Steyn handed down their judgment following hearings in December last year to grant the 62-yearold businessman's appeal on human rights grounds.

The court has now ordered his "discharge" from the then UK home secretary Suella Braverman's extradition order to face criminal proceedings in India on the basis of a Westminster Magistrates' Court ruling in November 2022.

"In our judgment, having regard to all the evidence and information provided on this ground, including the fresh evidence, we conclude that in Tihar prison the appellant (Bhandari) would be at real risk of extortion, accompanied by threat ened or actual violence, from other prisoners and/or prison officials, the judgment notes.

### **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. Ibrahima Kassory Fofana, who was prime minister in the government of former President Alpha Conde, was also fined 2 billion Guinean francs (\$230,000) during his sentencing on Thursday in the capital of Conakry. Fofana was convicted of embezzling up to 15 billion Guinean francs (\$1.7 million) in public funds from some of the past government's social welfare programs, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. He is one of many officials from the deposed Condé administration being prosecuted by the Court for the Repression of Economic and Financial Offenses, a special court set up after Guinea's junta came to power.

### 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, Some houses in Sindhupalchowk district developed cracks after the tremor hit the district. Besides Kathmandu valley, the earthquake was also felt by people in southern and eastern Nepal, according to officials.

### 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. The blast claimed the life of Hamidul Haq Haqqani, chief of his own faction of the Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) and caretaker of the Madrassae-Haqqania, located in Akora Khattak town of Nowshera district, Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah confirmed Born in 1968, Hamidul Haq became chief of his JUI (Sami Group) after the death of his father Maulana Sami ul Haq.



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

### 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. "We have impressed upon the international community and Afghan authorities to address this issue," he said. The spokesperson said Pakistan looked forward to cooperative relations with Afghanistan but the presence of terrorist sanctuaries on the Afghan territory was the chief hurdle. He also vowed that Pakistan would continue to pursue these issues with the Afghan authorities. As regards the closure of Torkham border, the spokesperson said operational constraints forced Pakistan to take this action, highlighting that the Afghan side was trying to construct a border post on the Pakistani side of the border.

### 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. Russian and US diplomats met in Istanbul Thursday to discuss normalising the operation of their respective embassies that has been crippled by multiple round of diplomats' expulsions during previous years. The Russian Foreign Ministry hailed the talks as "substantive and businesslike" and noted in a statement that "joint steps were agreed upon to ensure unimpeded financing of the activities of diplomatic missions of Russia and the United States on a reciprocal basis and to create appropriate conditions for diplomats to perform their official duties."

## 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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Feb 28: The students' group that led the protests against Bangladesh prime minister Sheikh Hasina launched itself as a political party Friday, declaring there will be no room now for pro-India and pro-Paki stan politics in the country.

Anti-Discrimination Student Movement or Students against Discrimination (SAD) turned into 'Jativa 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.

The student leaders also issued a declaration that outlined "a transformative political and economic roadmap for Bangladesh" at the inaugural event, which was attended by representatives of some political parties and envoys of the



Vatican and Pakistan. The student movement led a

mass protest leading to the ouster of Hasina's over 15 years of rule August 5 last year. Three days later, Muhammd Yunus assumed charge as the Chief Adviser of the Interim government. The NCP's inaugural rally

began with a recitation from the Quran, the Bhagwad Gita, the Bible and the Tripitaka, followed by the national anthem.

A minute of silence was also observed in memory of those killed during the July uprising.

"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," said NCP's convenor Nahid Islam, who resigned as the Information adviser from Yunus' advisory council earlier this week.

"We want to talk about the future," he said. "We want to move beyond the past and discuss the possibilities of Bangladesh." The party would be "solely Bangladesh-oriented,

pro-Indian and pro-Pakistani politics in Bangladesh. We will build the state keeping Bangla desh, the interest of the people of **Bangladesh ahead** NAHID ISLAM | NCP'S CONVENOR

dedicated to the country's progress," echoed SAD coordinator Nusrat Tabassum.

SAD member secretary Arif Sohel told the gathering at the inauguration of the party "People will no longer accept elite groups or dynastic loyal ty. Instead, future leaders will emerge from the working class farmers, labourers, and the

children of daily wage earners. He added that the new political party will uphold this vision and fulfill the people's aspirations.

Family members of those who lost their lives during the July-August 2024 mass protests leaders of different political parties, except Hasina's Awami League and its allies in the past regime, joined the NCP's inauguration event.

## 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

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. The genre-bending musical crime drama "Emilia Perez" looked like the streaming service's strongest shot yet at best picture after winning the jury prize at the Cannes Film Festi-

val and garnering a total of 13

Academy Award nominations

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." Social media amplified the story to global proportions.

Gascon apologized, but the damage was done. "This is the year of somebody

basically lighting themself on fire and taking their own movie down with them," said veteran marketing executive Terry Press, who has worked on Oscar campaigns on behalf of directors Steven Spielberg, Ron Howard, and other Hollywood

Gascon disappeared from the Hollywood awards circuit, though she has said she will attend the Oscars ceremony Sunday

Seemingly every film nomi-



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."

Director Brady Corbet defended the use of artificial intelligence in "The Brutalist" to perfect actor Adrien Brody's and Felicity Jones' delivery of the Hungarian dialogue in the

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.

"I wrote a piece for the New Yorker comparing it to 'Conclave,' because the whole thing just reminds me of the movie.

where every candidate running

■ Gascon's past posts damage Netflix's 'Emilia Perez'

■ Controversies affect multiple Oscar-nominated films this year

■ Oscar campaigns often involve personal and professional controversies

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

Oscar front-runners. "Green Book" director Peter Farrelly apologized for being "an idiot" after The Cut reported that he had exposed himself to actress Cameron Diaz in what he called an attempt at humor. The film went on to win

best picture in 2019, despite the revelation. Sometimes, the campaigns are stoked by an opponent - as when Harvey Weinstein mounted a whispering campaign against Steven Spielberg's

World War II epic, "Saving Pri-

vate Ryan," with its acclaimed recreation of the invasion of Normandy. "Weinstein was telling jour-

nalists 'Don't you think that the only really good part of the movie is the first 25 min utes, 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. "This was his version of that Karl Rove credo in politics like, 'Don't attack vour enemy's weakness. At tack your enemy's strength. He managed to take this stunning battle scene and turn it into a liability."

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.

As in politics, the personal can be difficult to separate from the on-screen performance.

# Business



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

### **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

raising female labour force

participation rates from 35.6

per cent to 50 per cent

of the report.

by 2047," said Emilia

Skrok and Rangeet

Ghosh, co-authors

In the past three

fiscal years India

has accelerated its

average growth rate

In order to maintain

to 7.2 per cent, it said.

this acceleration and at-

tain an average growth rate of 7.8 per cent (in real terms)

over the next two decades, the

Country Economic Memoran-

dum recommends four critical

areas for policy action, includ-

ing increasing investment, pro-

moting structural transforma-

the less conducive external en-

vironment, India would need

to not only maintain ongoing

initiatives but in fact expand

and intensify reforms includ-

ing easing access to land,

boosting agricultural pro-

ductivity, facilitating labour

mobility to bolster labour

productivity, improving phys-

ical and digital infrastructure

and improving the efficiency

of public spending on human

centivising the private sector

to invest in job-rich sectors like

agro-processing manufactur-

ing, hospitality, transportation.

and care economy to harness

the full potential of India's de-

The report recommended in-

capital development.

mographic dividend.

To meet this target, given



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 VIJAY SHARMA

With occuto the peak of 65-70 per cent and continued demand for quality

pancy close

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

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 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 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 twoway 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 dollarrupee 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 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

introduced a host of structural reforms to transform the country into a global manufacturing hub. to boost infrastructure, improve human capital, and

roeconomic 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.

leverage digitization, while at

the same time bolstering mac-

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

"India can take advantage of its demographic dividend by investing in human capital. creating enabling conditions for more and better jobs and deposits for 2024-25 PRESS TRUST OF INDIA New Delhi, Feb 28: Retire-

interest rate on

ment fund body EPFO Friday decided to retain an interest rate of 8.25 per cent on employ ees' provident fund (EPF) de posits for 2024-25, as provided in the previous fiscal, benefitting over seven crore subscribers.

EPFO retains 8.25%

In February 2024, the Employees' Provident Fund Or ganisation (EPFO) had in creased the interest rate on EPF marginally to 8.25 per cent for 2023-24, from 8.15 per cent in 2022-23.

A labour ministry statement said, "CBT (Central Board of Trustees) recommended 8.25 per cent annual rate of interest to be credited on EPF accumulations in members' accounts for the financial year 2024-25.

The ministry informed that the interest rate would be officially notified by the govern ment, following which EPFO would credit the rate of interest to the subscribers' accounts

According to the statement the decision on interest rate was taken at the 237th meet ing of the CBT of the EPFO chaired by the Union Minister for Labour & Employment Mansukh Mandaviya in Nev Delhi Friday. The ministry stated that

compared to many other fixed-income instruments, the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) offers relatively high and stable returns, ensuring steady growth of savings.

The interest earned on EPF deposits is tax-free (up to a specified limit), making it a highly attractive investment option for salaried individuals.

## 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

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,



BHUBANESWAR: UCO Bank, Zonal Office Bhubaneswar celebrated its Agriculture, MSME and CASA by MSME, Agriculture, Resources customers, Self Help Group Members and Bank Mitras. The occasion was graced by Goutam Patra, General Manager Business Development & Convenor SLBC, Odisha, Ankit Rana, General Manager, Recovery Department, Head Office, Kolkata, Smaraiit Mohanty, President Odisha Small Scale Industry Association (OSSIA), and Chinmaya Kumar Sahoo, Deputy General Manager & Zonal Head Bhubaneswar. Sahoo welcomed all the dignitaries and quests 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.

New Delhi, Feb 28: The Cenper cent of the annual target cording to the data released by Controller General of Accounts

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

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

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.

sented 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

# Fiscal deficit at 74.5% of annual aim

tre's fiscal deficit touched 74.5 at the end of January 2025, ac-(CGA) Friday. In actual terms, the fiscal

The deficit was 63.6 per cent

of the last financial year. The total expenditure was

In the Union Budget pre-

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



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

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 (v-o-v) 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 work with country's leading private sector

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 ten-

ure 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

faced 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 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 extraordi nary career spanning various top positions at leading com panies, most notably at ICICI Bank, ICICI Securities, and ICICI Web Trade Ltd. Her ten ure at these institutions played a significant role in shaping India's banking and financial services sector.

lender ICICI Bank, joined Sebi's

POST NEW NETWORK

Bhubaneswar.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: Odisha FC's hopes of securing a playoff spot faded after a 0-0 draw

against Mohammedan SC Fri-

day at the Kalinga Stadium,

Despite a solid first half and

some promising moments in

the second, the Kalinga War-

riors were unable to break the deadlock. With only one point

from the match, Odisha FC's

playoff aspirations effectively

The match began with Odi-

sha FC playing aggressively, knowing the importance of se-

curing a win. In the 5th minute,

Isak delivered a precise long

diagonal pass to Rahim, who

cleverly laid it off to Rahul KP.

However, Rahul's shot sailed

high over the bar, missing an

Defensively, the team looked

solid in the opening 25 minutes.

Carlos Delgado and Thoiba

stood strong in defense, with

Delgado making crucial inter-

ventions to deny Manvir, who

was poised to score on two sep

The first came when Delgado

and Thoiba blocked Manvir's shot

and forced a corner for the oppo-

sition, 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

into the box fell to Isak, whose

low shot was saved by the Mo-

The Kalinga Warriors' de-

fense, led by Delgado, held firm,

arate occasions.

early chance to take the lead.

ended for the season.

# Rahul junks injury scares OFC playoff hopes fade

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

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 take 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

minute, a well-executed setpiece by Saviour found Thoiba. but his header went wide. Just a few minutes later, a long ball

team and a very competitive team. We've played against them a lot of times in ICC events and they've ramped up hammedan goalkeeper. against us. It's been quite even

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

Kalinga Warriors play out 0-0 stalemate against Mohammedan SC

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 Rahim linked up well just outside the box, but Rahim's shot was collected easily by the goalkeeper. As the match wore on, the Warriors grew more desperate for a goal. In the 70th minute, Sav iour 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 every thing forward in search of a late winner. Rahim Ali drew a foul just outside the box in the final two minutes, giving Odi sha 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 37run 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

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



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.

In a first, El Clasico legends to clash in India

Now, with the arrival of Real Madrid Legends vs Barcelona Legends, India takes centre

### 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 PRESSS

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



29-vear-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



## 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

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).



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

their iconic battle, 'Legends

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

DH PODDAR COO AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE SPORTS FRONT



superstars set to be unveiled soon.

This is not the first time Barca Legends are heading back to India. They last played in Calcutta September 29, 2018 against a team of veterans

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

from Mohun Bagan, comfort-

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

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 Dis trict 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.

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