

Shruti's choice

Actor Shruti Haasan says she has always been drawn to stories that explore love, darkness, and self-discovery

LEISURE | P2

UP woman executed

An Indian woman on death row in UAE for the alleged murder of a four-month-old child has been executed February 15

NATIONAL | P8

Mfg growth slips

Manufacturing sector growth falls to a 14-month low in Feb amid softer increase in new orders and production

BUSINESS | P11

India focus on spin

India would rely on a potent spin battery and familiarity with the conditions to break the knockout jinx against an undermanned Australia

SPORTS | P12

Lulu Group to market state's agri products

Balasure, March 3: In a move aimed at strengthening bilateral trade between Odisha and the Middle East, Balasure-based Highland Group has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Dubai-based LuLu Group, a leading hypermarket and shopping mall operator in the Middle East. The agreement was signed at Gulfood, at Dubai-based World Trade Centre recently. This agreement seeks to expand the global reach of agricultural products from Odisha.

The MoU signing ceremony witnessed the presence of LuLu Group Chairman Yusuff Ali MA, CEO Saifi Rupawala, Global Director Salim MA, Global Marketing Director V Nandakumar, Highland Group Chairman Anil Kumar. The pact was officially signed by LuLu Group's COO Salim VI and Highland Group's MD Pratik Jena.

LuLu Group currently operates 257 hypermarkets and supermarkets across the Middle East, serving more than 6.5 lakh customers daily. With an annual business turnover exceeding 8 billion dollar, the company runs food sourcing operations in 23 countries worldwide.



NO TO NOISE POLLUTION: Several students from Cuttack participate in an awareness programme organised on the occasion of World Hearing Day at AG Square in Bhubaneswar Monday

'The Ranveer Show' to resume with riders

New Delhi, March 3: The Supreme Court Monday allowed podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia to air his 'The Ranveer Show' subject to maintaining 'morality and decency' and an undertaking that it was suitable for all ages.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh took note of Allahbadia's submission that the podcast was his only source of livelihood and around 280 people employed by him were dependent on the show.

The bench also extended the interim protection from arrest granted to Allahbadia till further orders, while asking him to join investigation in Guwahati.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre and states like Maharashtra, Assam and Odisha, said the comments made on the contentious YouTube show 'India's Got Latent' was not only vulgar but perverse and urged the court not to modify the condition of not airing any show.

"Let him remain silent for sometime," he said.

Baby dies due to 'wrong injection'

Sorada: A four-year-old girl died at Sorada CHC in Ganjam district Monday, as a doctor there allegedly administered her a wrong injection. Amrita, daughter of Pradeep Dakua from Borasingi village, had been suffering from fever for the past few days. A quack advised the family to take her to the government hospital for oxygen support but the baby was administered a 'wrong injection'.

SC: Vision no bar for justice

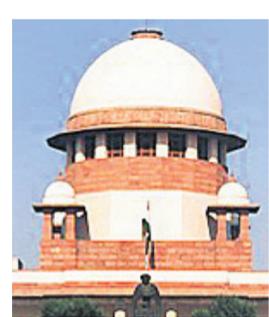
In a landmark judgement that would go a long way in the empowerment of differently-abled in the country, the Supreme Court Monday ruled that visual impairment is in no way an impediment for the discharge of justice. Hearing a batch of petitions, including a letter petition filed by a visually-impaired candidate's mother in 2024, challenging a clause in the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Services (Recruitment and Service Conditions) Rules that prevented visually-impaired candidates from seeking appointment in the state judicial services, the top court ruled no candidate can be denied such opportunity solely on account of disability. The court said no one should face any discrimination in the pursuit of judicial service recruitments, and the State must provide them affirmative action to ensure an inclusive framework. Nevertheless, the order will herald a new chapter in the annals of the justice system in the country which has long served without prejudice or bias of any kind, aptly represented by the statue of Goddess of Justice

New Delhi, March 3: The Supreme Court Monday held that visually-impaired persons cannot be denied opportunity of employment in judicial services, as it struck down provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Service Rules that excluded them.

The top court said, "It is high time that we view the right against disability-based discrimination, as recognised in the RPwD Act (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act) 2016, of the same stature as a fundamental right, thereby ensuring that no candidate is denied consideration solely on account of their disability."

A bench of justices JB Pardiwala and R Mahadevan delivered the significant judgement on petitions, including a suo motu case, over non-grant of quota to visually-impaired and low vision candidates in judicial services in a few states.

In the 122-page judgement, Justice Mahadevan held, "Visually impaired candidates cannot be said to be 'not suitable' for judicial service and they are eligible to participate in selection for posts in judicial service."



The verdict said the amendment made in Rule 6A of Madhya Pradesh Judicial Service (Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 1994, "falls foul of the Constitution, and is hence, struck down to the extent that it does not include visually impaired persons who are educationally qualified for the post to apply".

It also said that the provision to Rule 7 relating to additional requirements violated the equality doctrine and the principle of reasonable accommodation, and struck down its application to differently-abled persons who have requisite qualifications for applying to judicial posts.

"The overall analysis would

demonstrate that a rights-based approach necessitates that PwDs must not face any discrimination in their pursuit of judicial service opportunities, and instead, there must be affirmative action on behalf of the state to provide an inclusive framework," the bench said.

It referred to the principle of reasonable accommodation, as enshrined in international conventions, established jurisprudence, and the RPwD Act and said accommodations be provided to them as a prerequisite to assess their eligibility.

"Any indirect discrimination that results in the exclusion of PwDs, whether through rigid cut-offs or procedural barriers, must be interfered with in order to uphold substantive equality," it said. It said relaxation can be resorted to in assessing the suitability of candidates when enough PwD are not available after selection in their respective category.

The bench directed the authorities to proceed with the selection process for appointment of judicial officers in the light of the decision and complete the same, as expeditiously as possible, preferably, within a period of three months.

Biju goes; Panchayati Raj Diwas now April 24

Bhubaneswar, March 3: The state government Monday decided to celebrate Panchayati Raj Diwas April 24, instead of March 5 - the birthday of former chief minister Biju Patnaik - earlier.

The decision was taken to align the celebration of the day with National Panchayati Raj Diwas which is observed April 24. The government, through a notification issued by GA & PG department, said March 5 will be marked as a special day to honour Biju Babu which won't be a public holiday.

March 5 was being celebrated as Panchayati Raj Diwas in Odisha since 1990s. However, April 24 is celebrated as National Panchayati Raj Diwas during which Panchayat representatives of various states are felicitated.

Moreover, April 24 will also be observed as Lok Seva Diwas. Meanwhile, Biju Janata Dal (BJD) demanded that the state government should observe the Panchayati Raj Diwas March 5.

The birth anniversary of the legendary leader has been observed as Panchayati Raj Diwas



every year in the state.

Speaking to mediapersons here Monday, senior BJD leader Debi Prasad Mishra said, "It is unfortunate that the state government delinked Biju Patnaik from the Panchayati Raj system. It was Biju Patnaik who strengthened the Panchayati Raj movement in the country and made 30 per cent reservation for women in the three-tier Panchayati Raj system." "All previous governments in the state have celebrated it March 5 since the 90's. But it is a matter of great sorrow that no preparations or decisions have been taken by the present Mohan Charan Majhi government, even as only two days are left for the 109th birth anniversary of Biju Patnaik, the senior BJD leader said. The announcement came hours after BJD asked the state government to clarify its stand on celebration of the Panchayati Raj Diwas March 5.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Have children quickly after wedding: Stalin

Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu), March 3: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Monday favoured young people having children immediately following marriage and said a higher population appeared to be the criterion to get more MPs.

Addressing a wedding, Stalin, also the DMK president, said years ago, newlyweds were advised to not have children immediately following marriage.

However, the same thing must not be advised now and also there was no need for that. It is because a situation has now arisen, according to which only a higher population would ensure more MPs as the delimitation exercise would be on the basis of pop-

ulation, Stalin said.

Tamil Nadu paid attention to population control and succeeded and that was the reason for the state's plight today, he added. "I will not tell you to not have children hastily, have children immediately; but give them beautiful Tamil names," he said, directly appealing to the bride and bridegroom.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister had October 21, 2024 said that the Lok Sabha delimitation exercise may make people to think about raising "16 children," alluding to a Tamil saying on 16 kinds of wealth.

Last year, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu had urged people of his state to have more children. He had also spoken of new policies to encourage people to have more children.

'Anora' takes home top prizes at Oscars 2025

- **Mikey Madison wins best actress in upset over Demi Moore**
- **Adrien Brody wins best actor for 'The Brutalist'**
- **'No Other Land' wins best documentary feature**
- **Brazil's 'I'm Still Here' wins best international feature**

ing to tie the record for most Oscars won by an individual in one year with Walt Disney who won for four different films in 1954. The movie's 25-year-old star, Mikey Madison, was named best actress.

Baker's tale of an erotic dancer who elopes with the son of a Russian oligarch - unusually explicit for a best-picture winner - was made for just USD 6 million.

But Oscar voters, eschewing blockbuster contenders like 'Wicked' and 'Dune: Part Two', instead added 'Anora' to a string of recent indie best picture winners, including 'Everything Everywhere All at Once', 'CODA' and 'Nomadland'.

For a film industry that's been transformed by streaming and humbled by economic turmoil, Baker and 'Anora' epitomised a kind of cinematic purity. On the campaign trail,



Baker called for the return to the 90-day exclusive theatrical release.

"Where did we fall in love with the movies? At the movie theater," Baker said Sunday. "Filmmakers, keep making films for the big screen."

In personally winning four Oscars Sunday, Baker tied the mark held by Walt Disney, who won for four different films in

1954. That Baker and Disney share the record is ironic; his "The Florida Project" took place in a Florida low-budget motel in the shadow of Disneyland.

"Long live independent film!" shouted Baker from the Dolby Theatre stage.

Twenty-two years after winning best actor for 'The Pianist', Adrien Brody won the

same Oscar again for his performance as another Holocaust survivor in Brady Corbet's 'The Brutalist'.

Brody's win came over Timothee Chalamet ('A Complete Unknown'), who had the chance of becoming the youngest best actor ever, a record owned by Brody - just short of 30 when he won for 'The Pianist'.

"I'm here once again to represent the lingering traumas and the repercussions of war and systematic oppression and of antisemitism and racism and othering," said Brody. "I pray for a healthier and happier and more inclusive world. If the past can teach us anything it's to not let hate go unchecked."

Mikey Madison won best actress for her breakthrough performance in 'Anora', a victory that came over the category favorite, Demi Moore ('The Substance').

MORE P2

leisure



JOE ALWYN DROPS JAMES BOND HINT

English actor Joe Alwyn has dropped a huge hint about the possibility of playing James Bond in the future - admitting he would love to throw his hat in the ring for the coveted role of 007.

PARIS JACKSON TERRIFIED OF GETTING MARRIED

American model and actress Paris Jackson says she's terrified of getting married. "However I'm trying to get things planned with the venue and clothes for my upcoming wedding to Justin Long," shared the 26-year-old.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Flow with the tide today. This is Ganesha's tip pertaining to your relationships. You are assertive as a general rule but you can save it for later. Today is the day to be generous and accede to the wishes of your beloved. You may even propose to him/her.

TAURUS
This day appears to be earmarked for a long shopping spree. Ganesha sees you doing the rounds of malls, markets, dollar stores and bargain counters. You are likely to be happily busy in haggling over prices, trying to get the best deals for your purchases. Before you are done you would have bought tons of stuff.

GEMINI
You are desirous of perfection in everything that you do, and you practice this philosophy in every aspect of your life. You make sure that all of your energies are concentrated on taking forward your efforts in the right direction. You need to replenish your energies and increase your awareness today, to be able to continue your efforts, says Ganesha.

CANCER
It is about time that you cultivated healthy eating habits. Today, you will be prone to doing everything in excess. You may overeat or get swept away by emotions. You must keep a check on your emotions, or it may lead to unwanted complications.

LEO
You will be seized by a desire to do something new for a change today. Your mood will be bright throughout the day. You will be able to achieve success owing to your energy and enthusiasm. The planets are in your favour, hence you can accept the challenges coming your way and prevail over them, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
It is more than likely that you will reap financial profits from foreign contacts, predicts Ganesha. You will excel in all the activities that you undertake today. Your dream of establishing a mammoth business enterprise in a foreign country will take flight today.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that today will be a lucky day for you. You may receive some financial gain. There will be some good news about your children's progress. This is the right time to invest in business. For financial investors and share brokers this period is beneficial, so make the most of it.

SCORPIO
In all probability, your mood is extremely hawkish today. Your belligerence may even put off Lady Luck for the time being. Ganesha advises you to stay away from confrontations and troubles of any kind. The evening, however, promises to be relaxing.

SAGITTARIUS
Those around you will be impressed by the leader in you. You are the general and others will rally at your call to arms. And all the while, you swing your sword and make your way to the top, defying all odds. Do not forget to let people have their own time and space. This will not only help you progress, but will boost their morale too.

CAPRICORN
Patience is tested when one is in trouble; your patience could be tried today. The trick is in keeping your composure, says Ganesha. Avoid getting into an argument or scuffle with those around you, as luck may not be on your side.

AQUARIUS
You will not need a reason to party today. Be it the news of a friend getting married or you buying a new car, you are in a mood to celebrate life like anything! Apart from this, you will have a smooth sailing through out the day, foresees Ganesha.

PISCES
Looking at your planetary positions for today, there is a likelihood that you will suffer from reversals in fortunes financially. Hence be wary when it comes to financial dealings.

OSCARS 2025

Brody, Madison bag top acting honours



Adrien Brody, Mikey Madison, Zoe Saldana and Kieran Culkin won the four acting trophies

Los Angeles: Adrien Brody took home his second leading man Oscar for *The Brutalist*. Mikey Madison took home the best actress statuette and *Anora* was crowned best picture on its way to five awards Sunday. Kieran Culkin won the Oscar for best supporting actor for his work on *A Real Pain* and Zoe Saldana won for her work in *Emilia Pérez*. Sean Baker had a stunning night, winning the screenplay, director and editing awards for *Anora*. *Flow* beat *The Wild Robot* for best animated feature film while Paul Tazewell became the first Black man to win an Oscar for costume design for his work on *Wicked*. Here's the complete list of winners at the 97th annual Academy Awards:

- ### LIST OF WINNERS
- Best picture - *Anora*
 - Best actress - Mikey Madison (*Anora*)
 - Best actor - Adrien Brody (*The Brutalist*)
 - Best supporting actress - Zoe Saldana (*Emilia Pérez*)
 - Best supporting actor - Kieran Culkin (*A Real Pain*)
 - Best director - Sean Baker (*Anora*)
 - Best international feature - *I'm Still Here* (Brazil)
 - Best animated feature - *Flow*
 - Best original screenplay - Sean Baker (*Anora*)
 - Best adapted screenplay - Peter Straughan (*Conclave*)
 - Best original song - *El Mal* (*Emilia Pérez*)
 - Best original score - *The Brutalist*
 - Best documentary feature - *No Other Land*
 - Best costume design - *Wicked*
 - Best make-up and hairstyling - *The Substance*
 - Best production design - *Wicked*
 - Best sound - *Dune - Part Two*
 - Best film editing - *Anora*
 - Best cinematography - *The Brutalist*
 - Best visual effects - *Dune - Part Two*
 - Best live action short - *I'm Not a Robot*
 - Best animated short - *In the Shadow of the Cypress*
 - Best documentary short - *The Only Girl in the Orchestra*

O'Brien greets Indians in Hindi

New Delhi: Indian viewers who tuned into the Oscars 2025 awards ceremony on early Monday morning were in for a surprise when host Conan O'Brien greeted them in Hindi from the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. The 97th Academy Awards are live in India on streamer JioHotstar and TV channel Star Plus from the US. O'Brien, who is hosting the Oscars for the first time, spoke to Indian viewers during his opening monologue. "For those of you watching from India, I want to say *Bharat ke logon ko namaskar wahan subah ho chuki hai toh mujhe ummeed hai ki naashte ke saath Oscars kar rahe hain* (Greetings to the people of India, it's morning there, so I hope you're having breakfast with the Oscars)" he said, attempting to speak in Hindi. A section of users on X praised O'Brien, popular American late-night show presenter, for trying his hand at speaking Hindi.



Mumbai: Actress Shruti Haasan, whose British psychological thriller film *The Eye* made its India premiere as the opening feature of the 5th Wench Film Festival, has shared that she has always been drawn to stories that explore love, darkness, and self-discovery. The actress also said that *The Eye* allowed her to confront the aforementioned emotions on the screen. Set against the breathtaking landscapes of Greece, *The Eye* follows Diana (played by Haasan) as she embarks on an emotional journey, scattering her late husband Felix's ashes on a remote island. What begins as an act of closure soon entangles her in the chilling and mysterious 'Evil Eye' ritual, weaving an unsettling tale of grief, fate, and the supernatural. Reflecting on the project, Shruti shared, "From the moment I read the script, I knew this film was meant for me. I've always been drawn to stories that explore love, darkness, and self-discovery, concepts that resonate deeply with me. *The Eye* allowed me to confront those emotions on



Shruti likes to explore myriad emotions

screen, and working with such an incredibly talented all-female creative team made the experience even more special. It felt like the universe had aligned to bring this opportunity my way." The film is directed by Daphne Schmon and produced by Finger print Content, and marks Shruti's much-anticipated international debut.

Sonakshi gears up for South debut

Mumbai: Actress Sonakshi Sinha is reportedly all set to make her much-awaited South film debut. The actress, known for her roles in Hindi cinema, is venturing into Telugu cinema with the upcoming thriller *Jatadhara* that also stars Sudheer Babu. Although an official confirmation is still pending, industry sources hint that Sonakshi has been finalised for a powerful, unique role never seen before. Presented by Zee Studios and produced by Prerna Arora, *Jatadhara* stars Sudheer Babu in the lead and has already generated significant interest following its grand muhurat ceremony in Hyderabad. As per the latest reports, Sonakshi is set to join the cast and will begin shooting March 8. Interestingly, Sonakshi's very first film offer was for

the Tamil movie *Hey Ram*, where she was to star opposite Kamal Haasan.

Meanwhile, the Dabangg actress was last seen in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's period drama *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*. The series revolved around the lives of tawaifs in the red-light district of Heera Mandi in Lahore during the Indian independence movement against the British Empire. The Netflix show also featured Manisha Koirala, Aditi Rao Hydari, Richa Chadha, Sanjeeva Sheikh, Sharmin Segal Mehta, and Taha Shah Badushsha. In the show, Sonakshi played the dual roles of Rehana Jahan and Fareedan Jahan.



Anuja loses to I'm Not A Robot

NEW DELHI: *Anuja*, a New Delhi-set coming-of-age short film that was competing at the Oscars 2025 in the Best Live Action Short category, lost out on the award to Dutch-language movie *I'm Not a Robot*, a science fiction film written and directed by Victoria Warmerdam. *Anuja*, directed by Adam J Graves and Suchitra Mattai, follows a gifted nine-year-old Anuja, who must make a choice between education and factory work alongside her sister - a decision that will shape both their futures. It stars Sajda Pathan and Ananya Shanbhag. *Anuja*, currently streaming on Netflix, has two-time Oscar winning producer Guneet Monga and actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas on board as executive producer and Hollywood star-writer Mindy Kaling as producer.



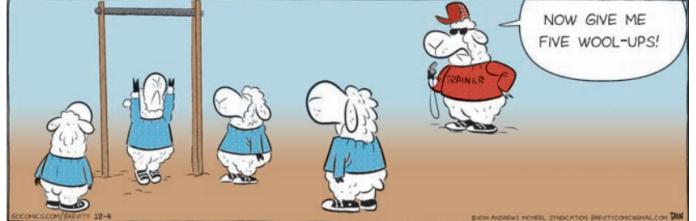
PEANUTS



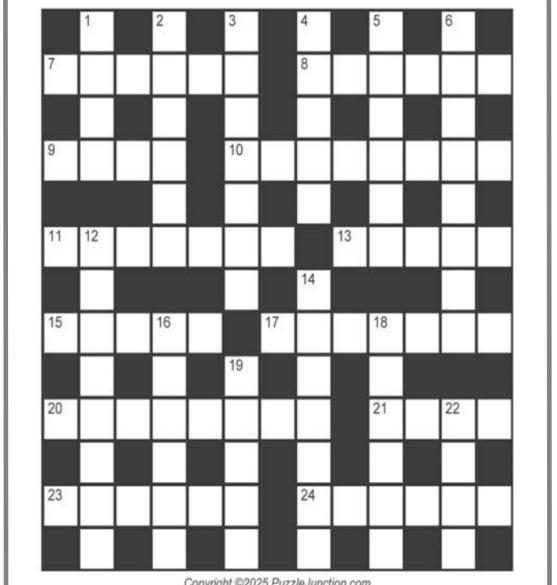
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



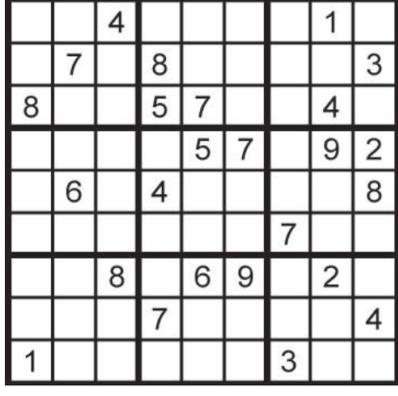
FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Ballpark part
 - 8 Sour to the taste
 - 9 Timbuktu locale
 - 10 Thankless wretches
 - 11 Varnish
 - 13 Station
 - 15 Brisling
 - 17 Vary
 - 20 Mixed drink
 - 21 Sod
 - 23 Savage
 - 24 Some diets
 - 5 Fata morgana, e.g.
 - 6 Cruise ship necessity
 - 12 Type of state
 - 14 Swamp
 - 16 Turkey part
 - 18 Have in mind
 - 19 Blasé
 - 22 Bona fide
- Down**
- 1 Albacore
 - 2 Party
 - 3 Unemotional
 - 4 Chutney fruit

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

White paper on atrocities against women soon: CM

Instant aid to needy at CM's Grievance Cell

MAJHI CALLS CONG 'SINKING PARTY'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 3: Calling the Opposition Congress a "sinking party," Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday said his government would soon publish a white paper on the alleged rise in atrocities against women in the state.

Majhi made this remark in response to an agitation by Congress supporters, led by its newly elected OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das, March 1. The Opposition party had alleged that crimes against women in Odisha had risen since the BJP came to power eight months ago.

"Let the Congress target the government. Congress is a sinking party, and it is doing so (agitation) in order to come to the limelight. It is making baseless allegations. The state government will soon bring a white paper on the issue (women atrocities)," Majhi told reporters on the sidelines of the CM's

Grievance Hearing session.

Majhi, who also holds the Home portfolio, claimed that the number of cases involving women had drastically decreased compared to the previous government.

"Our government has been taking quick action against accused persons and sending them to jail. The court will consider cases and sentence punishment for the accused," the CM said.

He added that as an Opposition party, Congress should raise such issues in the Assembly, such as during the question hour, zero hour, or as an adjournment motion.

"Let there be discussions. Our government is fully prepared to discuss the issues. We are not the government which runs away from the Assembly; it is the people's government," Majhi emphasised.

However, Congress leaders were not immediately available to comment on Majhi's

remarks. On March 1, Congress workers and leaders had staged an agitation near the CM's residence in the City to protest crimes against women in the state.

"Over 1,600 cases of crimes against women, including 54 gang-rapes, were registered in the last eight months. Children are getting pregnant in state-run schools. What is happening in the land of Lord Jagannath?" OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das had told reporters while attacking the BJP.

The Congress, which has already constituted a fact-finding team to investigate the violence against women, said, "Schoolgirls in Malkangiri, Jajpur, and Keonjhar districts have gotten pregnant while staying in state-run hostels. How is this possible?"

While Das said Majhi, as the Home minister, could not escape responsibility, his colleague and senior Congress leader Meenakshi Bahinipati alleged that the victims of crimes against women were primarily tribal.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 3: The state government Monday launched a special initiative at the Chief Minister's Grievance Cell under which the needy are being provided instant financial assistance.

The initiative was launched at the instruction of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who heard

problems of the people assembled at the 9th grievance cell hearing session here, an official said.

Majhi listened to the problems and grievances of people and took immediate steps to resolve them, he added. "Under the new initiative, Majhi sanctioned immediate assistance from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to five people suffering from incurable and terminal illnesses in the

single window system," the official added.

Under the new initiative, ₹1 lakh each was given to Hemant Sahu, a paralytic from Nimapada in Puri district, Vichitra Paikaraya, a paralytic from Nirakarpur in Khurda district, Indu Behera, a cancer patient from Tikabali in Kandhamal district, and Rashmita Nayak for the treatment of her son from

Investigate Feb 4 minor's death: OHRC to CRUT

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 3: The Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has asked the Managing Director of Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) to investigate the death of a minor girl after she was run over by a Mo Bus in Raghunathpur area here February 4, and submit the probe report before it by May 23, sources said Monday.

The OHRC direction came on a plea filed by rights activist Prabir Kumar Das on the basis of a news report published in Orissa POST (dated, Feb 5, 2025).

In his petition, Das said Kuni

Juadi, 12, died after coming under the wheels of a speeding Mo Bus in Raghunathpur area under Nandankanan police limits February 4. Das put the onus of the girl's death on the bus driver who caused the mishap, saying, "At least 10 mishaps have taken place in the last six months due to rogue Mo Bus drivers."

The petitioner has urged the OHRC to direct the state government for compensation to the victim's kin and providing training to Mo Bus drivers as it would go a long way in reducing road mishaps.

16-month-old boy gives new lease of life to 2

Janmesh Lenka becomes state's youngest organ donor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: A 16-month-old boy from the City became Odisha's youngest organ donor, giving new lease of life to two patients, an AIIMS-Bhubaneswar official said Monday.

Janmesh Lenka was admitted to the paediatric department of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar February

12 after inhaling a foreign object, causing a blockage in his airway and leading to difficulty in breathing. Despite immediate CPR and relentless efforts of the intensive care team, he was declared 'brain dead' March 1, hospital sources said.

AIIMS-Bhubaneswar authorities counselled the grieving parents about organ donation to which they consented.

Thereafter, a multidisciplinary

team of surgeons and transplant coordinators facilitated the retrieval and transplantation process.

The liver was successfully retrieved by the gastro-surgery team, led by Dr Brahmatt Patnaik, and transported to New Delhi's Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, where it was transplanted into a child suffering from end-stage liver failure.

Meanwhile, the kidneys were retrieved and transplanted en bloc into a single adolescent patient at AIIMS-Bhubaneswar. According to AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, it is a medical milestone as Janmesh became the youngest organ donor in Odisha. "Additionally, this is the second instance of en bloc kidney transplantation in Odisha," they said.

AIIMS-Bhubaneswar Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas commended the transplant coordination team and the

medical professionals involved for their relentless efforts in ensuring the successful execution of the organ retrieval and transplantation process.

"The story of Master Janmesh Lenka and his parents' decision serves as a powerful reminder of the impact of organ donation, especially in paediatric cases. Their noble act has not only saved lives but has also set a precedent for promoting awareness about paediatric organ donation in India," Biswas said.



How do you make tortoise babies see the light of day?

Mamma turtles are extremely fussy about where their babies are born. Especially the mammas of Olive Ridley turtles. This is a famously rare and endangered species. Like all moms, they are very particular that the climate has to be just right for their darling juniors to come into the world. And they take their time deciding. (Slow and steady.)

However during the last few days, 6,98,718 pregnant Olive Ridley Turtles have undertaken a very ambitious

sojourn from distant oceans to the pristine beaches of Odisha. Now, that's quite a strenuous swim for expectant mothers, but all is well now and the sunny sands at the mouth of the Rushikulya River have transformed into a giant maternity ward.

After making it to Odisha, these aquatic travellers have rapidly laid a record number of eggs and are now all excited to see their darling munchkins emerge and scamper and skip across the beach. In plain

turtlespeak this happy event is called 'arribada', but more about that later.

Turtle-tots are requesting you to avoid freezing the planet.

How did these glad tidings (across umpteen low and high tides) come to pass? Especially since last year the Olive Ridley moms had given these beaches the cold shoulder (hard shell would be more like it). The answer is that this year, the Odisha coastline is offering the ideal climate. And each and every one of you reading this needs to be thanked for it, from the bottom of every turtle heart.

Maybe you switched off lights and fans when you left the room. Or, you ran your Air Conditioner at moderate temperatures. It is possible you switched to an electric vehicle. All of these efforts have contributed to creating a big difference to our environment. To making the beaches of Odisha suited for about-to-be-popping-out turtles.

decrease carbon footprint by up to 75%, among a host of other eco-protection innovations.

On our part, we at Tata Power are involved in initiatives to ensure those tortoise mammas keep returning to our shores to breed turtle-tots.

Initiatives like enhancing EV charging infrastructure, promoting rooftop solar adoption along with the Odisha Renewable Energy Development Agency (OREDA), increasing renewable energy capacities, deploying eco friendly switchgear that will substantially

We are proud the Olive Ridley turtle has chosen our shores for their grand annual 'arribada'. The little baby turtles who will emerge from the lakhs of eggs waiting to hatch under the balmy Odisha sun, will be proof that this endangered species will now be safer.

And yes, you can expect lakhs of 'thank you's' being gurgled in tiny-turtle lingo from all those babies frolicking happily. All of us at Tata Power will chorus this blissful goo-goo gaa-gaa talk.

Govt to launch e-DAR for faster insurance claims

The platform to provide instant access to road accident data, expediting compensation claims and offering relief to victims' families

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 3: In a major digital initiative, the state government is set to launch e-DAR (Electronic Detailed Accident Report), an online portal developed in consultation with insurance companies to streamline vehicle insurance claim settlements.

The platform will provide instant access to road accident data, expediting compensation claims and offering relief to victims' families.

The Commerce and Transport department has been actively working with empanelled insurance agencies to ensure faster, hassle-free compensation under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.

Under Section 164 of the Act, vehicle owners or insurers are required to compensate victims or their legal heirs with ₹5 lakh for fatalities and ₹2.5 lakh for grievous injuries.

However, a recent assess-



ment revealed that 59 per cent of vehicles in Odisha remain uninsured, exposing owners to financial risks and legal consequences.

Of the 1.03 crore registered vehicles, more than 61.57 lakh remain uninsured, underscoring the urgent need for increased awareness and stricter enforcement.

To accelerate reforms, Commerce & Transport department principal secretary Usha Padhee recently chaired a high-

level meeting with insurance representatives.

Discussions focused on regulatory flexibility, process reforms, and seamless claims disbursement. Padhee directed insurance companies to develop a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for uniform implementation, ensuring efficiency and citizen-friendly settlements.

To enhance accessibility, five leading insurance companies have been empanelled under Odisha State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC). So far, claims worth ₹6.77 crore have been filed, with ₹1.45 crore already settled.

The government is actively monitoring pending claims and exploring policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and accessible insurance schemes to expand coverage across the state. Vehicle owners are urged to renew their insurance policies promptly to avoid legal and financial complications.



MUSICAL SHOW: Artistes perform at 'Sangeetayan,' a classical music concert organised by Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Monday

CGU celebrates 5th Foundation Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: CV Raman Global University (CGU) marked its fifth Foundation Day with a grand celebration, reinforcing its dedication to academic excellence, innovation, and industry collaboration.

The event commenced with a welcome address by vice-chancellor Bansidhar Majhi, setting an inspiring tone for the gathering. Founder and President Sanjib Kumar Rout

addressed the university community, emphasising the significance of being future-ready and continuously evolving to meet global educational and industrial demands.

He highlighted CGU's focus on industry-academia partnerships and skill development as key pillars for growth and sustainability.

Recognising dedication and excellence, distinguished faculty and staff were felicitated for their outstanding contributions to the university's prog-



CGU officials at the 5th Foundation Day celebration.

ress. Their efforts in research, teaching, and administration were acknowledged as integral to CGU's mission.

The chief guest, Raja Manickam, founder and CEO of IVP Semiconductor, lauded CGU's futuristic vision and

commitment to technological advancements. He commended the leadership of Rout and elaborated on the semiconductor industry's vast opportunities, encouraging students to align with emerging global trends.

The celebration concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Pro-Vice-Chancellor Gudda Sridevi, who expressed gratitude to the dignitaries, faculty, staff, and students for their invaluable contributions in making the event a resounding success.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	35.2°	33.5°
Min Temp	21.2°	21.2°
Humidity	84%	81%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil

FORECAST
Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later

MARKET WATCH

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	73,085.94 ↓ 112.16
NIFTY	22,119.30 ↓ 5.40
DOLLAR	87.46 ↓ 0.04
EURO	91.44 ↑ 0.34
GOLD	₹85,117 ↑ ₹822
SILVER	₹96,077 ↑ ₹1,665

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar, dated 03.03.2025 I, Anjuman Bibi, Address At. - Panchughanta, P.O. - Jaleswar, P.S. - Jaleswar, Dist. - Balasore, Odisha, PIN - 756032, declare that I have changed my son's name from MD. MAKSOOD SAHA to MOHAMMAD MAQSOOD HABIBI. Henceforth, he shall be known as MOHAMMAD MAQSOOD HABIBI for all purposes. ANJUMAN BIBI

I, Kamal Kumar Agarwal (49 yrs.), S/o-Hardayal Agarwal, Vill.- Baralpokhari, P.O.- Charampa, P.S./Dist.- Bhadrak, Odisha, PIN-756101, declare by this Affidavit No.1020, dated 04.02.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Kamal Kumar Agarwal for all future purposes.

OOAC 2025 held in City



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: The inaugural Odisha Operative Arthroscopy Course (OOAC) 2025, organised by the Odisha Arthroscopy Society and Kalinga Hospital Ltd., marks a milestone in orthopedic and arthroscopy training in the state.

Led by course director Prof Ranajit Panigrahi, a senior orthopedic consultant and renowned sports surgeon, the event brings together over 20 eminent national faculty members in arthroscopy and sports injury management. More than 150 orthopedic surgeons from Odisha and beyond are participating, gaining insights into the latest surgical techniques and innovations in ligament and sports injury management.

A key highlight of the course is the live telecast of over five advanced arthroscopy surgeries from the Kalinga Hospital OT complex to the scientific hall.

This hands-on learning experience enhances knowledge

and provides an in-depth understanding of modern arthroscopic procedures. Interactive discussions, debates, and demonstrations further enrich the expertise of young surgeons.

Sports injuries have long been a challenge for athletes, often disrupting careers. However, advancements in arthroscopic surgery now enable many to recover and return to peak performance. These developments benefit not only sports professionals but also the general public suffering from ligament injuries.

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo praised the Odisha Arthroscopy Society, Kalinga Hospital Ltd., and managing director Nilanjana Mukherjee for their commitment to medical education and innovation.

The initiative is expected to significantly enhance healthcare services in Odisha, improving treatment outcomes and overall quality of life for many individuals.

RSC opens Dinosaur Park

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: The state's first Dinosaur Park, 'Dinosaur Alive!!! In the Prehistoric Kingdom,' was inaugurated at the Regional Science Centre (RSC), Bhubaneswar, by Science & Technology Minister Krushna Chandra Patra Monday.

Speaking at the inauguration, Minister Patra called it a remarkable addition to Odisha's scientific and tourism landscape. "This park is a tribute to our rich geological heritage and a step toward fostering scientific curiosity. It will inspire young minds to explore the wonders of science and nature in an interactive way," he said.

The state-of-the-art park blends education, entertainment, and conservation, offering visitors an immersive journey into the prehistoric era.

Designed as a major tourist and educational attraction, the park features life-sized, animated dinosaur models with dynamic lighting, sound effects, and motion simulations.

Jagannath tattoo row: 2 arrested

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 3: A tattoo of Lord Jagannath on a foreign woman's thigh has triggered outrage in the state, leading to the arrest of a tattoo artist and his employer, police said.

The controversy erupted after a photo of the tattoo went viral on social media, drawing protests from Jagannath devotees who found its placement disrespectful. Amid the backlash, both the woman and the tattoo parlour owner issued public apologies.

Following a complaint from devotees, the Sahid Nagar police registered a case under Section 299 of BNS for "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings." Bhubaneswar ACP (Zone-5) Biswanjan Senapati said the woman visited the tattoo

parlour March 1, where artist Aswini Kumar Pradhan, under owner Rocky Ranjan Bisoi's instruction, inked the tattoo. Bisoi later shared a photo on social media, further fueling the controversy.

Both Pradhan and Bisoi were arrested and will be produced in court. Complainant Subrat Mohani stated that placing the tattoo at an "inappropriate" body part deeply hurt religious sentiments.

The woman later released a video apology, stating, "I never intended to disrespect Lord Jagannath. I visit the temple daily and will remove the tattoo once healed."

Bisoi also apologised, claiming his staff advised her to place the tattoo elsewhere, but she insisted on the thigh. He assured that the tattoo will be removed or covered after healing.

RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS HURT AS DEVOTEES FILE COMPLAINTS DEMANDING STRICT ACTION AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED
POLICE INVOKE LEGAL PROVISIONS, REGISTERING A CASE UNDER SECTION 299 OF BNS FOR INSULTING RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

WORLD HEARING DAY Camp held for traffic police

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 3: To mark the World Hearing Day, the Swami Vivekanand National Institute of Rehabilitation Training and Research (SVNIRTAR), Olatpur, in collaboration with the Commissionerate Traffic Police, organised a free hearing test camp here at Traffic Control Office Monday.

The camp was inaugurated by SVNIRTAR deputy director (Technical) KC Mahapatra along with DCP (Traffic) Tapan Mohanty and SVNIRTAR's Speech & Hearing department head Jaysankar Panda. Experts at the event emphasised the growing concern of hearing impairment, citing WHO estimates that 500 million people could suffer from hearing loss by 2030, rising to 700 million by 2050.

A team of 20 students from the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology department, guided by faculty members, conducted hearing tests for 250 traffic police personnel.

JAGATSingHPUR HERITAGE WALKS

Heritage enthusiasts explore state's architectural marvels

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar/Jagatsinghpur, March 3: As part of the second Jagatsinghpur Heritage Walks (JHW), a group of 30 heritage enthusiasts Sunday visited the Trilochaneswar Temple in Kundeswar and the Ajaikapada Bhairava Temple in Sathalapura, exploring architectural and spiritual heritage.

The Trilochaneswar Temple, believed to predate the iconic Lingaraj Temple, stands as a testament to Odisha's rich architectural legacy. This ancient settlement, once comprising 12 villages, formed Kundinagar (Kundinagra), with Lord Trilochaneswar Deva as its presiding deity and Maa Harachandi as its protector goddess.

Dating back to the eighth century, the temple was constructed by Keshari dynasty King Biswanbara in the Rekha Deula architectural style. The Jagamohana (assembly hall) was later added between the 10th and 11th centuries in the Pidha Deula style of Kalingan architecture. The complex features three smaller shrines, a Rosaghara (temple kitchen), and a small museum housing 8th-century idols. Despite its historical significance, visitors were dismayed by the lack of proper signboards or markers at the site, even after the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) undertook renovations in 1972.

Guided by chief priest Subash Padhi, the group explored



the temple premises and proceeded to Maa Harachandi Temple, where they were welcomed by priests and villagers who offered water and Prasad.

Their next stop was Rukuna Ghat on the banks of the Alaka River, a tributary of the Mahanadi, known for its connections to Puranic legends of

Lord Krishna and Devi Rukmini. However, visitors were concerned about the deteriorating state of this once-sacred water body.

The group then visited Siddheswar Temple, where they were welcomed by priests and introduced to the temple's history. A highlight of their visit was learning about ancient cooling techniques used to preserve the mahadeep (sacred oil lamp). At the nearby Saptamatruka Temple, they were informed about the 2019 theft of two precious idols during Mahasangam celebrations near Rukmini Ghat, with no progress made in their recovery.

The final stop was the Ajaikapada Bhairava Temple in Sathalapura, dedicated to Ekapada

Bhairava. Archaeological evidence suggests the temple was originally built in the early 10th century by the Somavamsi Keshari Kings. Over centuries, the structure suffered damage from floods and invasions by non-Hindu rulers. The current Pidha Deula structure was reconstructed in the 20th century, preserving the original sanctum sanctorum, which houses a Bhairava idol and a Shivalinga.

Situated six kilometres from Alanantha in Sathalapada, Jagatsinghpur, the temple is one of only two Ekapada Bhairava temples in Odisha, the other being in Jaipur district. It is officially listed as a monument by the ASI, reinforcing its historical and cultural significance.

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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-909090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

Border residents thwart Bengal encroachment bid



Bhograi MLA, officials assess situation; concrete markers to be installed within seven days

The local residents have foiled every attempt of West Bengal government and political leaders' encroachment drive on Odisha land so far. However, if the Odisha government does not intervene, it is not known how long they will successfully resist the high-handed tactics of the neighbouring state.

Bhograi MLA Gautam Buddha Das took the issue of West Bengal's revenue and administrative encroachment into Sahabajipur village seriously. He, along with Tehsildar Surya Nayak, Block Development Officer (BDO) Prashant Maharana, Block Chairman Prabir Kumar Giri, local Sarpanch Arun Kumar Giri, senior leaders Tapan Kumar Panda and Ganapati Giri, and the Talsari Marine Police, visited the spot and took stock of the situation.

Later, a crucial meeting was held at the Sahabajipur Gram Panchayat to discuss the border dispute. Under the MLA's leadership, a delegation will meet the District Collector and the Chief Minister to inform them about the development by submitting an urgent memorandum. Das asserted that Sahabajipur village belongs to Odisha and will remain a part of the state.

As part of immediate measures, the MLA directed that concrete pillars be installed within seven days to secure the village's borders. He also urged the residents to act as vigilant sentinels in safeguarding the boundary.

remove the markers. Sources indicate that the West Bengal administration and political leaders are strategically planning to assert control over disputed areas near Digha.

This situation mirrors the ongoing territorial conflict between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh over the Kotia region under Pottangi block in Koraput district. Similarly, the border dispute of the state with West Bengal is worsening day by day. The over four decades old border dispute continues to affect nearly 82 villages in Balasore's Bhograi and Jaleswar blocks, with no permanent resolution in sight. West Bengal has been systematically and tactfully encroaching on border villages, and has reportedly taken Shankhamedi village already under its control. Meanwhile, local Odia residents have repeatedly resisted encroachment attempts into Udayapur and Sahabajipur villages, standing firm against the high-handed tactics of West Bengal administration and political leaders.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, March 3: After four years of relative silence, neighbouring West Bengal has once again launched efforts to encroach territory along Odisha's border in Balasore district, sources said Monday.

The matter came to the fore after revenue officials of Ramnagar block and Digha-Shankarpur Development Authority from West Bengal's East Midnapore district, suddenly intruded into Sahabajipur village in Bhograi block Friday. They allegedly conducted an unauthorised land survey and installed concrete marker poles to demarcate the boundary.

However, local villagers strongly resisted the move, forcing the West Bengal government officials to retreat and



CANINE EXPO: Proud dog owners show off their pets at a dog show organised by K-9 Club in Rourkela, Monday. The programme witnessed the participation of 180 dogs of 32 breeds

2 labourers crushed to death as slab caves in

POST NEWS NETWORK

Aska, March 3: Two casual labourers were crushed to death after a newly constructed chajja slab of an under-construction house caved in on them at Karpura Nuagaon village under Aska police limits in Ganjam district, Monday.

The deceased were identified as Niranjana Mohanty (38) of Bhetanai village under Kotinada police limits near Aska and Khadala Sathy (62) of Gothanda village near Kulada in Bhanjanagar. The mishap occurred when the two labourers were removing the centring of the newly built chajja. They were crushed under rubble after the newly built chajja along with the centring caved in on them.

They were rescued in critical condition and rushed to the sub-divisional hospital at Aska where doctors pronounced them "brought dead", said SD-PO Santosh Kumar Jena.

Police have sent the bodies for post-mortem and started an inquiry into the incident, after a case was registered, the officer added. The two were engaged as labourers under a contractor, who has been detained.

NHRC seeks ATR on plight of Juang tribal community

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 3: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken cognizance of a complaint and sought an Action Taken Report (ATR) from the District Magistrate-cum-Collector of Keonjhar, regarding alleged human rights violations affecting the Juang Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). The commission has directed officials to submit the report within four weeks.

The NHRC issued the order Friday after reviewing a petition filed by human rights activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy. The petition alleges that negligence and apathy on part of state's ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare department and the Keonjhar district administration have resulted in severe hardships for the Juang PVTG community, including lack of all-weather roads, healthcare, and education.

Tripathy further alleged that many villages lack basic infra-



structure, forcing residents to transport patients on makeshift cots. Despite Keonjhar district having one of the highest allocations from the District Mineral Foundation (DMF) funds, authorities have failed to address these pressing needs, he claimed.

The petition highlighted the plight of Juang tribesmen living in 114 villages without basic amenities. The Juangs are one of the 13 PVTGs among the 62 tribal communities found in Odisha, who primarily reside in and around the Gonasika Hill area of Banspal block in Keonjhar district.

Citing a specific case, Tripathy reported that due to inadequate healthcare facilities, 35-year-old Sunia Juanga, his wife Rashmi, 30, and their 6-month-old daughter, Nani,

died in Jantari village. Their three surviving children are now orphaned. The petition alleged that health services are virtually nonexistent, with the nearest primary health centre located 15 km away and the block headquarters at about 40 km distance. A few Juang families benefit from the state-sponsored Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) or the National Health Card, the complaint stated.

Additionally, the petition contended that there is no official database tracking minor orphans or child marriages within the Juang community. It accused state authorities of negligence and inaction, raising serious human rights concerns.

The petition further alleged that due to administrative failure, Juang orphans are left without access to even basic necessities. It cited government inaction, corruption, and systemic neglect as contributing to the deprivation and suffering of the PVTG Juang community.

Woman murders hubby, surrenders before police

PNN & AGENCIES

Jaipur, March 3: The police Monday arrested a 30-year-old woman for allegedly killing her husband and burying his body in the backyard of their house in Jaipur district, an officer said.

The accused, identified as Dumari Munda of Dubikhal village surrendered at the Sukinda police station, confessing that she had hit him with a wooden plank leading to his death, February 27 night.

Dumari had married Babuli Munda (36), a native of Balasore district, about seven years back. The couple was staying at Dumari's parental house in Dubikhal village after marriage.

The couple used to fight over domestic issues regularly, the officer said.

While Dumari's parents had gone to the local market Thursday evening, they quarrelled over some matter and Babuli allegedly assaulted his wife.

Enraged, Dumari attacked him with a wooden plank, leading to his death, police said.

When her parents returned, she narrated the incident to them. Babuli's body was then buried behind their house. However, other villagers came to know about the killing Sunday night and asked Dumari's family to report it to the police. Following their advice, Dumari surrendered before the police.

Following Dumari's surrender, Sukinda police registered a case and launched a thorough investigation.

Police exhumed the body from the back of their house and sent it for post-mortem examination Monday.

"We have arrested the accused and are investigating the case to get more details about the circumstances leading to the incident," said Sukinda police station IIC Bilwamanag Sethy.

"The accused has confessed that she killed her husband alone. She claimed that she was fed up with her husband's drinking habit. He would come home drunk and beat her up frequently," he said. A court remanded Dumari to judicial custody for 14 days.

10 fishermen held from Gahirmatha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kendrapara, March 3: Ahead of the annual mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles at the Gahirmatha marine sanctuary in Kendrapara district, Forest department officials Monday arrested at least 10 fishermen on charges of illegally fishing within the turtle congregation zone.

The trawlers used by the intruders for fishing along the prohibited sanctuary area were also

seized by forest patrol teams. The Gahirmatha beach is expected to witness the mass nesting in the first fortnight of March.

The arrested fishermen from Kendrapara district were later remanded to judicial custody, said Assistant Conservator of Forests, Manas Das.

With the latest arrests, around 330 such fishermen have been apprehended and 30 sea-worthy vessels seized since November 1 last year, the Forest officials said.

Tusker dies after fight with another

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, March 3: A 30-year-old wild tusker was found dead in Kamakhyanager forest area of Dhenkanal district Monday morning, Forest department officials reported. The carcass of the elephant, which had migrated from Joranda about five days ago, was discovered near Jamujhara village in the western part of Dhenkanal forest division.

The cause of death is believed to be injuries sustained in a violent confrontation with another tusker Sunday night. According to a forest official, the clash, which occurred near a pond in Jamujhara village,



rendered the tusker severely injured. The fight was so fierce that it caused panic among locals, with the thunderous trumpet of the elephants echoing throughout the area. Villagers immediately alerted the Forest department, but officials were unable to intervene in time.

Forest officials conducted a post-mortem on the carcass, and samples were sent to the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) in Bhubaneswar for further analysis.

Local villagers and officials expressed frustration with the Forest department's lackadaisical attitude and delayed response.

Paradip Port bags prestigious Sagar Aankalan Certificate



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar/Paradip, March 3: Paradip Port has been conferred with the prestigious No. 1 Sagar Aankalan Certificate for its outstanding overall performance in bulk cargo handling in the 5 MMT category for the financial year 2023-24.

Port sources Monday said, Nilabhra Dasgupta, Deputy Chairman, Paradip Port Authority (PPA), received the award in Mumbai at the recently held Post-Budget Industry Meet, which deliberated on the transformative impact of the Viksit Bharat

Budget 2025 on India's maritime sector.

Sagar Aankalan—the Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPi) for FY 2023-24—is a significant step towards enhancing efficiency and global competitiveness in India's maritime sector. This marks a transformative leap towards establishing India as a maritime powerhouse, contributing to Atmanirbhar Bharat and a developed India by 2047.

Congratulating Team PPA on this remarkable achievement, PPA Chairman PL Haranadh stated that this recognition will inspire

further accomplishments, driving the overall growth of the country.

Notably, by the end of February in the current fiscal year, PPA became the fastest in the history of Indian major ports to clock 136.25 MMT in cargo throughput, despite significant market challenges such as a decline in iron ore export demand and thermal coal trade.

The port is poised to achieve an all-time record in cargo handling for the current fiscal year. Various system improvement measures introduced by the port have fuelled this growth.

Coastal thermal coal handling, which constitutes around 30 per cent of the total cargo volume, has shown a 4.65 per cent growth.

Similarly, containerised cargo volume has increased by 175.58 per cent, while gypsum and flux volume has surged by 2.86 per cent year-on-year in the current fiscal year.

Paradip Port's commitment to operational excellence, coupled with strategic improvements in cargo handling, has positioned it as a key player in catering to the growing needs of industries while emerging as a leading coastal shipping hub in the country.

WORKS DEPARTMENT No.B-1063
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, ROURKELA (R&B) DIVISION, UDITNAGAR, ROURKELA
E-Mail Id : eepwdrkl@gmail.com

Government of Orissa "e" Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. : 109/2024-25 Dated : 01.03.2025

- Number of works : 01 (One) number of Work
- Estimated cost : Rs.41.63 lakhs
- Period of completion : 1 (One) calendar month
- Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal : Dt.04.03.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
- Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal : Dt.12.03.2025 up to 05.00 P.M.
- Date of opening of Bid : Dt.13.03.2025 at 11.00 A.M.
- Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer (R & B) Division, Rourkela, Uditnagar

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersorissa.gov.in>

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POSSESSION NOTICE
(For Immovable Property)

[RULE 8(1) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES - 2002]

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Union Bank of India, Concerned Branches under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (Second) Act, 2002 (Act. No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices calling upon the Borrowers in loan A/c mentioned below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Union Bank of India, Concerned Branches for an amount mentioned below with interest thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to the Borrower to redeem the secured assets.

BRANCH/Name and Address of Borrowers/Guarantors	Liabilities due as per Notice	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession	Description of Properties
BANK STREET, JAJPUR ROAD/ Borrowers: 1) M/s. Kalinga Steel Fabrication, Prop.: Mr. Subas Kumar Jena, 2) Mr. Bhagaban Jena, S/o.: Late Kunja Jena, 3) Mr. Sudarshan Jena, S/o.: Late Kunja Jena, All are Bhagat Bhagaban, PO.: Sribantapur, P.S.: Kuakhia, Jajpur-755015	₹5,34,833/- as on 30.12.2024 + interest & Other Legal Charges thereon	16.10.2024 / 28.02.2025	Residential Land and Building in the name of 1) [Mr. Bhagaban Jena, 2) Sudarshan Jena, S/o.: Late Kunja Jena, having Plot No.: 1287, 1290, 1293, 1286/1442, 1292/1443, Khata No.: 251, Area: Ac.0.17 Dec, at Mouza: Bhagat Bhagaban, Tahasil: Rasulpur, Tahasil No.: 35, P.S.: Dharmasala, Dist.: Jajpur, Bounded by North: Public Road, South: Tirth Panda, East: Vandee, West: Bula Ojha
BALASORE MAIN BRANCH, BALASORE/ Borrower: Mr. Dilip Kumar Giri, At: Mukulishpur, Kachuadi, Kamarda, Dist.: Balasore, Odisha-756035 / Guarantors: 1) Mr. Pradeep Giri, At: Mukulishpur, Kachuadi, Kamarda, Dist.: Balasore, Odisha-756035, 2) Late Amulya Kumar Das, Legal heirs of Late Amulya Kumar Das are: 1) Mrs. Anusuya Das, 2) Mrs. Alpna Das, 3) Mrs. Amrita Das, 4) Mr. Arup Das, All are At: Kachupada, P.S.: Baliapal, Dist.: Balasore, Odisha - 756035	₹14,07,549/- as on 23.12.2024 + interest & Other Legal Charges thereon	23.12.2024 / 03.03.2025	Residential Land in the name of Late Amulya Kumar Das, S/o: Late Ramahari Das having property Khata No.: 228/437, Plot No.: 725/1800, Gharabari, Area: Ac. 0.08 Dec., as per Mutation Khata No.: 199/820, Plot No.: 725/1800, Sarad, Area: Ac. 0.08 Decs. As per M.S. Khata No.: 115, Plot No.: 725, Sarad, Area: Ac. 0.08 Decs. out of Ac. 0.85 Decs., situated at Karanjia, P.S No.: 06-Balasore Town, Tahasil: Remuna, Dist.: Balasore, Bounded by North: Plot No.: 717 & 724, South: Approach Road, East: Amarendra Chandra Debagooswami, West: Dilip Kumar Giri & others

Place: Balasore, Date: 03.03.2025
Sd/- Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India

FOCUS TRUMP TARIFFS

OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIA



The Trump offer of tit for tat tariffs is an opportunity for India to trim its import duties and give exporters a big boost

the net negative impact is smaller. India has agreed to increase crude oil purchase from the US which will be factored into the negotiations. By giving duty free or moderate duty access to Harley Davidson motorcycles or Bourbon whiskey, the loss to India's economy is negligible. But jeopardising India's access to the software services export market of the US is a big risk. Even in this context, the big services exporters out of India to the US are American companies like EY, Accenture, IBM, Google, Microsoft and Genpact. The proliferation of Global Capability Centres run by major American corporations in India is a tribute to the confidence in Indian talent. That trend needs to be nurtured and enhanced, and if that requires a concession by reducing import tariffs, so be it.

India could also tap into the huge untapped potential of export of agriculture products including agro-processing. At \$50 billion, India's exports are barely 1.5% of global exports in agricultural and related products. India is the world's largest producer of milk, has the highest population of cattle, is among the top two or three producers of fruits and vegetables, and has one of the longest coastlines. How well does that translate into export of milk products, cheese, confectionary, meat, poultry, fisheries, fruit juices, nutraceuticals, organic foods? There is no use in hiding behind the excuse of "protecting the small farmer" for putting large export and import barriers in agricultural trade. The US can be a big exporting opportunity for this relatively neglected sector.

Thus, the Trump offer of tit for tat tariffs is an opportunity for India to trim its import duties and give exporters a big boost. There will be some losers, but on the balance, it can have a huge positive impact.

The writer is a noted economist.
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being the fifth largest economy in the world, cannot hide behind high protective tariff walls. High import tariffs do no good to foster competition, nor to Indian consumers who are denied free imports nor to inefficient industries who thrive in a protective environment.

The Trump tariff proposal gives India an opportunity to overhaul and reduce its import tariffs, at least on those items which are of interest to the USA. Such a mutual agreement on tariffs will surely fall foul of WTO's MFN rule. But under Trump's presidency WTO is getting a short shrift anyway, and India must calibrate how much it wants to stick to strengthening the multilateral WTO. As such India's pursuit of several Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) anyway reveals a declining confidence in the WTO.

The Trump negotiation is a great opportunity to push tariff reform since it will be net beneficial to our export prospects and competitiveness. As such general tariff levels have gone up since 2015 and have drifted up 4 or 5% and are for non-agricultural goods, on average around 15%. Further, the proportion of those tariff lines which have MFN rates above 15% has risen to one fourth of all lines. This upward drift was justified for Make in India and later as sectoral support for the Production Linked Incentive scheme. But the time has come to slash these rates back to what they were before 2015 and progressively move toward a level on par with our peers in ASEAN countries. The Trump threat gives India an alibi to do this much needed reform. Just as 1991 reforms were pushed through as part of conditionalities of a loan from IMF, this tariff reform too could use an "external" justification.

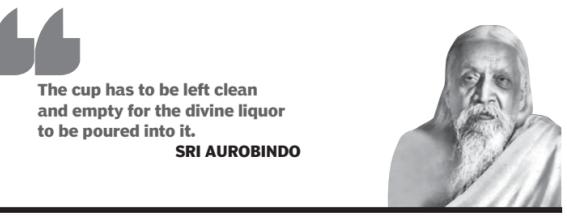
President Donald Trump has a way with words. America's federal income tax department is called Internal Revenue Service. Trump says he will build an External Revenue Service. It is an appealing concept. Instead of burdening US taxpayers he proposes to tax outsiders. He says America is one of the most open consumer markets in the world, with access given to all exporting countries. But those exporting countries often have high tariff walls protecting their domestic markets. He says that is unfair to America's exporters. Hence, he has proposed to raise import tariffs to match the exporting country's tariffs. It's a tit for tat strategy, which he claims will raise much revenue for America, and punish those who keep their domestic markets protected. Never mind that the WTO rules do not allow America to selectively differentiate import tariffs for the same product from different origins. This is called the MFN rule. Never mind that raising import tariffs will hurt the American consumer, since it will raise prices and hence inflation. Trump counters that by saying he will cut income tax, which is not feasible given the huge size of the fiscal deficit.

Never mind that the reason developing countries like India were allowed to have higher import tariffs than countries like the US was to compensate their domestic industries for domestic handicaps like high cost of power, infrastructure, credit and lower labour productivity. This was all a part of the grand design of the WTO to get all on board. India and many other developing countries have enjoyed a special and differential treatment for good reason, in the WTO. And yet Trump's threat of reciprocal punitive tariffs has an appeal to the American voter and consumer. It is also true that a country like India, boasting of



Ajit Ranade

HIGH IMPORT TARIFFS DO NO GOOD TO FOSTER COMPETITION, NOR TO INDIAN CONSUMERS WHO ARE DENIED FREE IMPORTS



The cup has to be left clean and empty for the divine liquor to be poured into it.
SRI AUROBINDO

Hamas Fooled Israel

The just published report of the top-level investigation by Israel Defence Forces (IDF) into the Israeli military's failure to gauge the impending lethal attack by Hamas on 7 October, 2023 reveals the military intelligence was so complacent about its false assessment of Hamas that it did not act even when unusual movements had been seen in Gaza the night before catastrophe struck Israel. Some 5,000 Hamas-led terrorists from the Gaza Strip burst into southern Israel carrying out a murderous rampage of unprecedented intensity and scale. The IDF probes have come out with evidence that the force struggled to mount a response with bases closest to the border overrun and the chain of command broken amid the chaos. The attack claimed the lives of some 1,200 people in Israel, with another 251 people kidnapped and much of the area devastated. Most victims were civilians.

The material released by the IDF shows Hamas' invasion was possible because of the colossal failure for years of the Israeli forces to properly keep track of Hamas' preparations and analyse whatever credible information its intelligence wing collected. The Israeli military establishment deluded itself into the belief that Hamas did not have the nerve nor the intent to launch a ground offensive against Israel. At the most it could fire rockets which Israel's sophisticated system of interception could easily neutralize. This was the assessment of the IDF that was far removed from reality.

What is even worse and scandalous for Israel is that the Israeli army was "defeated" for several hours at the hands of Hamas during the invasion. The chaos and confusion catastrophically slowed the fightback on the day.

The probes at the General Staff level are focused on four main topics. The IDF believed, prior to the 7 October onslaught, that the Hamas in Gaza did not pose a significant threat to Israel, it was uninterested in a large-scale war and any cross-border threat would be thwarted by Israel's high-tech border fence. The investigation highlighted a widening gap between the IDF's perceptions of Hamas and what the terror group was doing in reality. As part of its investigation, the IDF has now determined that Hamas had decided in April 2022 to launch such an attack. By September 2022, the terror group was at 85 per cent readiness and it decided in May 2023 to launch the assault on 7 October. This investigation also found that the IDF's conduct, decision-making, and intelligence assessments on the night between 6 and 7 October were based on the result of years of false assessments about Hamas. As a result, intelligence officials at all levels failed to provide a warning for what would come.

Interestingly, even though the IDF probe has provided stark details of the holes in the famed intelligence service of Israel, there is not a word on the political establishment, especially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his Far-Right allies. While the latter were busy with their political goal of virtual ethnic cleansing to displace millions of Palestinians from their homes in Gaza and destroy their houses and infrastructure, they failed to oversee the work of their defence forces and intelligence apparatus. According to one school of opinion, Netanyahu was opposed to any cease-fire because he feared this would give an opportunity to his adversaries to raise the issue of his government's intelligence failure and demand his resignation. It was to save his chair and his political future that he wanted the war with Hamas to drag on.

This raises the question why the probe report is made public now. The answer is the ruling establishment of Israel now feels safe as global and regional attention has shifted from the Hamas attack to US President Donald Trump's plan to rebuild Gaza forcing the Palestinians to leave their homes effectively, never to return. This seems to be the most opportune time to disclose the failure of the Israeli military and the government to anticipate Hamas' invasion without attracting much public criticism.

Israel's deadly intelligence and system's failure should be a dire warning for India. Encircled by enemies on all sides since the failure of relations in the neighbourhood has collapsed, India is constantly prone to any kind of attack. Dependence on imported hardware for intelligence gathering and warfare added with a lethargic and unwilling manpower, India has many hurdles to overcome that it has consistently been neglecting for decades. This should be a wake up call for the Indian political leadership.

WISDOM CORNER

The discovery of truth is prevented more effectively, not by the false appearance things present and which mislead into error, not directly by weakness of the reasoning powers, but by preconceived opinion, by prejudice.
ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

So long as we love, we serve; so long as we are loved by others, I should say that we are almost indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend.
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

It is a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one's life and find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than 'try to be a little kinder.'
ALDOUS HUXLEY

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1789 The U.S. Constitution is put into effect. The law is one of the world's oldest constitutions still in use. The oldest is the Constitution of San Marino, which was issued in 1600.
- 1837: Chicago was incorporated as a city, with a population of about 4,200.
- 1918: The first documented cases of the Spanish flu herald a deadly worldwide pandemic. The disease quickly spread around the world, causing over 25 million deaths.
- 1933: Inauguration of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. On this day in 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated as the 32nd U.S. president, and later he led the country out of the Depression and to victory in World War II.
- 1980: Robert Mugabe becomes Zimbabwe's first Black prime minister. A hero of the Black struggle against the white minority rule in his country, Mugabe won a landslide victory. More recently, his oppressive style of leadership has been condemned domestically and internationally.

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Why nature needs its own ID

During my 35-year career in environmental conservation, I have come to realize that today's planetary crisis is driven not just by destruction and neglect but also by something more profound: our economic systems' blindness to nature's value. As governments chase GDP growth and companies seek to maximize profits, they fail to account for the vast ecosystems that sustain our economies, societies, and personal well-being. We manage what we measure, and because ecosystem services don't appear on balance sheets, they are effectively invisible, even as the implications - exploitation of natural resources, habitat destruction, and pollution of our air, land, water, and ocean - stare us in the face.

The consequences of remaining on our current path are well-documented. The World Bank warns that the collapse of just a few critical ecosystem services, such as wild pollination and marine fisheries, could shrink global GDP by \$2.7 trillion annually by 2030. How can we make nature more visible and integral to our decision-making? The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures represents an important first step. By providing financial institutions and corporations with the tools to assess their dependence and impact on natural ecosystems, the initiative encourages and enables them to shift financial flows toward nature-positive investments.

Quantifying these relationships is no easy feat. But digital nature IDs offer a promising solution. Much like personal IDs enable citizens to exercise their rights, receive government benefits, access banking services, and take legal action, a digital nature ID could help establish essential environmental metrics to account for the ecosystems supporting human development. A person without an ID risks invisibility in modern society. The same is true for nature. Assigning secure IDs to natural ecosystems could shield them from unchecked exploitation. For example, a forested watershed could have an ID storing information about its geographical characteristics, biodiversity, and ecosystem services, along with the measurable benefits it provides to local communities and even distant populations downstream. By

quantifying these benefits, we could make it harder for businesses or individuals to disregard or harm nature. No longer invisible, nature's value would be profiled, legally recognized, and far more difficult to exploit. With the rapid development of mobile technologies, a digital nature ID can integrate digital tagging, remote sensing, and sensor data for real-time monitoring of natural ecosystems. AI could further enhance these systems, making environmental data more accessible and actionable. Imagine a geo-tagged data parcel, overlaid with key ecological features and environmental health indicators, offering a holistic, living snapshot of a specific ecosystem.

By integrating administrative, environmental, and geographic data, digital nature IDs could pave the way for scaling results-based payment schemes, providing fair compensation to those who protect carbon-absorbing rainforests, mangroves, and other vital ecosystems. They could also enhance the traceability of raw materials in agricultural supply chains and empower land-rights holders by improving access to biodi-

iversity credits, green bonds, and loans tied to sustainable stewardship. Moreover, such a system could bolster legal protections for indigenous and local communities by incorporating clear, location-specific records. But development of a digital nature ID must be a whole-of-society effort, underpinned by the principles of inclusion and collaboration. Its design should reflect the concerns of all stakeholders, so that it serves as a public good that drives nature-positive action at scale. Above all, it must uphold the rights, welfare, and value systems of indigenous peoples and local communities, ensuring that they retain control over data related to their lands, resources, and way of life.

At scale, a digital nature ID could become a transformative tool for accounting for the value of our planet's natural resources and contributions to humanity. By recognizing and quantifying the ways nature enables our societies and economies to survive and thrive, we can usher in a new era of accountability.

The writer is Director of the UNDP's Nature Hub.
©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Midori Paxton

AT SCALE, A DIGITAL NATURE ID COULD BECOME A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL FOR ACCOUNTING FOR THE VALUE OF OUR PLANET'S NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANITY

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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



Wildlife conservation

Sir, The world is facing an intense environmental crisis, where climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are interconnected, making the future of humanity uncertain. Due to human activities such as excessive resource exploitation, habitat destruction, and illegal hunting, many species are on the brink of extinction. According to the 2024 WWF report, wildlife populations have declined by 73% since 1970. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reports that 46,300 species are at risk of complete extinction. Deforestation, urban expansion, climate change, and the increase in plastic waste are endangering numerous marine and terrestrial species. Wildlife and plant species play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance. Globally, forests provide shelter to 60,000 plant species, 80% of amphibians, and 75% of birds. Additionally, they serve as a source of food, medicine, and income for 1.6 billion people. The loss of biodiversity disrupts ecological balance, potentially causing severe consequences for human life. World Wildlife Day on 3 March emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive biodiversity conservation efforts. Nature is our wealth - protecting it is our responsibility!
Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Tainted leaders

Sir, The Central government is against totally banning tainted politicians from contesting elections for the remainder of their life. According to the existing law, a convicted political leader must be immediately disqualified and banned from contesting elections for six years. After six years, the leader becomes eligible for contesting elections. But will this punishment act as a deterrent to other offenders? Why can't it be extended? Many are of the opinion that a lifelong ban is the best option. As most of the political parties have corrupt leaders, they are unwilling to discuss this controversial matter. Political parties are not bothered about giving tickets to tainted leaders as victory is more important than the credentials of the candidate. One wonders why political parties are reluctant to place leaders without corruption charges in elections. Trials of corruption cases take a prolonged time for completion. During this time the tainted leaders contest elections. Speeding up the trials helps get rid of such leaders.
Venu GS, KOLLAM

PM chairs wildlife board meet

Modi announces conservation plans, lion population estimation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sasan (Gujarat), March 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday announced the Asiatic lion population estimation exercise in May and unveiled conservation plans for tigers, gharials and a critically endangered bird, while pushing for using AI to combat forest fires and human-animal conflicts.

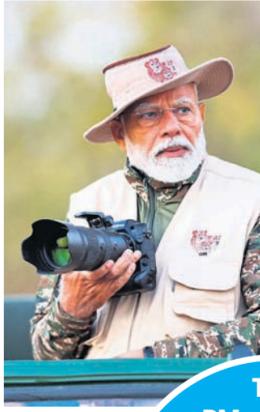
He made a slew of announcements while chairing the seventh meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), in his capacity as ex-officio chairperson, at Sasan in Gujarat's Junagadh district.

At the meeting, which coincided with World Wildlife Day, the PM virtually laid the foundation stone of a National Referral Centre for Wildlife at Junagadh. Modi announced a scheme focused on the conservation of tigers, and a centre of excellence for the effective management of human-wildlife conflicts.

The PM released the first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report in the country, which pegged the number of the aquatic mammals at 6,327.

Soon after completing his lion safari at the Gir National Park, Modi headed for the NBWL meeting, which ended by Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupendra Yadav and other members of the board.

At the meet, the PM announced the initiation of a new conservation project on gharials, and a National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan after considering



(CMS), said the release.

The proposed National Referral Centre for Wildlife will function as a hub for co-ordination and governance of various aspects related to wildlife health and disease management, it said.

Population estimation of Asiatic Lions is carried out once every five years and the last such exercise was conducted in 2020. At the meeting, Modi announced the initiation of the 16th cycle of lion estimation exercise in May this year, it said.

The PM also announced that a Centre of Excellence will be set up at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) campus in SACON (Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History) at Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu for effective management of human-wildlife conflicts.

The centre will support states and Union Territories in equipping rapid response teams with advanced technology, gadgets for tracking and forewarning, prescribe surveillance and intrusion detection systems in human-wildlife conflict hotspots, and build capacity of field practitioners and community to execute conflict mitigation measures, said the release.

Modi stressed on the usage of remote sensing and geospatial mapping and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to combat issues like forest fires and human-animal conflicts, it said.

He suggested engagement of the WII with the Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N) to address the challenge of human-wildlife conflict, the release said.

The PM released the first-ever riverine dolphin estimation report in the country, which pegged the number of the aquatic mammals at 6,327

the need to upscale conservation efforts of this critically endangered bird species, stated an official release.

He outlined a scheme focused on the conservation of tigers outside reserves with the aim to address human-tiger and other co-predator conflicts by ensuring co-existence with local communities, it said.

The Board discussed conservation efforts for dolphins and Asiatic lions, and the establishment of an International Big Cats Alliance. The Prime Minister suggested enhanced cooperation under the United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

B'desh delegation visits Farakka

GANGES WATER TREATY RENEWAL TALKS

One of the functions of the Farakka Barrage in West Bengal's Murshidabad district is regulation of water to Bangladesh as per the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty, 1996, on sharing of the Ganga water



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 3: A Bangladeshi delegation of the Joint River Commission (JRC) arrived in West Bengal Monday and visited the Ganges at Farakka regarding the Ganga Water Treaty, which is due for renewal in 2026, an official said.

One of the functions of the Farakka Barrage in West Bengal's Murshidabad district is regulation of water to Bangladesh as per the Indo-Bangladesh Treaty, 1996, on sharing of the Ganga Water.

The 86th meeting of the joint committee, as per the provisions of the Treaty, and the technical meeting under the India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission Framework are scheduled to be held in Kolkata March 6 and 7.

"The Bangladeshi delegation of the Joint River Commission (JRC) reached Kolkata this morning and immediately left for the joint observation site on the Ganges at Farakka. The Commission will be in Farakka until March 5," an official of the West Bengal Irrigation & Waterways Department told PTI.

The delegation will then re-

turn to Kolkata for the two-day meeting, the official said.

According to state government officials, the Joint River Commission which includes members from the governments of India, Bangladesh and West Bengal, meets once a year to discuss issues regarding the cross-boundary river.

According to the Ministry of Jal Shakti, India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers.

The Joint Rivers Commission of India and Bangladesh was constituted in 1972 as a bilateral mechanism to address issues of mutual interest on common, border, and trans-boundary rivers.

The Ganga Water Treaty was signed December 12, 1996, by the then Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina. During Sheikh Hasina's last visit to India in June - weeks before her regime was toppled in August 2024 - the two sides announced that technical teams would meet for negotiations.

West Bengal Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee is expected to play an important role in the efforts to renew the Ganges water-sharing treaty. This comes even as she continues to oppose the Teesta River water-sharing agreement, despite both India and Bangladesh agreeing on its draft in 2011.

Last year, Banerjee wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that the push to renew the Ganga Waters Treaty was "unilateral" and that the West Bengal government had not been consulted.

However, officials from the Union government had clarified that an internal committee formed by the Ministry of Jal Shakti in July 2023 had included representatives from both the Bihar and West Bengal governments - the two states through which the Ganges flows before reaching Bangladesh.

West Bengal nominated its representative to this internal committee in August 2023 and participated in three of the committee's four meetings.

Kenwal Lake in Anand to undergo re-molding

Kenwal Lake plays a crucial role in water supply, providing drinking water to approximately 1,987 villages and irrigation water to 1,436 hectares of farmland

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Anand, March 3: The Gujarat government has approved a ₹79 crore project for the desilting and remolding of Kenwal Lake, a vital water source in Anand.

The tendering process is nearing completion, and work is expected to commence soon. The 16-year-old lake, spanning 525 hectares, will undergo restoration, with 17-18 per cent of its area set to be desilted and reshaped, Water Resources and Water Supply Minister Kunwar-

jibhai Bawaliya announced in the Legislative Assembly.

Kenwal Lake plays a crucial role in water supply, providing drinking water to approximately 1,987 villages and irrigation water to 1,436 hectares of farmland.

Additionally, it serves nine cities, including Ahmedabad. The restoration project will include embankment strengthening, the construction of a protective wall, the installation of paver blocks, and road development. Addressing legislative queries, Minister Bawaliya

highlighted that Kenwal Lake is integral to Gujarat's water supply network, supporting irrigation, drinking water distribution, and fisheries.

He also credited former Water Supply Minister Narottambhai Patel for his efforts in implementing the water supply scheme, particularly benefiting Saurashtra and his constituency, Jasan. Gujarat has made significant progress in water supply infrastructure, ensuring access to drinking water for rural and urban populations.

The state operates multiple water supply schemes, benefiting over 2.25 crore people across 18,000+ villages and 200+ towns. Major projects include the Sujalam Sufalam Yojana, which enhances water conservation, and the Sardar Sarovar Project, which supplies drinking water to more than 9,000 villages and 173 towns.

The Gujarat Water Supply and Sewerage Board (GWSSB) manages rural and urban water distribution through regional and group water supply schemes.

Additionally, the SAUNI Yojana (Saurashtra Narmada Avtaran Irrigation) plays a vital role in transferring excess Narmada water to parched regions of Saurashtra.

Groundwater recharge initiatives, desalination plants, and rainwater harvesting are also being implemented to ensure long-term water security.



Students revise before appearing for the class xii board exam, conducted by West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education, in Nadia, West Bengal, Monday

PTI PHOTO

Cong demands live telecast of Gujarat Assembly proceedings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gandhinagar, March 3: The Opposition Congress in Gujarat Monday sought a live telecast of the state Assembly proceedings, saying people have the right to know about issues their elected representatives raise in the House.

Citing a recent incident wherein Minister of State for Home Harsh Sanghavi had uploaded a small clip of the House proceeding on his social media handle, the Congress demanded a similar privilege for all legislators.

After the Question Hour, Congress Legislative Party leader Amit Chavda urged the BJP government and the Speaker to start a live telecast of the Assembly proceedings.

"Since this House is run with the taxpayers' money, they have the right to know what happens here and what issues their elected representatives take up. Apart from the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, 28 different states,



including some ruled by the BJP, have allowed telecast of their respective Assemblies," Chavda said while addressing Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and Speaker Shankar Chaudhary.

He said, "A minister had shared a video clip of his address inside the Assembly on his social media platform. Everyone feels that live telecasts should be allowed, and all the MLAs must get videos of their speeches without discrimination. I urge the CM and the Speaker to make a decision about live telecast and providing clips to all MLAs."

He further alleged that an edited TV programme on the Assembly's Question Hour, which is prepared by the state informa-

tion department and broadcast on TV channels the same day, is full of bias because it shows only the government's version.

Without giving any definitive assurance about the live telecast, the Speaker said he would discuss the issue of video clips with all the party representatives during the Assembly's business advisory committee meeting next week.

"There was a request from Minister Harsh Sanghavi for that clip. Since the government felt that the issue raised in the clip was important and people must see it, I allowed it. Thus, only that one clip was given. We will discuss this issue next week in the business advisory meeting," he said.

Later, Congress MLAs staged a protest outside the Assembly over the issue.

Chavda also wrote to Chaudhary demanding a live telecast of the House proceedings and providing video clips to all the MLAs without any discrimination.

Centre releases ₹699cr grants for rural local bodies in Bengal

New Delhi: The government Monday released grants worth ₹699 crore for rural local bodies in West Bengal under the 15th Finance Commission. This is the second installment of Untied Grants amounting to ₹694.4446 crore and withheld portion of 1st installment of Untied Grants amounting to ₹4.9323 crore, according to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. These funds are for the 21 eligible District Panchayats, 326 eligible Block Panchayats and 3,220 eligible Gram Panchayats in the state. The Untied Grants will be utilised by Panchayati Raj Institutions/Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) for location-specific felt needs. The Tied Grants can be used for the basic services of sanitation and maintenance of the Open Defecation Free (ODF) status, and this should include management and treatment of household waste, and human excreta and fecal sludge management in particular and supply of drinking water, rainwater harvesting and water recycling.



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, WATCO PROJECT DIVISION

Email: gmprojectsbp@gmail.com, Tel. No. 0663-2411911

e-Procurement Notice

Bid Identification No.9 Project/WATCO/SBP/ 2024-25

- No.C-1782 Dated 25.02.2025
- 1.Name of the work: BC Road restoration work and Sewer Pipe laying.
- 2.Estimated cost: Rs.13.42 Lakhs-37.07 Lakhs
- 3.Period of completion: Referred to DTCN
- 4.No. of works: 3 (Three).
- 5.Tender paper cost: Referred to DTCN
- 6.Class of contractor: "B, C or D" Class
- 7.Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal: 11.00 Hrs. of 04.03.2025 to 17.00 Hrs. of 13.03.2025
- 8. Date of opening of bid: 12.30 Hrs. on dtd.17.03.2025
- 9. Name and address of the O.I.T: General Manager, WATCO Project Division, Sambalpur, At- 40 MLD STP Campus, Bhatra, Dhanupali, Sambalpur,768005.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in" Sd./- General Manager WATCO PROJECT DIVISION, SAMBALPUR

OIPR-13236/11/0002/2425

When the CAG report on the Dwarka Expressway revealed that a road approved at ₹19 crore per km was built at ₹250 crore per km, the BJP did not debate it either. But now, at least because of us, they are discussing it

ATISHI | LEADER OF OPINION IN DELHI ASSEMBLY

PUNJAB CABINET OKAYS TWO OTS SCHEMES

The Punjab Cabinet Monday approved two one-time settlement schemes for industrialists to waive compounding and penal interests so that they could clear their long-pending dues for industrial plots in focal points



of the day quote

In fact, even the Tamil literature has not used the word Aryan as a race. In the last 60-70 years, the Dravidian ideology has created a narrative of differences between Aryan and Dravidian

R N RAVI | TN GOVERNOR

Maharashtra is a preferred destination for FDI and contributes more than 14 per cent to the country's GDP

CP RADHAKRISHNAN | MAHARASHTRA GOVERNOR

The team of Amazon Web Services met today. They explained their entire plan of investing about USD 8.2 billion in Maharashtra in the coming few years going into 2029-30

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

India, Belgium to boost ties

New Delhi: India and Belgium Monday discussed the possibility of bilateral maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region and looked at ways to enhance defence industrial ties. Ways to bolster India-Belgium defence engagement figured prominently at a meeting between Belgium's Princess Astrid and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The two sides also agreed to explore the setting up of an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism between the two nations. Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken was also part of the Belgian delegation. Princess Astrid is leading an Economic Mission to India that comprises top ministers and business leaders.

Four killed in road accident

Rae Bareilly (UP): Four people were killed and seven others were seriously injured when a dumper truck collided head-on with an auto-rickshaw here Monday, police said. Additional Superintendent of Police Sanjeev Kumar Sinha said that the auto-rickshaw was going towards Rae Bareilly with passengers from Lalganj. As soon as it reached near Baras village, a dumper truck hit the vehicle and shattered it. Sinha said that on hearing the loud sound, passersby pulled out the people trapped in the auto-rickshaw. Four people died on the spot.

Delhi court acquits five

New Delhi: More than 14 years after five men were accused of murder, a court here has acquitted them and asked the Delhi police commissioner to take necessary action because of "serious lapses" in the investigation. Additional Sessions Judge Pankaj Arora was hearing a case against five men against whom the Sonia Vihar police station had registered a case under the penal provisions of murder, kidnapping and destruction of evidence. The prosecution alleged that the accused persons abducted and killed the victim, Kamal Singh, by inflicting iron rod blows and fist blows on him July 12, 2010.

DU student killed

New Delhi: A 19-year-old Delhi University student working as a newspaper vendor was killed in a road accident in Rohini, an official said Monday. According to the police, the victim was pursuing graduation and took up newspaper distribution to fund his education.

UP woman on death row in UAE executed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Uttar Pradesh resident Shahzadi Khan, 33, who was on death row in Abu Dhabi for allegedly murdering the four-month-old son of her employer, had already been executed, the Ministry of External Affairs told the Delhi High Court Monday.

Shahzadi Khan was handed over to the Abu Dhabi police February 10, 2023, and she was sentenced to death July 31, 2023. She was lodged in the Al Wathba jail. On being informed about the development, Justice Sachin Datta termed it "very unfortunate".

"It is over. She was executed February 15. Her last rites will be held March 5," Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma told the court and stressed that the government had tried its best to assist her. The submission was made during the hearing of the petition filed by the 33-year-old woman's father seeking to know her well-being.

The Ministry of External Affairs, meanwhile, said Monday that the Indian Embassy provided all possible legal assistance to Shahzadi, including sending mercy petitions and pardon requests to the Government of the UAE.

Shahzadi was convicted on charges of murder of an infant and sentenced to death in the UAE. The highest court of the UAE, the Court of Cassation, upheld the sentence, it said. The UAE authorities intimidated to the Embassy February 28, 2025, that the sentence of Shahzadi has been carried out in accordance with local laws. The family of Shahzadi has been informed of the matter, the MEA said. Her father Shabbir Khan, a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Banda, had said there was "profound uncertainty" regarding his daughter's situation and his repeated applications to



the Ministry of External Affairs for clarification were fruitless.

The plea further alleged that Shahzadi was inadequately represented before the local courts in the case over the alleged murder of her employer's four-month-old child and she was pressured into confessing, leading to the imposition of the death penalty on her. During the hearing, the petitioner's counsel said his limited prayer was to know whether his daughter was alive or she had been hanged.

He said February 14, Shahzadi had called the family from the prison saying that she would be executed in a day or two and this would be her last call. Since then, they were unaware of her well-being, he said. The Centre's counsel told the court that the embassy officials and the petitioner were in touch and arrangements were being made so that the family could attend their daughter's last rites in Abu Dhabi.

"We did our best. We hired a law firm there to represent her in court. But the laws there deal with the murder of an infant very severely," he submitted. The petition said, "On February 14, 2025, the petitioner's daughter telephoned him from detention, informing him that she had been relocated within the facility and that, prior to her potential execution, her final wish was to speak with her

Father alleges injustice

The father of Shahzadi Khan was denied justice and that the Indian government did not extend any support to the family. The family's legal counsel, Ali Mohammad, has termed the execution an "extrajudicial killing in the guise of judicial killing". Speaking to PTI Videos, Shahzadi's father Shabbir Khan said, "She was not given justice, sir. We tried our best. We approached the Indian government and submitted applications at multiple places but we had no money, no means to go there and hire a lawyer. The government did not stand with us," he said. The news of her execution came to light during a Delhi High Court hearing Monday when the Ministry of External Affairs confirmed that she had been hanged last month. Her last rites are scheduled to take place March 5 in Abu Dhabi. Shahzadi Khan's family was unaware of her execution until February 28, when they received the official confirmation. Shabbir Khan said the last time he spoke to his daughter was February 14, just a day before she was hanged. Asked whether the government had assured any support, he said, "No, we received no help whatsoever," adding that the family had reached out to politicians and even film personalities but to no avail.

parents." The petitioner, with considerable effort, submitted an application dated February 21, 2025 to the Ministry of External Affairs, seeking to ascertain the current legal status of his daughter and confirm whether she remains alive or has been executed," it added.

The plea said the woman travelled to Abu Dhabi in December 2021 after obtaining a legal visa. In August 2022, her employer gave birth to a son for whom Shahzadi was employed as a caregiver. On December 7, 2022, the infant received routine vaccinations and tragically passed away that evening, it said. It claimed that the infant's parents refused consent for a post-mortem and also signed an agreement to waive further investigation into the death.

'Friend' strangled Cong worker with charger

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 3: Haryana Police Monday arrested a "friend" of Congress worker Himani Narwal for allegedly strangling her with a wired mobile charger after a fight at her home in Rohtak and later dumping her body in a suitcase.

Himani's body was found stuffed in a suitcase in Rohtak Saturday, leading to the formation of a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the murder. Speaking to reporters in Rohtak, Additional DGP K K Rao said the accused, Sachin, hails from Jhajjar district, where he runs a mobile phone shop, and was arrested in Delhi.

Rao said it was a murder with few clues. "When the body was found, we set up eight teams, including an SIT. Our priority was to identify the victim when her body was found. When the family identified her, the police conducted swift investigations to trace out the accused.

"For the past one-and-half years, the accused was in contact with the woman through social media and also used to visit her home. "The woman used to live alone in Vijay Nagar. On February 27, the accused visited her home, and they had a heated argument," Rao said. The officer said the fight between the two broke out over money. According to police, Sachin, a married man with no political connections, strangled Himani with a wired mobile phone charger, killing her on the spot. Sachin was produced before a court in Rohtak on Monday and was sent to a three-day police remand.

"There was a monetary issue between the two, but what it was, all this has to be verified first. We cannot say this was the reason (for the murder). "The accused has said there was a fight between the two, and during an exchange of words, he strangled her,"



Himani's body was found stuffed in a suitcase in Rohtak Saturday, leading to the formation of a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the murder

Speaking to reporters in Rohtak, Additional DGP K K Rao said the accused, Sachin, hails from Jhajjar district, where he runs a mobile phone shop, and was arrested in Delhi

the ADGP said. Rao said that after strangling Himani, Sachin took her jewellery, laptop, ring and rode her scooter to Jhajjar to hide these items in his shop there.

The same night, he returned to her home, stuffed her body in a black suitcase and got into an auto-rickshaw with the bag, as well as a quilt that had blood stains on it. He got down near Sampla bus stand to waylay the investigation, Rao said. Once the auto-rickshaw left, he dumped the suitcase and left. The officer said the auto-rickshaw driver had no inkling that the passenger was carrying a body in the suitcase. Some Congress members said Himani was a dedicated party worker and also took part in the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Jharkhand tables ₹1.45L-cr Budget

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, March 3: The Jharkhand government Monday presented a ₹1.45 lakh-crore Budget for 2025-26, allocating a whopping ₹62,844 crore for social welfare programmes aimed at helping the poor, women and other vulnerable groups.

For its popular Jharkhand Mukhyanmantri Maiya Samman Yojana that aims to enhance financial security and well-being of women in the age bracket of 18-50 years, it allocated ₹13,363 crore. Additionally, ₹5,000 crore has been made towards providing free electricity. Presenting the maiden budget of the Hemant Soren-led government after it retained power following a resounding victory in Assembly elections last year, Finance Minister Radhakrishna Kishore said the state's economy is expected to grow at a rate of 7.5 per cent in 2025-26 fiscal.

"I lay on the table of the House a budget of ₹1.45 lakh-crore for the 2025-26 financial year March 3 that coincides with the birth anniversary of great industrialist Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, who believed that economic independence is the base of political independence...This budget will pave way for overall development of the state," the finance minister said in the Assembly.

The budget provides for an outlay of ₹62,844 crore for the social sector and ₹13,363 crore for Maiyan Samman financial aid to women, Kishore said. Under the industrial policy, the government aims to attract ₹20,000 crore in investment, which will generate both direct and indirect employment for 15,000 people Kishore said.

VOTER ROLL ROW

EC must accept errors within 24 hours: TMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The Trinamool Congress Monday expressed dissatisfaction with the Election Commission's response on the duplication of voter card numbers, saying the poll panel must accept the error within 24 hours.

Addressing a press conference here, TMC Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Party Leader Derek O'Brien said if the EC fails to do it, the party would release more documents related to the issue Tuesday morning. O'Brien, along with TMC Rajya Sabha deputy leader Sagarika Ghose and Lok Sabha MP Kirati Azad, displayed lists with details of voter ID cards with the same EPIC number.

"We want only residents of state to vote in that state. Only voters of Bengal to vote in Bengal... Voters will not be allowed to vote as their votes will be cast by people with identical EPIC numbers," O'Brien said. Amid reports flagging issuance of identical voter card numbers to electors in two different states, the EC Sunday said it would rectify the issue and also update its technology-driven platform. The poll authority asserted that while the elector photo identity card (EPIC) numbers of some of the voters "may be identical", the other details, including demographic details, Assembly constituency and polling booth, are different.

TOP COURT ASKS CENTRE TO REGULATE ONLINE CONTENT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The Supreme Court Monday directed the Centre to formulate a mechanism to regulate social media content but cautioned against censorship.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kottiswar Singh said the Centre should take views of all stakeholders. "We have suggested the solicitor general to deliberate upon and suggest such a regulatory mechanism which does not impinge upon the right of free speech and expression but at the same time is also effective enough to ensure the parameters of such fundamental right

as stated in Article 19 (4) of the Constitution," it said.

The bench further said any draft regulatory mechanism could be brought in public domain for suggestions from all stakeholders before taking any legislative or judicial measure. "For this purpose, we are inclined to expand the scope of these proceedings," the bench said while hearing a plea of podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia.

The bench, however, asked for a regulatory regime that did not lead to censorship. "It should never. No government will like and no stakeholder will like. But to say that it's free for all is also a very dangerous thing. It's a very dangerous proposition."

Mehta said now everything was in the open and one couldn't prohibit a child to access something meant for the ages above 18.

The bench, however, asked for a regulatory regime that did not lead to censorship. "It should never."



Students of Jadavpur University with other students take out a protest rally from Jadavpur University over the clash between students and the police during West Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu to the university, in Kolkata

First-ever survey finds over 6,300 river dolphins in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The first population estimation of riverine dolphins in India has revealed the presence of 6,327 dolphins in the Ganga, Brahmaputra and Indus River systems, according to a government report published Monday.

The Ganges River dolphin, known for its unique features, is found in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system and its tributaries across India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan. A small population of the Indus river dolphin, a close relative of the Ganges river

dolphin, is found in the Indus River system in India.

As part of "Project Dolphin", a comprehensive survey was conducted for the first time to estimate the population of river dolphins across eight states - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Assam and Punjab.

It is one of the world's largest freshwater surveys, covering the entire range of the Ganges river dolphin in the Ganga and Brahmaputra, as well as the Indus river dolphin in the Beas river, according to the report "Population Status of River



Dolphin in India"

The survey estimated 6,327 Ganges river dolphins (range: 5,977-6,688) and three Indus river dolphins. The findings sug-

gest that dolphins thrive in areas with adequate water depth and minimal human disturbances, it said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced

The Ganges River dolphin, known for its unique features, is found in the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna river system and its tributaries across India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan

A small population of the Indus river dolphin, a close relative of the Ganges river dolphin, is found in the Indus River system in India

Project Dolphin August 15, 2020, to conserve dolphins and other aquatic ecosystems. Monitoring dolphin populations is crucial for conser-

vation, especially for river dolphins, which have a slow growth rate and live in some of the world's most threatened habitats.

The survey covering over 8,000 km was conducted from 2021 to 2023. It included eight states - along the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers and their tributaries, as well as the Beas river. During the survey, 58 rivers were assessed. Of these, 28 rivers were actively surveyed by boat, while 30 were studied through road surveys, focusing on locations where the Ganges river dolphin had been historically reported.

national



MILD SNOW IN PARTS OF HP
Isolated places and higher reaches of Chamba, Kullu, and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh recorded mild snowfall Monday, the local Met office said

MILD SNOW IN PARTS OF HP

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of the day uote

This government did not dare make a mention of the resolution that it had claimed was for the restoration of Article 370

MEHBOOBA MUFTI | PDP SUPREMO

In the last Assembly session (in Srinagar), we had a long list headed by former prime minister A B Vajpayee and now after four months, we have a short list headed by another former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who has made an immense contribution for the country

OMAR ABULLAH | J&K CM

I urge the chief secretary to introduce real-time tracking of applications. He should monitor this every fortnight. Interested industry captains may also join this effort by giving prior intimation

MAMATA BANERJEE | WB CM

BJP, AAP clash over CAG reports in Delhi Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The ruling AAP and BJP slug it out over a discussion on the CAG report on public health infra in the city, on the last day of the first session of the newly constituted Delhi Assembly, with Speaker Vijender Gupta marshalling out three opposition MLAs.



The AAP MLA Jarnail Singh was marshalled out by the Speaker as he raised slogans over BJP's promise to pay ₹2,500 to women of Delhi after coming to power when Chief Minister Rekha Gupta was speaking. The remaining AAP MLAs including Leader of Opposition Atishi walked out after that. Earlier, the Speaker marshalled out AAP MLAs Anil Jha and Kuldeep Kumar over using "unparliamentary" language during the discussion.

Gupta later on told PTI that any member marshalled out or suspended from the House would be required to leave the Assembly premises immediately. If such a member does not leave the Assembly premises, then he or she will be automatically suspended for the rest of the time period of the session.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report regarding public health infrastructure and the management of health services in Delhi was tabled in the Assembly on February 28.

As the tensions flared during the discussion, the Speaker directed marshals to take out AAP MLA Anil Jha for using "unparliamentary" language. Jha made comments while BJP MLA Ashok Goel was slamming the previous AAP government over the condition of health services under its rule.



Devotees dressed as Lord Hanuman take part in a religious procession organised by Sri Hanuman Chalisa Parivar Society in Amritsar, Punjab

Mayawati expels nephew Akash Anand from BSP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, March 3: A day after removing her nephew Akash Anand from all key posts, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati Monday said she has expelled him from the party "in the interest and movement" of the party.

Mayawati said that Akash's response to her action against him Sunday was "selfish and arrogant". In a BSP meeting Sunday, Akash was relieved from all responsibilities as he was under the continuous influence of his father-in-law Ashok Siddharth, more than the interest of the party, for which he should "repent and show his maturity", she said.

"But on the contrary, the lengthy response given by Shri Akash is not a sign of his remorse and political maturity, but is mostly selfish, arrogant and non-missionary under the influence of his father-in-law," Mayawati said in a post on X in Hindi.

"Therefore, in the interest of the self-respect and self-esteem of the movement of the most revered Baba Saheb Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar and following the tradition of discipline of Manaywar Shri Kanishram ji, Shri Akash Anand, like his father-in-law, is expelled from the party in the interest of the party and the movement," Mayawati said.

ED's show cause notice to Paytm

The show cause notice has been issued to Paytm's flagship company One 97 Communication limited (OCL), its managing director and other Paytm subsidiaries such as Little Internet Pvt Ltd and Nearbuy India Pvt Ltd for "contraventions" of the provisions of the FEMA to the tune of around ₹611 crore, the ED said in a statement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: The Enforcement Directorate Monday said it has issued a notice to Paytm's parent company, its MD and linked entities for "contravention" of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) involving ₹611 crore.

According to Paytm's annual report for the financial year 2024, the fintech major's founder, Vijay Shekhar Sharma, is its chairman, managing director (MD) and chief executive officer.

The notice has been issued by a special director of the federal agency after the completion of an investigation and before the initiation of adjudication proceedings under the said law. A Paytm spokesperson said the company was working to resolve the matter in accordance with applicable laws and regulatory processes.

The show cause notice has been issued to Paytm's flagship company One 97 Communication limited (OCL), its managing director and other Paytm subsidiaries such as Little Internet Pvt Ltd and Nearbuy India Pvt Ltd for "contraventions" of the provisions of the FEMA to the tune of around ₹611 crore, the ED



said in a statement. Investigations found that OCL made foreign investments in Singapore and "did not" file necessary reporting to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the creation of an overseas step-down subsidiary, it said. The company had "also received foreign direct investment (FDI) from overseas investors without following proper pricing guidelines stipulated by the RBI", it alleged.

The ED said OCL's subsidiary company in India - Little Internet Pvt Ltd - received FDI from overseas investors "without following" the pricing guidelines stipulated by the RBI. The other subsidiary - Nearbuy India Pvt Ltd - "did not" report the FDI received by the company within the time frame prescribed by the RBI, it said.

In a regulatory filing made on Saturday (March 1), Paytm said it received a notice from the ED for alleged violation of certain FEMA rules by the company and its two subsidiaries- Little Internet and Nearbuy - with respect to certain investment transactions.

Later, Paytm clarified that the alleged breach pertains to the period when the two companies were not its subsidiaries. It acquired the two companies in 2017.

According to the breakup shared by the company, OCL transactions amounting to over ₹245 crore, LIPL's about ₹345 crore, and NIPL's about ₹21 crore have been listed in the alleged breach. "The alleged contraventions relate to certain investment transactions relating to OCL, LIPL and NIPL", it stated.

In a statement, a Paytm spokesperson said, "We are working towards resolving the matter in accordance with applicable laws and regulatory processes. We remain committed to strengthening processes in adherence and upholding the highest standards of compliance and governance". The company's shares plunged more than 4 per cent following the reports of the ED notice.

Patanjali University hosts annual festival 'Abhyudaya'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Haridwar (Uttarakhand) March 3: Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan Sunday hailed Baba Ramdev's Patanjali as a future global solutions center, emphasising its growing influence in healthcare and education.

Speaking as the Chief Guest at the annual festival 'Abhyudaya' at Patanjali University, he praised the institution's role in nation-building and its contribution to India's knowledge traditions.

Pradhan described Patanjali not merely as an organisation but as a movement representing Indian values. He commended Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna for revitalising yoga and Ayurveda, transforming them into mass movements. On the occasion, Ramdev, Chancellor of the university, and Acharya Balkrishna, Vice-Chancellor, honoured Pradhan with a Certificate of Honour.

Highlighting the significance of the National Education Policy, Pradhan acknowledged Patanjali's role in preserving and promoting Indian education through the Indian Education Board. Addressing students, he remarked that choosing Patanjali University for education was akin to choosing India itself. During the event, Ramdev expressed his vision of making Patanjali University a global institution surpassing Oxford and Cambridge.



Vice Chancellor Acharya Balkrishna delivered the welcome address, highlighting the university's research and contributions through the Patanjali Research Foundation. Uttarakhand's Higher Education Minister Dhan Singh Rawat, attending as a distinguished guest, praised Patanjali's advancements in research and development. As part of 'Abhyudaya,' winners of sports competitions were awarded medals, and students delivered captivating cultural performances. The event was attended by Dr NP Singh, Executive Chairman of the Indian Education Board; Prof Sadhvi Devpriya, Pro-Chancellor and Festival Convener; Prof Mayank Kumar Agarwal, Pro-Vice-Chancellor; Dr Satyendra Mittal, Director of Distance Education; Alok Kumar Singh, Registrar; Swami Arshadev, Proctor; along with deans, department heads, and other distinguished guests.

POST OF THE DAY

Stock market is bleeding. Investors lost 9 lakh crores. The fall is worse than covid. Market broke 28 years' record and fell for 5 straight months. Meanwhile Indian PM is busy enjoying nature safari with fancy dress and a group of cameras.

SHORT TAKES

'IIT Baba' arrested with ganja in hotel

Jaipur: 'IIT Baba' Abhay Singh, who burst into the limelight during the Maha Kumbh, was arrested from a hotel in the Shiprapath area with a small quantity of ganja, police here said Monday. He was later granted bail, they added. Shiprapath SHO Rajendra Kumar Godara said the police received information about a video purporting to show Singh threatening to commit suicide becoming widely circulated on social media. Acting on the information, the police reached the spot and questioned Singh. During the questioning, a small quantity of ganja was found with him, Godara said.

Murder accused nabbed in Delhi

New Delhi: A criminal wanted in a murder case was arrested after a police encounter near Prem Bari nala in northwest Delhi, officials said Monday. Two other accused were later arrested based on his input, they said. Sahil (22) fired at a police team when confronted, leading the officers to retaliate in self-defence. Sahil suffered a bullet injury on his right knee and was subsequently apprehended, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Bhisham Singh said.

Urologist George P Abraham found dead

Kochi: Renowned urologist George P Abraham was found dead at his farmhouse in Nedumbassery, police said Monday. He was 75. The senior surgeon's body was found hanging at his farmhouse, which falls under the Nedumbassery police station limits, Sunday night. Abraham, a distinguished expert in the surgical management of complex urological disorders, was affiliated with a leading private hospital in Kochi. According to hospital sources, Abraham had personally conducted over 3,600 renal transplant procedures.

State of school education crying for attention

Spectacles sparkle. The glitzy, blitzy, eye-blinding, extravaganza that had India in thrall. The crushing rush for a momentary dip to cleanse body and soul. The never ending stream of religious fervor from the Ram temple to the Mahakumbh and on to the next one, possibly still in the works.....all designed for 'deliverance' of the majority.

With the arch-lamps having been momentarily switched off and the booming 21-gun salute of the 'media' artillery subsiding, there are many mundane tasks crying for attention. The state of school education is one of them.

According to the data released by the Ministry of Education, the enrolment of students has dropped by over a crore in 2023-24. In 2018-19 the total enrolment of students in school was 26.02 crore which increased in 2019-20 by 1.6 per cent and crossed 26.45 crore. A total of 24.8 crore students enrolled in the academic year 2023-24, the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE) report of the ministry stated.

The states which saw the highest drop in enrolments were Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra. In 2018-19 Bihar had an enrolment of over 2.49

crore students which dropped to over 2.13 crore (a fall of 35.65 lakh students). Uttar Pradesh had an enrolment of 4.44 crore students in 2018-19 which fell to 4.16 crore (a fall of 28.26 lakh students). In the case of Maharashtra which had 2.13 crore students the fall over the same period was to 2.13 crore-less by 18.55 lakh students.

A day before the budget 2025-26 February 2,2025, the union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the Economic Survey 2024-25 in Parliament, which stated that India's school education

system serves 24.8 crore students across 14.72 lakh schools with 98 lakh teachers (UDISE+ 2023-24). Government schools make up 69 per cent of the total, enrolling 50 per cent of students and employing 51 per cent of teachers, while private schools account for 22.5 per cent enrolling 32.6 per cent of students and employing 38 per cent of teachers.

This year's education sector allocation has been pitched for a 6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocation of ₹1,28,650.05 crore marking a 6.65 per cent increase over the previous year. "The allocation for school education is ₹ 78,572 crore which is the highest ever for the department." "There has been an



overall increase of ₹5,074 crores (7 per cent) in the budget allocation for the department of School Education and Literacy in 2025-26 as compared to the previous year", union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan has stated for the record.

"Window dressing is all fine, but the situation on the ground mirrors an altogether different story", says Dr Manish Doshi of the Congress. The ministry of education which released reports of school education in 2022-23 and 2023-24 together December 30, 2024, well behind schedule, paints a grim picture. The report attributes no reason for the fall but the inference is that the weeding of bogus students and the correction of outdated records, thanks to the installation of a new digital database system has led to it. Sources in the know aver that the fall has been over two consecutive academic years while the

so-called correction of records have been going on for long. The Prime Minister's own home state of Gujarat mirrors the decline avidly.

According to the recently released Social Economic Review of Gujarat 2024-25 the total number of primary schools have declined by 1000 in the last five years, the highest decline being recorded in those run by local bodies-from 31,337 in 2019-20 to 30,626 in 2023-24. Similarly in the case of primary schools, their numbers in the state have fallen from 45,315 in 2019-20 to 44,288 in 2023-24. So has the enrollment from 86.14 lakh to 78.47 lakh. There is a noticeable decline in the number of sanctioned seats from 1.85 lakh in 2020-21 to 1.22 lakh in 202-25. Similarly in diploma courses the number of students have declined from 1.87 lakh in 2020-21 to 1.17 lakh in 2024-25.

There is more troubling news for Gujarat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's model state trails the likes of Manipur, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, by a mile in education. This fact is revealed by the sustainable development report-2024 of the Niti Aayog. Kerala tops with 82, followed by Haryana and Himachal Pradesh 77 each with Gujarat getting just 58 which is less than West Bengal,

Jharkhand and Rajasthan. All this despite the fact that from the time when Modi helmed the state, Gujarat had been running a programme called "Shaala Praveshotsav" wherein the might of the bureaucracy and the elected wing of the government fan out all over the state to enroll students in school.

In hindsight the spectacle seems to have abysmally failed in achieving its objective for the net enrolment rate in Class I-VIII in the state is 89 per cent while Arunachal Pradesh and Assam had cent per cent followed by Andhra Pradesh with 96.9 per cent. It is not enrolment alone which is faltering, the drop out ratio in secondary classes is not much to talk about either. Gujarat stands at 17.9 per cent as compared to Kerala with a mere 5.5 per cent, and Haryana at 5.9 per cent. As of December 2023, a total of 1606 government-run primary schools in the state had only one teacher. In 2019, 36 per cent of the 7.29 lakh students who appeared in the Class X board examinations failed in their mother tongue Gujarati in Gujarat. There has been improvement ever since. Last year the failure rate in Gujarati was only 9 per cent of 5.9 lakh students. Thank God for small mercies!



Our administration is waiting to see if US President Donald Trump makes good on his threat to impose 25% tariffs on Mexican imports
CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

JAPAN FIGHTS FOREST FIRE

Japan is fighting a forest fire that has damaged dozens of homes and forced hundreds of residents to evacuate in a northeastern coastal city. The fire has burned about 2,100 hectares (5,190 acres) of forest in Ofunato since it started Wednesday



of the day quote

We are trying to reach an agreement on the opposition's thinking and we have talked about the release of political prisoners in the conference because issues in the country are through the Constitution and principles,



SHAHID KHAQAN ABBASI | EX-PM, PAKISTAN

Under the severe security environment, nuclear deterrence is indispensable to defend the people's lives and assets, as well as Japan's sovereignty and peace



YOSHIMASA HAYASHI | CHIEF CABINET SECRETARY, JAPAN

I am now deeply worried by the fundamental shift in direction that is taking place domestically and internationally. Divisive rhetoric is being used to distort, deceive and polarize. This is generating fear and anxiety among many



VOLKER TURK | UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

SHORT TAKES

1 hurt in firing at Pak-Afghan border

Peshawar: An exchange of firing between Pakistani and Afghan security forces at the Torkham border overnight left one civilian from Pakistan injured after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on reopening the crossing, which has been closed for more than a week. According to security sources, the exchange of firing left a civilian injured on the Pakistani side of the border. The security situation caused panic amongst people who have been waiting for the reopening of the border, which remained closed for the 11th day Monday. The truckers association also asked all vehicle owners to vacate the border after heavy artillery firing from both sides.

Top court upholds Khaleda's acquittal

Dhaka: Bangladesh's Supreme Court Monday upheld a High Court ruling that acquitted former premier and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia in a corruption case in which she was sentenced to seven years in jail by a lower court. A three-member Appellate Division bench headed by Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam passed the order, dismissing the plea filed by the state and the Anti-Corruption Commission challenging the High Court verdict that acquitted Zia and others, the state-run BSS news agency reported. Zia, 79, was convicted in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case in 2018 by a Dhaka court. The court sentenced her to seven years imprisonment and fined her Taka 1 million.

UKRAINE-RUSSIA WAR

France floats one-month truce

European countries, led by Britain and France, are looking at options for a peace proposal including Ukraine after last week's Oval Office rupture between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy



REUTERS

London/Paris, March 3: Britain said Monday there were several possible proposals on the table for a possible Ukraine ceasefire, after France floated a proposal for a month-long initial truce that could pave the way for peace talks.

"There are clearly a number of options on the table," Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokesman said. "I'm just not getting into a running commentary on the options."

European countries, led by Britain and France, are looking at options for a peace proposal including Ukraine after last week's Oval Office rupture between US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Starmer hosted a summit of European leaders in London Sunday and said European leaders had agreed to draw up a Ukraine peace plan to present to the United States.

In an interview given on his way to the summit, French

President Emmanuel Macron raised the possibility of a one-month ceasefire, although so far there has been no public endorsement from other allies.

"Such a truce on air, sea and energy infrastructure would allow us to determine whether Russian President Vladimir Putin is acting in good faith when he commits to a truce," French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Monday of Macron's proposal.

"And that's when real peace negotiations could start."

Zelenskyy, asked if he was aware of the plan for a month-long truce mentioned by Macron, told reporters in London, "I'm aware of everything."

France, Britain and potentially other European countries have offered to send troops to Ukraine in the event of a ceasefire, but say they would want support in some form from the US, a proposal referred to as a "backstop".

Zelenskyy says a ceasefire must come with explicit security

- Trump-Zelenskyy clash has increased sense of urgency
- France says one-month truce would provide opportunity to see if Putin is serious
- Germany's says Oval Office clash was not spontaneous
- European Union to unveil proposal to boost defence spending

guarantees from the West to ensure Russia, which invaded Ukraine three years ago and holds about 20% of its territory, does not attack again. Trump has refused to give any such guarantees.

MERZ SAYS OVAL OFFICE CLASH 'NOT SPONTANEOUS'

Friedrich Merz, the conservative due to become Germany's chancellor after winning the largest share of the vote in an election a week ago, suggested Friday's Oval Office argument was a trap set in advance for the Ukrainian leader.

"It was not a spontaneous

IMPASSE OVER CEASEFIRE

Israeli fire kills 2 Palestinians



REUTERS

Cairo, March 3: Israeli fire killed at least two people in Rafah and injured three others in Khan Younis in the south of Gaza, raising fears among Palestinians that the ceasefire could collapse altogether after Israel imposed a total blockade on the shattered enclave.

A first phase of a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas that began in January ended over the weekend with no agreement on what will happen next.

Hamas says an agreed second phase must now begin, leading to a permanent Israeli withdrawal and an end to the

- Mediators make effort to salvage the ceasefire deal
- Israel imposes blockade on all supplies to Gaza
- Hamas says Israel pushes things into square zero
- Gaza stores emptied and price of sack of flour more than doubles

war. Israel has instead offered a temporary extension into April, with Hamas to release more hostages in return for Palestinian detainees, without immediate talks on Gaza's future.

Later Monday, Hamas official Osama Hamdan said Israel's demand to extend the first phase of the ceasefire was pushing things back to "square zero".

"The mediators and guarantors bear full responsibility for preventing (Israeli Prime Minister) Netanyahu from sabotaging all efforts made to reach the agreement and for protecting the agreement from collapsing," said Hamdan in a news conference.



A carnival float depicts US President Donald Trump, surrounded by flames with the words 'Annexations, tariffs, climate destruction, mass deportations' written on them, during the traditional Rose Monday carnival parade in Dusseldorf, Germany

2 dead after car drives into crowd in German city

REUTERS

Mannheim, Germany, March 3: A car drove into a crowd in the western German city of Mannheim Monday, killing at least two people and seriously injuring several others, local media reported, overshadowing carnival celebrations in the region where police had been on alert for attacks.

Police detained the car's driver and later said he had acted alone, with no broader threat seen for the public.

The suspect is a 40-year-old German man from the neighbouring state of Rhineland-Palatinate, broadcaster SWR reported, citing the state interior minister of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Thomas Strobl.

The ministry did not immediately reply to an emailed request for comment.

People were seen lying on the ground at the scene and at least two were being resuscitated, a witness told Reuters.

It was unclear whether the driver acted deliberately or if there was any connection to Germany's carnival celebrations, which culminated on Rose Monday with a number of parades, although not in Mannheim, which held its main event Sunday.

Police declined to comment on the suspect's identity, saying this was a focus of their investigation. Security has been a key concern in Germany following a string of violent attacks in recent weeks, including deadly car rammings in Magdeburg in December and in Munich last month, as well as a stabbing in Mannheim in May 2024.



Ancient burnout remedy still at heart of Greece's carnival

In the mountain village of Distomo, the 'Koudounaraioi' — literally, the 'Bell People' — transform themselves into half-human, half-beast revelers in a ritual dating back to pre-Christian times

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Distomo (Greece), March 3: Feeling overwhelmed by everyday obligations or doom-scrolling? The ancient Greeks had a remedy for burnout still practised annually by their rural descendants.

In the mountain village of Distomo, the "Koudounaraioi"

— literally, the "Bell People" — transform themselves into half-human, half-beast revelers in a ritual dating back to pre-Christian times.

Clad in sheep and goatskins with heavy hand-forged bronze bells chained to their waists, the Bell People danced through the streets Monday of this red-roofed village, a two-hour drive northwest of Athens.

The deafening clatter the dancers make and their profanity-filled chants as they bound around a fire in the main square are a wine-fuelled sonic assault. And that's the point.

Hedonistic carnival traditions across the Greek heartland and islands trace back to the ecstatic processions in ancient times honouring Dionysus, the god of wine, fertility

ANIMAL SKINS, BELLS, RITUAL CHAOS



and revelry and were then, as now, a cultural pressure valve.

"We give society a jolt ... and try to take away their misfortunes, their problems, to lift their spirits so they can feel

something," said Giorgos Papiouannou, a 29-year-old aluminium plant worker known during carnival as president of Distomo's Bell People.

"We even visit cemeteries,

making noise to wake up' the souls of those who have passed, reminding them and the living alike that we are here, celebrating life," he said.

The ancient tradition practised by farming communities to usher in spring was eventually incorporated into the Christian calendar. Monday marks the end of carnival and the start of Lent, a period of dietary restrictions and increased religious observance before Easter, which this year falls April 20.

Distomo is known to Greeks as a symbol of wartime hardship. In June 1944, occupying Nazi forces slaughtered 230 civilian villagers, including more than 50 children in reprisals for attacks by resistance fighters.

An austere World War II mausoleum overlooks

the village.

"After the massacre, we managed to keep the tradition alive. It's to awaken the spring," Distomo Mayor Ioannis Stathas said. "This is a tradition that is many centuries old, a pre-Christian tradition, and it has been carried from generation to generation."

This year's Bell People, many of them schoolchildren, held up flares and olive-wreaths as they entered the village, trailed by giggling children and their parents dressed up as dinosaurs, police officers and other carnival costumes.

Revelers were handed plastic cups filled with wine and portions of bean soup, as children danced to a mix of Greek folk music, Western chart hits and K-pop.



Gold will remain relevant for investors as a portfolio diversification mechanism with a likely ascending importance as an asset class in the coming years
V ANANTHA NAGESWARAN | CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISOR

RUPEE SETTLES 5 PAISE HIGHER

The rupee settled with a gain of 5 paise at 87.32 against the US dollar Monday as the weakening of the US dollar against major currencies supported investor sentiments. According to forex traders, investors' upbeat sentiment was restricted due to volatile domestic equity markets and unabated withdrawal of foreign funds. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 87.36 and moved in a wide range during the session, touching the intraday high of 87.25 and the low of 87.41 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 87.32 against the dollar, registering a gain of 5 paise from its previous closing level



of the day quote

We are calling 2025 the year of 'Progressive Performance' for us... we want to make sure that we continue to grow in the Indian market. We want to make sure that we take the brand even higher up in terms of customer accessibility in terms of awareness and also in terms of brand image



We had a record-breaking year in 2024, with unprecedented signings and strong business performance in South Asia, underscoring the region's immense growth potential. With a robust pipeline of openings, we remain committed to driving economic impact, creating job opportunities and supporting local economies



India also needs a centralized digital verification system where licensed foreign manufacturers register and upload details of all BIS-certified shipments. This would allow customs officials to verify shipments in real time before clearing imports



Mfg sector growth slips to 14-mth low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a 14-month low in February amid softer increase in new orders and production, a monthly survey said Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) registered 56.3 in February, down from 57.7 in January, but remained firmly within the 'expansionary' territory.



purchase activity and hire extra workers. "Business expectations also remained very strong, with nearly one-third of survey participants foreseeing greater output volumes in the year ahead," Bhandari said. On the job front, manufacturers continued to expand their workforce numbers in February. The rate of job creation was the second-best in the series' history, behind only that recorded in January. "One-in ten firms signalled greater recruitment activity, while 1 per cent of companies shed jobs," the survey said. According to the survey, February witnessed the slowest rise in cost burdens in a year, but demand buoyancy kept charge inflation at an elevated level. The HSBC India Manu-

facturing PMI is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers. On the domestic macroeconomic front, the Indian economy grew by 6.2 per cent in the December quarter, recovering sequentially from seven-quarter lows, but the expansion came in lower than last year. For the full 2024-25 fiscal (April 2024 to March 2025), the government now pegs GDP growth at 6.5 per cent, marginally higher than its initial estimate of 6.4 per cent but below the revised growth rate of 9.2 per cent for 2023-24. The growth in the current fiscal and less than 7 per cent expected in the next will keep India as the fastest-expanding major economy.

Gold prices rise by ₹200 to ₹87,900

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Gold prices rose by ₹200 to ₹87,900 per 10 grams in the national capital Monday amid fresh buying by jewellers and retailers and a weak rupee, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at ₹87,700 per 10 grams Friday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced by ₹200 to ₹87,500 per 10 grams. It had settled at ₹87,300 per 10 grams in the previous market close. Additionally, silver prices also went up by ₹100 to ₹96,500 per kg. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for April delivery jumped ₹698 to ₹84,917 per 10 grams.

"Gold remained positive after last week's 1.60 per cent profit booking. The fresh upside comes as global uncertainty persists, with tensions between US and Ukraine leaders over deal negotiations," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities.

Further, Trivedi stated that ongoing tariff concerns and dollar volatility continue to support gold as a safe-haven asset. However, any positive developments in Russia-Ukraine relations or global trade tariffs could pressure prices.

Also, silver futures for May contracts surged by ₹1,193 or 1.26 per cent to ₹95,521 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

FDI drops 5.6% to \$10.9bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Foreign direct investment in India dipped by 5.6 per cent year-on-year to USD 10.9 billion in October-December quarter of this fiscal due to global economic uncertainties, according to the government data.

FDI inflows during October-December 2023-24 stood at USD 11.55 billion.

According to the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) data, in the July-September quarter of the current fiscal, the inflows were up by about 43 per cent year-on-year to USD 13.6 billion and had increased 47.8 per cent annually to USD 16.17 billion in the preceding April-June quarter. Cumulatively, during the April-December 2024-25, the inflows registered a growth of 27 per cent to USD 40.67 billion as against USD 32 billion in the same period of 2023-24.

Total FDI, which includes equity inflows, reinvested earnings and other capital, grew by 21.3 per cent to USD 62.48 billion during the first nine months of this fiscal from USD 51.5 billion in April-December 2023-24.

During the April-December 2024-25, FDI equity inflows rose from major countries, including Singapore (USD 12 billion against USD 7.44 billion), the US (USD 3.73 billion against USD 2.83 billion), the Netherlands (USD 4 billion against USD 2.27 billion), the UAE (USD 4.14 billion against USD



2.43 billion), Cayman Islands (USD 296 million against USD 215 million) and Cyprus (USD 1.18 billion against USD 796 million). However, inflows declined from Mauritius, Japan, the UK, and Germany.

Sectorally, inflows rose in services, computer software and hardware, trading, telecommunication, automobile, and chemicals.

FDI in services has increased to USD 7.22 billion during the first nine months of the current financial year as against USD 5.18 billion in the same period last year.

As per the data, FDI inflows in non-conventional energy stood at USD 3.5 billion.

The data also showed that Maharashtra received the highest inflow of USD 16.65 billion during April-December 2024-25. It was followed by Karnataka (USD 4.5 billion), and Gujarat (about USD 5.56 billion).

BIZ BUZZ

Union Bank of India's MSME outreach



BHUBANESWAR: An MSME Outreach Programme was organised by Union Bank of India, Regional Office, Bhubaneswar at World Skill Centre, Mancheswar Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar. Gokula Nanda Mallick, Minister of MSME, Govt. of Odisha, AK Vinod, Chief General Manager, Union Bank of India, Sarvesh Ranjan, General Manager and Zonal Head, Union Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Zone, Niranjana Barik, Deputy General Manager and Regional Head, Union Bank of India, Bhubaneswar Region were present on this occasion. The main purpose of the programme was to reach out to MSME customers and make them aware about MSME products of the Bank along with latest initiatives of Govt. of Odisha prioritising MSME Sector. Mallick distributed sanction letters to prospective MSME customers. More than 250 customers attended the programme.

Bank of India opens Trisulia branch

BHUBANESWAR: Bank of India, Trisulia Branch, Bhubaneswar Zone, was inaugurated by the General Manager FGMO Bhubaneswar, Vikas Krishna. The event was graced by the presence of Zonal Manager, Bhubaneswar Zone Bijoy Kumar Malik and Deputy Zonal Manager Ashok Kumar Jena. Following the inauguration, Vikas Krishna addressed the staff, offering insightful guidance and shared his invaluable perspectives on banking excellence and customer service.



No let-up: Nifty declines for 9th session

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 3: Benchmark BSE Sensex declined by 112 points while Nifty fell for the ninth straight session Monday following selling in blue-chips HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

In a see-saw trade, the 30-share BSE benchmark declined by 112.16 points or 0.15 per cent to close at 73,085.94 as 18 of its components advanced and 12 declined.

The index opened higher but soon fell to the day's low of 72,784.54 due to intense selling in large caps. The barometer staged a rebound in the second half amid positive Asian markets and hit a high of 73,649.72 before paring gains to close down.

Extending losses to the ninth session, the NSE Nifty slipped 5.40 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 22,119.30. The index slumped 120 points or 0.54 per cent to hit a low of 22,004.70 but later recovered most of the losses.

From the Sensex pack, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports, Maruti Suzuki India, Axis Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharmaceuticals and Asian Paints were among the laggards. Reliance Industries fell the



most by 2.38 per cent to close at ₹1,171.10 apiece. During the day, it went down by 3.63 per cent to hit a 52-week low of ₹1,156 per piece.

UltraTech Cement, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro and State Bank of India were the gainers.

"The market experienced a gradual recovery from its intraday low, driven by improving economic growth, a rebound in consumption expenditure, and healthy expansion in the agricultural sector, which influenced investor sentiment. With valuations approaching oversold levels, domestic indicators suggest the potential for a rebound," Vinod Nair, Head of Research,

Geojit Financial Services.

Global uncertainties and sustained foreign fund outflows continue to keep market participants cautious, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.70 per cent, however, midcap index went up 0.25 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, Energy (1.11 per cent), Financial Services (0.54 per cent), Bankex (0.28 per cent), Oil & Gas (0.50 per cent), and Services (0.49 per cent) were the losers.

On the other hand, Capital Goods, Power, Consumer Durables, Realty, Commodities, Teck, Focussed IT, Utilities and Metal were among the gainers. As many as 2,852 stocks de-

clined while 1,235 advanced and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Shares of Coffee Day Enterprises which owns the Cafe Coffee Day chain, surged 20 per cent to hit its upper circuit limit after the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) set aside the insolvency proceedings against the company.

"Indian benchmark indices ended on a muted note, with the Nifty 50 ending at 22,119.30 and the BSE Sensex ending at 73,176.25. However, there was a slight recovery from the intraday low, influenced by economic growth. Investors still remain cautious amid the ongoing US tariff uncertainty," Ameya Ranadive Chartered Market Technician, CFTe, Sr Technical Analyst, StoxBox, said.

In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong ended in green, while Shanghai in red. Seoul stock markets were closed due to a holiday.

European markets were trading in the positive territory in the mid-session deals. The US markets ended positive Friday.

Meanwhile, global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.58 per cent to USD 72.39 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹11,639.02 crore Friday, according to exchange data.

Bitcoin jumps 20% after Trump hints at new strategic reserve

REUTERS

Singapore, March 3: Bitcoin surged more than 20% from last week's lows Monday and several other cryptocurrencies also rallied sharply after US President Donald Trump raised the possibility of a new US strategic reserve that would include a range of tokens.

Trump said in a post on Truth Social that his January executive order on digital assets would create a stockpile of currencies, including bitcoin, ether, XRP, solana and cardano. The names had not previously been announced.

Bitcoin and ether will be at the heart of this reserve, he posted Sunday.

The post sent the world's largest cryptocurrency up by a fifth from the November lows it was trading at on Friday, helping flip sentiment on a token that has been sliding since mid-January on disappointment Trump had not followed through on

pledges to loosen regulation.

It was last at around \$91,605, up from Friday's low of \$78,273.

Ether was also up 20% from Friday's lows to \$2,351, a 7% drop from Sunday's closing levels. XRP and solana were up around 30% from Friday's lowest levels, while cardano was up 60% from last week's lows.

"Trump just gave the pump that crypto traders have been holding out for," said Matt Simpson, senior market analyst at City Index.

"Any faith that was lost last week appears to have been restored," and new highs could be made unless there was another wave of risk-off selling, he said. Bitcoin and ether will be at the heart of this reserve, he posted Sunday.

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Chris Weston, head of research at Pepperstone, said it was possible the rally will extend into the first White House Crypto Summit that Trump is hosting Friday, with the risk that the bearishness in other markets could weigh on sentiment.

While Wall Street closed higher Friday, the recent selloff in large technology bellwethers such as Nvidia has eroded confidence in bitcoin, which some see as an alternative tech proxy. Bitcoin fell more than 17% in February, clocking its biggest monthly percentage fall since June 2022 and losing more than a third of its price since topping \$105,000 in early January.

Its rally since Trump's November election was spurred by optimism that the crypto-friendly president would champion a strategic bitcoin fund and end the previous Joe Biden administration's crackdown on the industry.

"Ironically, a currency that was designed to be isolated

from government interference and decentralized, is now reliant on the US government for its fortunes," Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB said, reiterating that the \$100,000 level an "obvious target" for bitcoin.

Beyond a flurry of appointments of crypto-friendly officials when Trump took office, there has been little concrete news so far around that policy for investors.

"While this announcement has significantly boosted prices, it has also raised concerns," wrote IG market analyst Tony Sycamore.

The funding for cryptocurrency purchases in the reserve could either come from US taxpayers or the cryptocurrencies in the asset will be those seized in law enforcement actions, he said.

"The latter isn't anywhere near as bullish as it simply represents a transfer between accounts rather than new buying entering the market."

India look to spin a new tale

Sports Min slams Shama for remark on Rohit



It is going to be a good game. Australia has a rich history of playing well in ICC tournaments. Now, it's about us to do things right

ROHIT SHARMA | SKIPPER, INDIA

also robbed the already creaking Australian bowling unit of a handy spin option.

The absence of premier names was felt in the previous matches as the Aussie bowlers conceded 352 and 273 against England and Afghanistan respectively, albeit in better batting conditions.

Hence, the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill will be eager to go full throttle at them here. They have found the perfect rhythm of batting on these sluggish tracks here.

Skipper Rohit hoped as much.

But he will not be unaware of the batting might the Auss-



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya Monday lashed out at Congress spokesperson Shama Mohamed for questioning India captain Rohit Sharma's captaincy and fitness levels, terming it "deeply shameful" and "outright pathetic."

Her remarks came after Rohit was dismissed for 15 runs off 17 balls during India's Champions Trophy match against New Zealand Sunday.

Training his gun on the Congress spokesperson, Mandaviya wrote on 'X', "Congress and TMC should leave sports persons alone as they are fully capable of handling their professional lives."

"Remarks made by leaders from these parties, indulging in body shaming and questioning an athlete's place in the team, are not only deeply shameful but also outright pathetic."

In the midst of the widespread backlash that her remark on the T20 World Cup winning captain drew, Mandaviya added, "Such comments undermine the hard work and sacrifices that our sports persons make to represent the country on the global stage."

Shama caused a stir on social media with her controversial post directed at the Indian captain.

Acknowledging her comments were out of line, Congress asked Shama to delete the post from her 'X' account.

In her now-deleted post, Shama, she wrote, "Rohit Sharma is fat for a sportsman! Need to lose weight! And of course the most unimpressive Captain India has ever had!"

BCCI secretary slams Shama

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia Monday slammed Congress spokesperson Shama Mohamed for questioning India captain Rohit Sharma's captaincy credentials and fitness levels, saying it was very unfortunate for a responsible person to pass such a trivial comment in the middle of the national team's Champions Trophy campaign. "Very unfortunate for a responsible person to pass such a trivial comment when the team is in the midst of such a marquee ICC tournament. It may have demoralizing effect on an individual or the team," Saikia told PTI. "All the players are performing to their highest potential and results are visible. I hope individuals shall desist from making such derogatory statements for personal publicity sake at the cost of National Interest," he added. Shama caused a stir on social media with a controversial post directed at the Indian captain. Acknowledging her comments were out of line, Congress asked Shama to delete the post from her 'X' account. In her now-deleted post, Shama said Rohit is "fat for a sportsman". "Need to lose weight! And of course the most unimpressive Captain India has ever had!"

India have reached the semi-finals of the Champions Trophy and play Australia in the semi-final in Dubai on Tuesday. They beat New Zealand by 44 runs on Sunday to top their group.

Meanwhile, former India seamer Venkatesh Prasad also slammed Shama.

"Rohit has maintained great dignity as a captain, led us to a T20 WC win 8 months back, and in the middle of an ICC tournament, body-shaming him is absolutely pathetic and uncalled for," Prasad tweeted.

"Should have some respect for a person who has achieved through his skills and leadership for so many years," Prasad added.

Men in Blue to face Australia in the Champions Trophy 2025 semi-final showdown seeking revenge for their 2023 World Cup final loss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, March 3: History weighs heavily against them but India would rely on a potent spin battery and familiarity with the conditions to break the knockout jinx against an undermanned Australia when the two formidable cricket forces clash in the Champions Trophy semifinal here Tuesday.

It will not be a straightforward task, though, as the Aussies are a resilient beast in global tournaments even without their lead cast of Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc.

Their stunning chase of 352 against England at Lahore a few days back validates the thought.

The last time India triumphed against Australia in the knockout stage of an ICC

event was way back in 2011 World Cup quarterfinal.

India lost to Australia in the semifinals of the 2015 ODI World Cup and in the title clash of the 2023 ODI World Cup before succumbing to them in the World Test Championship final in 2023. This Indian side will realistically hope to rewrite that largely melancholic script over the last 14 years and the primary reason for that optimism is the presence of some top of the line spinners in their ranks.

Their pre-tournament decision to fill the squad with five spinners drew a lot of flak from all corners, but it is now proving to be a masterstroke on the slow pitches in Dubai.

The easiest explanation of their dominance is the knowledge of the conditions having had the luxury of playing all their matches in Dubai. But that is only partially true. They have made an effort to tweak their craft as per the needs of the surfaces here.

Since there was no fast or spitting turn on offer here like in a dustbowl, the Indian spinners were made to play the waiting game.

Patience rather than magic is the key in bowling on these decks, as revealed by Varun

Gaffaney and Illingworth to be on-field umpires

New Zealand's Chris Gaffaney and England's Richard Illingworth will officiate as on-field umpires in the Champions Trophy semifinal between India and Australia here Tuesday. Englishman Michael Gough will be the third umpire while Andy Pycroft of Zimbabwe will perform match referee's duties as per the ICC announcement. Illingworth will continue in Dubai having overseen India's Group A clash with New Zealand Sunday, while Gaffaney was due to umpire Australia's meeting with South Africa in Group B in Rawalpindi February 25 before the match was abandoned due to rain.



Chakravarthy. "The pitch here is not a rank turner as such, which people were projecting it to be, but definitely it was holding on a bit, and it was deviating a little bit to create the doubt. So basically, you had to play around it," said Chakravarthy.

The Indian spin quartet of Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel walked away with nine New Zealand wickets, but they applied the pressure consistently to earn their rewards. They delivered 128 dot balls

in the 39 overs bowled between them as the Kiwis struggled to break free, a sequence eventuating in a flurry of wickets.

Even the dismissal of an otherwise stoic Kane Williamson had a touch of desperation as his shimmy against Axar ended in a stumping by KL Rahul.

On the other hand, Australia have only one genuine spinner in Adam Zampa, while hoping for part-timers Glenn Maxwell and Travis Head to deliver the goods.

Matthew Short has been ruled out of the tournament with a calf injury and it has

ies possess as the latter hunted down a 350-plus target without any meaningful contribution from Head and captain Steve Smith. India will certainly want to evict them at the earliest, particularly Head as he has been the team's nemesis in recent years.

It is also a chance for Rohit and his company to mitigate the still lingering pain of losing to Australia in the 2023 World Cup final in Ahmedabad.

This match could be slow-burner but brace for a cracker nonetheless.

SHORT TAKES

Mumbai spinner Shivalkar dies

Mumbai: Legendary Mumbai spinner Padmakar Shivalkar died here Monday due to age-related issues. He was 84. Considered one of the best spinners to have never played for India, Shivalkar featured in a total of 124 First-Class matches and claimed 589 wickets at 19.69 between 1961-62 to 1987-88. The left-arm spinner made his debut at the age of 22 in Ranji Trophy and continued playing until he was 48 and took 361 wickets in India's premier domestic competition including eleven 10-wicket hauls.

FIFA lifts ban on PFF post constitutional changes

Lahore: FIFA, the world governing body of football, has lifted the suspension on the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) after the necessary constitutional changes were made to ensure smooth governance of the sport in the country. FIFA had imposed the suspension on the PFF February 5 due to the failure of Congress members to amend the constitution as required by the global body.

Ex-Football leaders arrive at court

Muntenz: Ex-FIFA president Sepp Blatter arrived at a Swiss court Monday for his fresh trial on fraud, forgery and misappropriation charges, appearing frail one week before his 89th birthday. Blatter arrived 10 minutes after his co-defendant Michel Platini, the former UEFA president and FIFA vice president. Blatter and Platini are facing a second trial nearly three years after they were acquitted by three federal judges. The charges relate to a Blatter-approved FIFA payment of 2 million Swiss francs (now USD2.21 million) to Platini. When federal prosecutors published their initial indictment in November 2021, they said the payment "damaged FIFA's assets and unlawfully enriched Platini."

Khelo India Winter Games 2025 to commence from March 9

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, March 3: The second leg of the 5th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG), which postponed due to insufficient snowfall, will now be held from March 9 to 12 as Jammu and Kashmir's Gulmarg received the appreciable snowfall.

The second leg of the 2025 Khelo India Winter Games, featuring four snow sports Ski Mountaineering, Alpine Skiing, Snowboarding & Nordic Skiing, was initially scheduled to be staged in Gulmarg from February 22 to 25, but the authorities announced postponement of the event due to scant snowfall on the ski slopes of Gulmarg.

The Ski resort has received good snowfall during the last seven days, and even Monday five to eight inches of fresh snowfall accumulated on the ground while it was still snowing at Gulmarg.

Officials Monday said that the



event will now start March 9 and conclude March 12. "More than 300 athletes from all over the country will compete in events like alpine skiing, Nordic skiing, ski mountaineering, snowboarding and ice hockey. Arrangements for 5th Khelo India winter games 2025 have already been finalised, officials said.

The first leg of KIWG 2025 was held in Leh from January 23 to 27, featuring ice sports such as ice hockey and ice skating at Ladakh NDS Stadium and Gupthuk Pond & LSRC Army Rink.

The initiative is meant to promote winter sports in India by offering athletes a competitive platform in one of the country's premier snow destinations.

Prague Masters: Pragg draws Aravindh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prague, March 3: Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out a draw with fellow Indian Aravindh Chithambaram as the two stayed a full point ahead of nearest challengers after the fifth round of Prague Masters chess tournament here.

With 3.5 points in their kitty, Aravindh and Praggnanandhaa are now followed by top seed Wei Yi of China, Anish Giri of Holland, Quang Leim Le of Vietnam and Vincent Keymer of Germany, who all have 2.5 points apiece.

There are four more rounds remaining in the 10-players round-robin tournament.

This was the third Classical game between Praggnanandhaa and Aravindh but the result did not change. Aravindh, playing black, decided not to push Pragg in to complexities and his Berlin defense was simply an easy guess to get a level position right through.

The opening that was popularized by Russian Vladimir



Kramnik quarter of a century ago in his match against compatriot Garry Kasparov, held Aravindh in good stead right through the course of the game as Praggnanandhaa exchanged pieces at regular intervals.

The players soon reached

a rook and pawns endgame where Aravindh was a pawn less but had enough counter-play. The position petered out to be a theoretically drawn when Aravindh gave up a second pawn leaving no shelter for the white king to hide behind.

Iniyar wins Cannes Open chess

New Delhi: Indian Grandmaster Pa Iniyar won the Cannes International Open, defeating compatriot V Pranesh in the ninth and final round in Cannes, France. Iniyar ended the tournament on 7.5 points, a half point more than Delhi-based International Master Aadhyaa Garg, who finished second. Iniyar remained undefeated through the course of the tournament scoring six wins and three draws. The Indian picked up the necessary steam in the last three rounds winning one game after another and his most crucial victory was over Garg in the penultimate round. The result helped Iniyar gain 12 rating points and is now closing in on the 2600 Elo barrier, taking his rating to 2579. The 38th edition of the open tournament ended Sunday and witnessed a participation of 147 players from 25 countries. A total of six Grandmasters and 21 International Masters took part in the event.



Rivalry to rekindle in upcoming derby clash

In-form Atletico Madrid looks to end its Champions League slump against city rival Real Madrid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madrid, March 3: The Madrid derby takes center stage in the round of 16 of the Champions League, with Atletico Madrid in a commanding position to try to finally get the best of rival Real Madrid in the European competition.

Madrid, the record 15-time European champion, has been a thorn for Atletico in the Champions League over the years, beating the city rival in two finals and eliminating it from the competition the other two times they faced off in the knockout rounds.

But this Atletico arrives for Tuesday's first leg at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium playing some



of its best soccer since coach Diego Simeone took over more than a decade ago, and showing the confidence that it can take on the longtime rival head-on.

The round of 16 will begin this week to cap the inaugural season of a new Champions League format that featured a league phase and a playoff

round.

Atletico Madrid enters the match against Madrid in good form and enjoying one of its best seasons under Simeone. The team is ahead of its rival in the Spanish league standings, and is only one point behind leader Barcelona.

Atletico hasn't lost any of its matches this season against either Madrid or Barcelona. In the Spanish league, it beat the Catalan club 2-1 in Barcelona and drew 1-1 in both games it played against Madrid. Atletico hasn't lost to Madrid in four consecutive matches, having eliminated the city rival in the round of 16 of the Copa del Rey last season.

Cricket will open up new Olympic markets: Coe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 3: Hailing cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Los Angeles Games, International Olympic Committee (IOC) president's post front-runner Sebastian Coe says the move will open up new markets, which will be critical for the growth of the Olympic movement.

Cricket returned to the Olympics in the T20 format for the first time after the 1900 edition, as it was named among the five additional sports for the 2028 LA Games. The decision was taken in 2023. Coe, who is currently the head of World Athletics, stressed that cricket's support



base goes far beyond South Asia, which has a population of more than two billion.

"Well, from everything I've said (during November 2024 visit to India), you would recognise that cricket is in for the Olympic movement, particularly with the support that it will have not only in South Asia, but people from South Asia living in all our big cities," Coe told PTI in an exclusive virtual interview.