



Elnaaz's perspective

Iran-born Indian actor Elnaaz Norouzi shares a strong message on faith, humanity, and the misuse of religion

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US withdraws personnel

US withdraws some personnel from Middle East bases after Iran warns of strikes on American facilities

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Trade deficit surges

India's exports to China post a \$5.5 billion increase compared to last year even as the trade deficit hit a record \$116.12 billion

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Kiwis level series

Daryl Mitchell and Will Young guide New Zealand to a series-leveling seven-wicket win over India in the second ODI

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Pak partners with Trump's crypto firm

REUTERS

Islamabad, Jan 14: Pakistan said Wednesday it had signed an agreement with a firm connected to World Liberty Financial, the main crypto business of US President Donald Trump's family, to explore using World Liberty's USD1 stablecoin for cross-border payments.

The Pakistan Virtual Asset Regulatory Authority said in a statement that a memorandum of understanding with SC Financial Technologies, a little-known company it described as an "affiliated entity" of World Liberty, would enable "dialogue and technical understanding around emerging digital payment architectures."

The announcement represents one of the first publicly announced tie-ups between World Liberty, a crypto-based finance platform launched in September 2024, and a sovereign state. It also comes amid a warming of ties between Pakistan and the United States.

Under the agreement, SC Financial Technologies will work with Pakistan's central bank to integrate its USD1 stablecoin into a regulated digital payments structure, allowing the token to operate alongside Pakistan's own digital currency infrastructure, a source involved in the deal said.

The memorandum was announced during a visit to Pakistan by World Liberty's co-founder and chief executive Zach Witkoff, who is the son of US special envoy Steve Witkoff.

A government photograph showed Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Witkoff signing the agreement, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and army chief General Asim Munir standing behind them.

World Liberty did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the visit and tie-up. Stablecoins - digital tokens typically pegged to the dollar - have ballooned in value in recent years.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



You can't see it. It too has a personality and every personality has the right to privacy

32 killed after crane falls on train in Thailand



MANGLED REMAINS: Wreckage at the site where a train was derailed when a construction crane collapsed and fell onto its carriages, causing several casualties, in Sikhi district, Nakhon Ratchasima province, Thailand, Wednesday

REUTERS

Sikhi district (Thailand), Jan 14: A train derailed in northeastern Thailand Wednesday after a construction crane fell on two of its carriages, killing at least 32 people and injuring 66, the Thai Health Ministry said.

The accident took place Wednesday morning in the Sikhi district in Nakhon Ratchasima province, 230 km northeast of Bangkok, on a train from the capital bound for Ubon Ratchathani province.

Transport Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said in a statement that there were 195 people on board, adding that he had ordered a thorough investigation to be carried out.

The crane was working on a high-speed rail project when it collapsed and hit the passing train, causing it to derail and briefly catch fire.

Images shared by the ministry showed carriages overturned next to shrubland and firefighters extinguishing a blaze as smoke billowed out.

Earlier footage of the crash site verified by Reuters shows rescue workers trying to extract casualties from one of the mangled carriages, with some badly injured passengers already being loaded into ambulances.

India asks nationals again to leave Iran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: India Wednesday asked all its nationals currently residing in Iran to leave by available means as the security situation in the country deteriorated further in view of massive anti-government protests and a crackdown on the demonstrators.

New Delhi has also strongly advised its nationals to avoid travelling to Iran.

The protests began late last month in Tehran after the Iranian currency rial plunged to record lows. The protests have since spread to all 31 provinces, evolving from an agitation against economic woes to a demand for political change.

In view of the evolving situation in Iran, Indian nationals who are currently in Iran (students, pilgrims, business persons and tourists) are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights, the Indian embassy in Iran said in a fresh advisory.

It is reiterated that all Indian citizens and PIOs should exercise due caution and stay in contact with the Indian Embassy in Iran.

Stray dog massacre in T'gana

CANINE CONUNDRUM: As the stray dog population rises, fear, anger and compassion collide in a deeply moral dilemma. On one hand, communities demand protection, safer streets and accountability from local authorities, especially after attacks on children and the elderly. On the other, reports of mass poisonings and illegal culling raise disturbing questions about humanity, legality and the value placed on animal life. Is fear an excuse for cruelty, or is inaction equally cruel to those living in constant anxiety? The Supreme Court has acknowledged the seriousness of the stray dog menace while firmly rejecting killing as a solution. Caught between safety and compassion, society continues to wrestle with a question that has no easy answers: how far can we go to protect ourselves without losing our moral compass?

AGENCIES

Hyderabad, Jan 14: A promise made during recent gram panchayat elections to eliminate the stray dog menace has led



to one of the largest reported cases of animal cruelty in Telangana, with at least 500 stray dogs allegedly killed by lethal injections over the past two weeks in multiple districts, police said.

Investigations by animal activists and police have uncovered mass killings of dogs in Warangal, Hanamkonda, Kamareddy and Jagtiyal districts. The dogs were allegedly poisoned or given lethal injections, after which their carcasses were buried in mass graves or dumped on village outskirts.

In the latest incident, police said around 200 dogs were

killed in Kamareddy district, pushing the overall toll to about 500 in about two weeks. Six people, including five village sarpanches, have been booked in connection with that case.

Earlier, police in Hanamkonda district registered cases against nine people, including two women sarpanches, their husbands, gram panchayat secretaries and hired workers, for the alleged killing of nearly 300 dogs in Shayampet and Arepalpally villages earlier this month.

According to police and village sources, several sarpanch candidates promised "dog-free villages" during the December gram panchayat elections, citing public anger over stray dog attacks. After being elected, some allegedly authorised the killings to fulfil those pledges.

A video that surfaced from Dharmapuri municipality in Jagtiyal district showed a man injecting a dog with a lethal substance, after which the animal collapsed within minutes. The footage has intensified public outrage and prompted a wider probe.

Police officials said at least 15 suspects are now under investigation, including seven sarpanches. Gram panchayat staff members are accused of arranging logistics and hiring private contractors to carry out the killings using poisoned bait and injections.

All the accused have been booked under Section 325 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sahita, which deals with killing or poisoning animals, and under provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act.

Forensic tests are underway to determine the exact nature of the poison used.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court Tuesday took a stern view of the stray dog issue, warning state governments of heavy compensation in dog-bite cases but reiterating that culling is illegal. Following the incidents, the Telangana government issued directions to district collectors to strictly enforce the Animal Birth Control Rules, which mandate sterilisation and vaccination instead of killing.

Anything less than having Greenland unacceptable: US

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nuuk (Greenland), Jan 14: President Donald Trump said Wednesday that NATO should help the US acquire Greenland and anything less than American control is unacceptable, hours before Vice President JD Vane was to host Danish and Greenlandic officials for talks.

In a post on his social media site, Trump reiterated his argument that the US "needs Greenland for the purpose of National Security." He added that "NATO should be leading the way for us to get it" and that otherwise Russia or China would — "AND THAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!" "NATO becomes far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the UNITED STATES," Trump wrote. "Anything less than that is unacceptable."

Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, is at the centre of a geopolitical storm as Trump insists he wants to own it — and residents of its capital, Nuuk, say it isn't for sale. The White House hasn't ruled out taking the Arctic island by force.

Tusker found dead in Khesada forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boinda, Jan 14: The carcass of a male elephant was recovered Wednesday from Kadalmunda Khesada forest under the Bamur forest range in Kishorenagar block of Angul district, forest officials said.

Preliminary inquiry indicated that the elephant, estimated to be about 15 years old, had died nearly four days earlier. The exact cause of death, however, is yet to be ascertained.

According to officials, a forest patrol team spotted the carcass while monitoring the area inside the forest. Following the discovery, Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) Sanjay Kumar Saini, Athamalik Divisional For-



est Officer (DFO) Santosh Kumar Kapula and Bamur forest ranger Swadhin Samal reached the spot and launched an inquiry.

A post-mortem was conducted by veterinary surgeon Pradipta Kumar Singh of the Angul district Animal Husbandry department. After the examination, the carcass was buried at the site in accordance with standard procedures.

Forest officials said further investigation is underway to determine the actual reason behind the animal's death.

May the next record breaker be another woman, says the 'Avatar: Fire and Ash' actress who dethroned Scarlett Johansson to achieve the feat

AGENCIES

Los Angeles, Jan 14: Hollywood star Zoe Saldana has emerged as the highest-grossing leading actor of all time at the worldwide box office, bagging the top position at the global rankings following the release and blockbuster success of 'Avatar: Fire and Ash'.

According to box office tracking website Numbers, which compiles worldwide data on the top 100 stars in leading roles, Saldana ranks first with

a cumulative global box office collection of USD 15.46 billion from 33 films, averaging nearly USD 469 million per movie.

Her record is bolstered by appearances in some of the biggest blockbusters in cinema history, including Avatar (2009), which grossed USD 2.92 billion, Avengers: Endgame (2019) with USD 2.71 billion, Avatar: The Way of Water (2022) at USD 2.32 billion, Avengers: Infinity War (2018) with USD 2.04 billion and Avatar: Fire and Ash (2025), which has earned over USD 1.23 billion worldwide so far.

Saldana has starred in the three highest-grossing films of all time — the two Avatar films and Avengers: Endgame — and is the first actress to feature in four movies that have crossed the USD 2 billion mark globally.

Scarlett Johansson is at number two in the list with USD 15.40

billion from 36 films, and Samuel L Jackson at number three with USD 14.61 billion from over 70 films. Other stars in the top 10 include Robert Downey Jr., Chris Pratt, Tom Cruise, Chris Hemsworth, Vin Diesel, Chris Evans and Dwayne Johnson.

Last year, Johansson rose to the top spot after Jurassic World Reborn amassed USD 869 million worldwide. The actor has also appeared in multiple Marvel films.

Reacting to the milestone, Saldana posted a video message on social media Tuesday evening, thanking filmmakers, collaborators and fans across the world for their support.

"I just want to express my sincerest gratitude for the extra-



inary journey that has led me to become the highest-grossing film actor of all time today," said Saldana, who won her maiden Oscar for her performance in Emilia Perez in 2025.

"An achievement made possible entirely, entirely by the incredible franchises and the collaborators that I have been fortunate enough to be a part of, to every director who placed their trust in me," she said.

To her fans, Saldana said their unwavering support, passion and loyalty are the true foundation of this milestone.

"None of this exists without you showing up time and time again with open hearts and enthusiasm. This accomplishment belongs to all of us, and I'm deeply grateful and profoundly humbled. And may the next record breaker be another woman," she concluded.

leisure

**EMILIA HAD BREAKDOWN AFTER GAME OF THRONES**

English actress Emilia Clarke had a full mental breakdown after *Game of Thrones* ended and she had time to process the previous decade. The 39-year-old shot to fame playing Daenerys Targaryen in the fantasy drama series from 2011 to 2019.

LAWRENCE: I IDENTIFY AS A STAY-AT-HOME MOM

Actress Jennifer Lawrence said she is only busy during the hectic press tours for her movies, and for the rest of her time, she enjoys a quiet life. Speaking on the Smartless podcast, Lawrence said: "That's me. I identify as a stay-at-home mom. But I am obviously working."

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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ARIES

You need to be very cautious today, says Ganesha. The results of a lot of hard work over a long time may be undone by one impulsive decision. After a stressful morning, you could just wish to spend time with children, playing their childish games.

**TAURUS**

This day, you will be able to express and communicate your ideas and feelings very convincingly, assures Ganesha. All those who come in contact with you today will be clear, and appreciative about whatever you tell them. At work your superiors are likely to be responsive and helpful. All said and done, you are not likely to face any difficulties or disappointments today.

**GEMINI**

Your health interests will take precedence over career, says Ganesha. There are indications that you will spare more time working out at a gym. Those in the field of marketing and advertising will have a fabulous time. A good marketing strategy will bring maximum profits with minimum efforts.

**CANCER**

Your way of talk today will be such that it can cause misunderstanding. In a fit of emotion, you will take a hasty decision. You will regret the same in future, but you will also get a chance to rectify the same. So, says Ganesha, do not take a any ad hoc or temporary decision but a firm decision.

**LEO**

You will be busy on the work front today. It is a good day for those who are self-employed. Housewives will remain extremely busy with household matters. You will be able to work according to your desire though, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

Close members of your family and friends will take up most of your time today. Students will have to pay more attention to studies as exams are upcoming, and they will have to learn to balance study and free time. Ganesha says today is a good time to buy property. All in all, it is a day when you can afford to relax and let your mind pursue its interests.

**LIBRA**

You may not have been crowned 'Employee Of The Month', but do not let that distract you from the fact that today, you are the brightest star in office. Be prepared to get some special treatment at work, as your bosses shower praise on you. Apart from that, a lot of tangible and intangible benefits await you.

**SCORPIO**

"It's a dream come true," you may utter these words in surprise today, feels Ganesha. Your palatial home is ready or you may just get the keys of your much desired vehicle. You may have an extended celebration by receiving or giving gifts to your closed ones. However, make sure you do not make a hole in your pocket.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Your business may bring you faster growth rates than bacteria today. Moreover, banking transactions will fetch returns exceeding your expectation. Management institutes will value your expertise and experience, predicts Ganesha. All in all, a day when progressions are on the rise.

**CAPRICORN**

At times you are very direct in your approach and often end up hurting your near ones badly. Today, you'll bandage some old wounds and make efforts to restore old relationships, says Ganesha. But, your struggle to improve rapport may not be as successful as you want it to be.

**AQUARIUS**

The cupid may strike you today! The singles may feel the energy and excitement of budding romance. Equally blissful day for the married couples, too, as they will spend quality time with each other. Go down the memory lane, go through some photo albums and cherish those long lost moments, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**

Unexpected expenses are likely to crop up today. There are strong indications that you will set out upon a journey or a picnic to some nearby place, without too much prior planning. However, the journey will be comfortable and your travel plans will go off without a hitch. Even if you don't undertake any travel today, you will find yourself poring over the memories of your earlier sojourns, says Ganesha.



Sonal calls out targeted negativity



Mumbai: In today's social media-driven landscape, public perception can be easily influenced by manufactured narratives, often unrelated to an actor's work or performance. Sonal expressed disappointment over how such tactics are being used to undermine peers instead of encouraging healthy competition.

"These paid PR attacks on actors need to stop. It's getting out of hand now. All this negative PR is unnecessary and toxic. You can't look good by making someone look bad. Why can't we just be happy for each other?" Sonal said, adding that actors work hard and deserve a more supportive professional environment.

Her comments follow similar remarks made recently by actresses Tara Sutaria and Taapsee Pannu, who also spoke about facing negative PR campaigns. Together, these statements have drawn attention to the less-discussed aspects of publicity strategies within the industry.

While competition remains an inherent part of the film business, many believe that persistent trolling and paid negativity only weaken the creative ecosystem. Beyond affecting public image, such practices can also take a toll on mental well-being and divert attention away from an actor's actual work.

Sonal Chauhan, who has projects lined up including *Mirzapur: The Film*, emphasized the need for kindness and mutual respect within the industry.

AGENCIES



Sources confirmed to the publication that Akshaye Khanna will be back on set for a short one-week shoot, aimed at expanding his character's backstory and adding more layers to his role in the next chapter of the franchise.

In *Dhurandhar*, Akshaye plays Pakistani gangster Rehman Dakait. His brief, impromptu dance to Flipperachi's Fa9La in the film went viral on social media, with fans and content creators enthusiastically recreating the moment. Several clips featuring Akshaye's performance also flooded the internet, earning him renewed popularity and widespread appreciation.

AGENCIES

Akshaye's Dakait to return in *Dhurandhar 2*



Elnaaz's note on faith, humanity

Mumbai: Iranian-born Indian Actress Elnaaz Norouzi has shared a strong message on faith, humanity, and the misuse of religion, saying that belief should never be confused with extremism or oppression.

In a note she penned on Instagram, Elnaaz said one can be Muslim and still reject radical Islamism, adding that faith and extremism are not the same.

She wrote: "A small reminder for anyone who needs to hear it: You can be Muslim and still reject radical Islamism. Faith and extremism are not the same thing. I was born Muslim, and I will never support tyranny or injustice done in the name of religion."

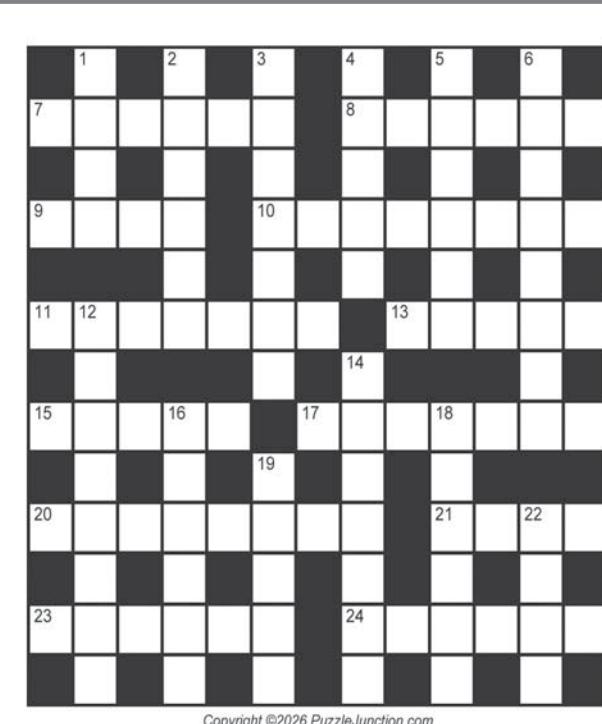
The actress emphasised that being a believer does not mean pretending your community is perfect, but having the courage to call out what is wrong.

"Being a believer doesn't mean pretending your community is perfect, it means being honest enough to call out what's wrong," she wrote.

Stressing that humanity matters above all else, Elnaaz said she has met both good and bad people across all faiths, and that the actions of a few should not define an entire religion.

"Here's what matters – HUMANITY I don't care if you're Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu... I've met incredible people across all faiths, and I've also met bad people across all faiths. The bad ones don't make the entire religion bad," she added.

IANS

PEANUTS**CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****FUN POST****CROSSWORD**

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Across

- 7 Type of bath or gum (5-3)
- 8 Companion dwellers
- 9 Christiania, now
- 10 Colourful gem (4,4)
- 11 Garnish
- 13 Cut off
- 15 Like some jokes
- 17 First light
- 20 Kind of shotgun
- 21 Mount Olympus
- 23 Shoat
- 24 They provide zest
- 25 Washouts
- 26 Loathes
- 27 Circular

Down

- 4 Winter warmer
- 5 Take your pick
- 6 They're found on a beach
- 12 Fragrant
- 14 Bison
- 16 Seamstress's need
- 18 Time in power
- 19 Words to remember
- 22 Family rooms

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

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****ICROSSWORD****SUDOKU**

downtown

Odisha celebrates Makar Sankranti with holy dips, kite flying & community feasts



CHIEF MINISTER MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI TOOK A DIP IN THE BAITARANI RIVER IN HIS HOME DISTRICT OF KEONJHAR AND ALSO OFFERED PRAYERS AT A SHIVA TEMPLE

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE THRONGED SRIMANDIR IN PURI ON THE OCCASION, WITH SPECIAL RITUALS BEING HELD SINCE THE MORNING



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: People across Odisha Wednesday took holy dips in different water bodies on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi took a dip in the Baitarani river in his home district of Keonjhar and also offered prayers at a Shiva temple.

"May this great tradition of Odisha further strengthen our social unity and harmony. May the blessings of Mahaprabhu keep the stream of the state's progress uninterrupted, and may every family be filled with joy and happiness," he said in a post on X.

Makar Sankranti, a harvest festival, marks the movement of the Sun northwards, towards the Tropic of Cancer. It is believed that worshipping the Sun keeps diseases and poverty at bay. Thousands of people thronged Srimandir in Puri on the occasion, with special rituals being held since the morning.

The sibling deities – Lord Balabhadra, Lord Jagannath and Devi Subhadra – were adorned with the 'Makar Chourashi Bessa' on the occasion. Garlands of colourful flowers and holy basil are part of the Trinity's attire for the day.

The deities are offered a special sweet dish, 'Makar Chaula', prepared with newly-harvested rice, jaggery, grated coconut and bananas.

Meanwhile, the rituals at the famed Lingaraj Temple in Bhubaneswar were disrupted due to a dispute between two groups of servitors.

A large number of people also visited the Chandrabhaga beach and the centuries-old Sun Temple in Konark to witness the sunrise.

In south Odisha, which has a sizeable Telugu population, people decorated the entrances of their houses with 'rangoli' and organised community feasts.

Kite flying added a splash of colour to the skies in different parts of the state, where children and adults alike participated in friendly competitions.

Extending greetings to the people, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati said, "May the grace of the Divine Lord fill everyone's lives with joy and exuberance."

Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik also extended greetings on the occasion.

"May this unique festival of our culture and tradition fill everyone's lives with happiness, peace, and prosperity," he said in a social media post.

Dharitri and Orissa POST Editor Tathagata Satpathy being felicitated by Binjharpur MLA Pramila Mallik at a state-level literary event organised by 'Akhilachakra' in Jajpur, Wednesday

BJP using govt office for party meeting: BJD

BHUBANESWAR: Opposition BJD Wednesday accused the ruling BJP of misusing official government premises to conduct party meeting. In a statement, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty alleged that the meeting of the BJP's party in-charge has been included in the Sambalpur visit programme of the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister. While it has been mentioned in the minister's tour programme that this meeting will be held at the Collector's Conference Hall, directions have also been given to authorities to ask all government officials of the district to remain present at this BJP leader's meeting, he claimed. Mohanty asked how a BJP in-charge and other party functionaries could hold a meeting at the Collector's Conference Hall, and why should government officials attend it? "This clearly indicates that the BJP is attempting to convert government offices into its party offices. Across the state, nuisance by BJP leaders and workers in government offices, and attacks on government officials have become a day-to-day occurrence under the BJP rule," he said. "Now, by organising meetings of party functionaries inside government offices, the BJP is trying to exert pressure on government officials and secure partisan interests of its workers," the statement read.

research on Nathaniel Hawthorne's 'The House of the Seven Gables' and Fakir Mohan Senapati's 'Chha Mana Atha Guntha'. Sarangi expressed his gratitude to the Odisha Sahitya Akademi and the OLL&C department for the honour.

On the occasion, the Odisha Sahitya Akademi released two publications — 'Rajakabi Gobindabhanja Granthabali' and 'Sahityika Janani Balabhadra Mohanty (Bharadwaj)'. Students of Utkal University of Culture presented a chorus music performance during the programme.

Noted writer and novelist Shantanu Acharya, OLL&C department Secretary Bijay Ketan Upadhyay, Special Secretary Deba Prasad Dash and Odisha Sahitya Akademi Secretary Chandrasekhar Hota were present on the occasion.

Vyasa Kabi Fakir Mohan Odia Bhasha Samman for Nrusingha Charan Sarangi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur/Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: The Odisha government is preparing a comprehensive plan for the integrated development, heritage conservation, and modern historical research of major Buddhist sites in the state, said Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida in Jajpur Wednesday.

Addressing the second 'Guru Padmasambhava Prayer Ceremony' and 'International Buddhist Conference' at Udayagiri in Jajpur, Parida, who also holds the Tourism portfolio, said that the conference will help in the development of Buddhist tourism while spreading the message of peace and compassion across the world.

"The land of Odisha has always progressed along the path of spirituality and the state government is making sustained efforts in this direction," she said.

Parida said, "The state government is preparing a comprehensive plan for the integrated development, heritage conservation, and modern historical research of major Buddhist sites in the state, said Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida in Jajpur Wednesday.

"Odisha holds historical evidence of Guru Padmasambhava's association with Vajrayana Buddhism and several lesser-known aspects of Buddhist history in the state are now being brought to public attention,"

GOPALPUR BEACH FESTIVAL TO BEGIN JAN 27

BHUBANESWAR: The four-day Gopalpur Beach Festival is set to begin January 27 in the scenic coastal town of Gopalpur in Ganjam district, official sources said Wednesday. The festival, which was earlier scheduled to start January 22, has been rescheduled to accommodate ceremonial events and special guests, including the Governor and Chief Minister. Commerce and Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena, who made the announcement during a preparatory meeting, said the festival's inauguration will be graced by Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, while the closing ceremony January 30 will see the presence of CM Mohan Charan Majhi. "Initially, we had planned to hold the festival from January 22, but after considering the schedules of the dignitaries, the dates have been revised to January 27-30. The event will showcase Odisha's rich cultural heritage and boost tourism in the region," Jena said.



OP PHOTO

INT'L BUDDHIST CONFERENCE AT UDAYAGIRI

Comprehensive plan for devpt of Buddhist sites soon: Parida



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur/Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: The Odisha government is preparing a comprehensive plan for the integrated development, heritage conservation, and modern historical research of major Buddhist sites in the state, said Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida in Jajpur Wednesday.

"A special expert committee is being constituted for the development of Buddhism, and emphasis is being laid on connecting Odisha to India's Buddhist Tourism Circuit," the deputy CM said, adding that steps have also been initiated for the development of the Jirang Mahavihara.

Speaking on the occasion, Odia Language, Literature and Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said that 'Guru Padmasambhava Prayer Ceremony' has significantly helped in disseminating the teachings of Buddhism and in widely promoting Odisha's rich Buddhist heritage. He noted that Buddhist devotees from across India and abroad have participated in this ceremony.

"Odisha holds historical evidence of Guru Padmasambhava's association with Vajrayana Buddhism and several lesser-known aspects of Buddhist history in the state are now being brought to public attention,"

the Culture Minister said.

The conference witnessed participation of over 1,700 Buddhist followers, monks, and tourists from India and abroad. On the occasion, dignitaries released the 'Udayagiri Souvenir' and books related to Buddhist heritage.

Following the addresses by the guests, a scholarly discussion session on the historical links between Odisha and Guru Padmasambhava was held, followed by a cultural programme in the evening. The discussion featured Richard Dixey from the Light of Buddha Foundation, French Indologist Frédéric Maronval, eminent writer and researcher Prabir Pattanayak, researcher Anita Sabat, Professor Rahul Ravi Rao, and Lama Tenzin Samphel.

Badachana MLA Amar Kumar Nayak, Tourism Director Dipankar Mahapatra, District Collector Ambar Kumar Kar and Buddhist guru from Jirang Jigme Rinpoche were also present.

The conference is being organised through the joint efforts of the state government's Culture and Tourism departments and Jajpur district administration.

IIT-Bhub's tech for bauxite exploration

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: A group of researchers at IIT-Bhubaneswar has developed a satellite-based cost-effective technology for bauxite prospecting and exploration in Odisha.

Bauxite, the primary ore of aluminum, is a critical raw material for industries such as aerospace, construction, and packaging. With the global aluminum market projected by Credit Suisse to face a supply shortfall by 2030, ensuring a stable domestic supply has become a strategic priority for India.

The group, led by Assistant Professor Ashim Sattar, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Bhubaneswar, was awarded in the 4th Odisha Mining and Infrastructure International Conference 2026 for developing the technology.

This unique technique was published in the Journal of Geochemical Exploration, in the 4th Odisha Mining and Infrastructure International



ODISHA HAS AN ESTIMATED 2.3 BILLION TONNES OF BAUXITE RESERVES, ACCOUNTING FOR OVER 50 PER CENT OF INDIA'S TOTAL RESOURCES.

HOWEVER, MUCH OF THIS MINERAL LIES IN CHALLENGING TERRAINS

OF THE EASTERN GHATS, MAKING TRADITIONAL EXPLORATION TIME-CONSUMING, EXPENSIVE, AND ENVIRONMENTALLY INTENSIVE

Conference 2026.

Sattar and his research group successfully identified potential bauxite depositional sites at a regional-scale across the Koraput and Rayagada districts of Odisha using advanced hyper spectral satellite remote sensing, the institute said in a statement.

The study integrated hyper spectral satellite data, field surveys, geochemical and petrographic assessments, and

this mineral lies in challenging terrains of the Eastern Ghats, making traditional exploration time-consuming, expensive, and environmentally intensive, mining experts said.

Using hyper spectral imaging, the IIT-Bhubaneswar team leveraged the concept of spectral signature which is a distinctive pattern of electromagnetic response of earth materials, to detect potential bauxite-bearing zones across two districts of Odisha. This technique can offer a cost-effective, rapid, and eco-friendly approach to support sustainable mineral exploration in Odisha and beyond, they said.

The findings are expected to support the mining industry and policymakers in identifying potential bauxite exploration zones, optimizing resources, and minimising environmental impacts. This initiative lays the foundation for next-generation mineral mapping and sustainable resource management in Odisha, they said.



the honour, he received a cash award of Rs 5 lakh.

The OLL&C Minister paid floral tributes to Fakir Mohan Senapati and congratulated Sarangi on receiving the honour.

In his address, the OLL&C Minister said, "Vyasa Kabi Fakir Mohan Senapati laid the foundation of modern Odia literature by giving voice to social realities. His writings continue to guide and inspire genera-

tions of readers and scholars. Fakir Mohan's contribution ensured the vitality of Odia literature and his literary legacy remains deeply relevant even today."

In his speech, Sarangi reflected on the enduring influence of Fakir Mohan's literary works, stating that they have been a constant source of inspiration for his academic journey. He also spoke on his comparative

missions of readers and scholars. Fakir Mohan's contribution ensured the vitality of Odia literature and his literary legacy remains deeply relevant even today."

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Incentives for Ama Bus staff from Jan 26



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: During a high-level committee meeting on Ama Bus operations Wednesday, officials approved an incentive scheme for bus captains and guides, set to roll out from January 26.

Under the scheme, incentives will be disbursed quarterly based on comprehensive evaluations of safe driving practices and overall performance.

Chaired by Housing and Urban Development Principal Secretary Usha Padhee, the meeting focused on strengthening road safety, enhancing passenger convenience, and improving driver skill development and welfare.

Officials informed the committee that Ama Bus vehicle speeds were closely monitored during the first two weeks of January and no cases of speed violations were reported. The meeting also discussed improving bus accommodation and management at bus stops.

The committee laid special emphasis on ensuring the safety of road users, particularly in view of increasing heavy vehicle traffic. Passenger-friendly services and systematic monitoring of bus operations were also reviewed.

To strengthen driver training, e-buses will be provided to the Institute of Driving Training and Research (IDTR). Drivers will be able to undergo practical driving training.

Youth held for extortion threat to woman vendor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: Police have arrested a 27-year-old man for threatening and attempting to extort money from a woman street vendor in the IG Park Lane area, Capital police said Wednesday.

According to the complaint, the accused, identified as Suresh Behera, used to park his motorcycle near her roadside stall and demand ₹100 per month illegally, threatening her with dire consequences.

When the vendor refused, he verbally abused her. Suresh later returned armed with a sharp weapon and again threatened her over the extortion demand.

During investigation, police found sufficient evidence that the accused had criminally intimidated the complainant while demanding extortion money. Acting on reliable information, Suresh was arrested on January 13.

He reportedly confessed to his involvement in the offence. Based on his disclosure, police seized a sharp weapon (about 45 cm long and 7.4 cm wide) and the motorcycle used in the crime. Suresh was forwarded to court following his arrest, and further investigation is underway.

CLASSIFIED

LOST

I, Sri Mohan Kumar Dash, S/o Ashok Dash, At-Dash Colony, Ward No. - 10, PS/Dist. - Bargarh, I have lost my original money receipt of Rs.95828 issued by the TPWODL authority and my consumer number - 512001111628. If any person found it, kindly deposit the same at TPWODL office, Bargarh.

2nd Patha Utsav of yr January 18

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: The Capital City is set to come alive this Sunday (January 18) as the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) prepares to host the second Patha Utsav of the year on the Baramunda Jagamara New Road.

In preparation for the event, a high-level meeting was recently held under the chairpersonship of BMC Mayor Sulochana Das. The meeting was attended by Cultural Standing Committee Chairman Ramchandra Ranasingh, member Mihir Kumar Rout, Additional Commissioner Ratnakar Sahoo, Kailash Chandra Das, and other senior officials of the corporation.

Officials unanimously agreed that the upcoming Patha Utsav would be more vibrant and engaging than the first edition held earlier this winter at Master Canteen. This time, several new games and cultural activities will be introduced, with a special focus on children's entertainment.

Renowned playback singers Diptirekha Padhi and Jayashree Dhal will headline the musical performances, promising to captivate youth and music lovers alike.

Another major attraction will be two separate "Bhubaneswar's Got Talent" stages, aimed at showcasing the City's hidden talents. A second stage featuring DJ music will keep the audience grooving throughout the morning.

Public participation in Ama Bus route planning and services will commence from February, allowing citizens to share suggestions and feedback on route changes through social media platforms.

The duration of driver training programmes has been extended from three days to five days, enabling more extensive heavy motor vehicle driving practice. Enhanced focus will be placed on psychometric tests, inhibitors, lane discipline, and self-assessment.

Additionally, simulators will be introduced in training schools for specialised e-bus driving training.

In line with passenger safety and environmental sustainability, 30 old BPTCL buses that have completed over 1.5 lakh kilometers will be scrapped.

In their place, small e-buses will be introduced in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack to improve last-mile connectivity.

The accused has been identified as Ranjib Kumar Pradhan, who impersonated himself as Dr Prakash Pradhan.

According to police sources, the complainant came in contact with Ranjib in 2021 through a matrimonial platform after

sharing her biodata. Introducing himself as Dr Prakash Pradhan, the accused also falsely claimed that his younger brother, Tushar Pradhan, was working as a Deputy Manager at SBI, Rayagada.

Trusting his assurances of marriage, the complainant and her family remained in regular contact with him.

During this period, Ranjib convinced the complainant's father to invest money on the pretext of Covid-19 senior citizen policies, departmental training schemes and petrol

pump dealership auctions.

Acting on his instructions, the family transferred ₹22.70 lakh to Ranjib between June and December 2021.

Investigation revealed that after receiving the money, Ranjib deliberately delayed the marriage, failed to provide any policy bond documents, and continued to demand more money on false grounds.

Technical analysis showed that the two mobile numbers used in the dealings were operated by Ranjib himself.

Preliminary findings further revealed that Ranjib alone orchestrated the fraud by using multiple identities.

Police verification with SBI Rayagada and CHC Manamunda confirmed that no person named Tushar Pradhan was employed as Deputy Manager at the bank, nor was any doctor named Prakash Pradhan working at the said hospital.

During interrogation, Ranjib confessed to the offence and admitted using his father's bank account to receive the cheated

money. He was forwarded to court following his arrest, and further investigation into the matter is underway.

OP PHOTO

OP

Illegal brick kilns flout pollution norms, curbs

POST NEWS NETWORK



Balasore, Jan 14: Even as the Balasore district administration has imposed restrictions to control rising air pollution levels, several illegal brick kilns are allegedly operating in violation of pollution control norms in Basta tehsil, raising concerns over lax enforcement.

District Collector Suryawanshi Mayur Vikas recently reviewed the implementation of air pollution control measures through videoconferencing with senior officials. The restrictions were imposed under Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) following deterioration in the Air Quality Index (AQI) in the region.

During the meeting, the Collector directed all departments concerned to strictly enforce the guidelines, including regular water sprinkling in dusty areas, a ban on open burning with penalties for violations, and strin-

functioning without approvals from the Mines department and State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) in panchayats such as Santoshpur, Raghunathpur, Karua, Paunshkuli, Tadada, Singla, Bhelora and Nabara.

Residents claimed that despite the issuance of show-cause notices to 31 kilns by Basta tehsildar Sushant Kumar Pattnaik January 8, several units continued operations the next day. Smoke from kilns in Raghunathpur and Nabara panchayats reportedly envelop nearby areas, causing health issues, including respiratory problems among children.

Locals further alleged that kiln owners are extracting soil illegally from agricultural lands and using coal sourced through unauthorised channels for baking, aggravating air pollution. They accused the Mines, Revenue and Forest departments and the pollution control board of turning a blind eye to the violations.

gent action against illegal brick kilns operating without valid clearances.

However, locals alleged that dozens of illegal brick kilns continue to operate in Basta and Singla police station areas, defying the administration's directives. According to sources, more than 70 brick kilns are



HOLY DIP: Over 1 crore devotees took holy bath at the confluence of Ganga river and Bay of Bengal at Sagar Island in South 24 Pargana district of West Bengal, adjoining Bhograi in Balasore, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti Wednesday

OP PHOTO

Devotees throng Kalijai Temple on Makar Sankranti

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Berhampur, Jan 14: Kalijai island, home to the revered Kalijai Temple inside Chilika Lake, witnessed a heavy rush of devotees Wednesday on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

Braving the winter chill, devotees from different parts of the state and neighbouring Andhra Pradesh arrived early in the morning to offer prayers to Goddess Kalijai, regarded as the presiding deity of fishermen, and to take a holy dip in the lake.

Hundreds of boats were deployed from Balugaon, Barkul, Keshupur and Krushna Prasad

jetties to ferry pilgrims to the island. "Around 200 boats were engaged from Barkul jetty to carry devotees to the temple," said Basant Nayak, president of the Maa Kalijai Motorboat Owners' Association. About 120 boats were similarly pressed into service at Balugaon jetty,

he added. Boat movement remained smooth due to clear weather conditions and the absence of morning fog, officials said.

Police maintained a strict vigil to ensure compliance with safety norms. "Passengers were instructed to wear

life jackets and overloading of boats was strictly avoided," said Balugaon police station inspector-in-charge J K Parida.

Adequate police personnel were deployed at Balugaon and Barkul jetties, while a patrolling boat was pressed into service inside the lake. Rescue boats were also kept on standby to deal with any emergency, the officer said.

Fire services personnel were deployed at the lake, and additional forces were stationed on the temple premises to maintain law and order. No untoward incident was reported during the celebrations, police said.

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Further, N Asanta Reddy, brother of Sabitri who resides in the same village, too faced ostracism along with his family as he used to keep in touch with his sister despite the restrictions imposed by the committee. Both the families were barred to utilise any facilities available in the village, including groceries and schooling of their children. Notably, both the families are daily wage earners and this hardship broke them financially.

Both Sabitri and Asanta complained to the local police and district administration repeatedly but to no avail. Finding no alternatives, Sabitri sought assistance from an advocate to request the President of India to intervene in the matter through a letter posted October 6, 2025. The President's Secretariat swiftly directed Odisha Chief Secretary to conduct an enquiry and submit a report on the same after receiving the letter.

The matter was finally resolved Monday when Chhatrapur Sub Collector Sibashis Baral along with Chhatrapur SDPO Chandan Kumar Ghadei and Ganjam tehsildar Sukanta Mishra held a joint meeting with the committee members and the two families. The restrictions were lifted and the families were finally accepted among the villagers.

The government officials have warned the committee members to refrain from taking such steps resulting violation of human rights. Sabitri conveyed gratitude to President Murmu for her timely support and resolution of the matter.

Baby girl sold for ₹35K rescued from Cuttack



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rayagada, Jan 14: Four people suffered burn injuries in a firecracker explosion in Rayagada district in the early hours of Wednesday, police said.

The injured youths were identified as K Yogi, D Shankar, G Nikhil and Sonu Dora. All sustained critical injuries to their hands and faces, officials said. Two of them were critical and later shifted to a hospital in nearby Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

As part of the celebrations, a fire was lit around which people stood and offered prayer.

The accident occurred when someone allegedly dumped a large number of crackers on fire, leading to an explosion.

A team led by Bhandar-

Ostracised families back in village as Prez intervenes

DWARKA PRASAD PATNAIK, OP



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Fake ghee unit sealed in Bargarh

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Jan 14: In a major crackdown, police have busted a spurious oil and ghee manufacturing unit in Bargarh district and seized materials used in the adulteration process.

Acting on allegations of spurious ghee production, police and district administration officials conducted a surprise raid on a ghee manufacturing unit Tuesday near Barahagoda Chhak on the outskirts of Bargarh town.

The raid was led by Bargarh Sub-Collector Prasanna Kumar Pandey, along with personnel from the Bargarh Rural police station. The officials sealed the manufacturing unit and seized large quantities of ghee, sesame oil along with raw materials and equipment used in the production. It is alleged that ghee and sesame oil were prepared using chemicals and automobile grease or lubricants.

Police detained two persons in connection with the case and launched an investigation.

The alleged fake ghee racket, which is believed to have been operating on the town's outskirts for a long time, has triggered concern among local residents and become a topic of widespread discussion. Further investigation is underway, police added.

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EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. MCSW-Sanitation-25-26-25

NAME OF WORK : SANITATION AND GUARDING OF TRAINING CENTRE CUM INSPECTION BUNGALOW, SUB-ORDINATE REST HOUSE & PREMISES INCLUDING GYMNASIUM, CLEANING OF TOILETS, COMMON AREAS, SSE CHAMBERS & ADJACENT COMMON AREAS IN WORKSHOP COMPLEX AND CLEANING OF TOILETS, COMMON AREAS, ROOMS & CHAMBERS IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING AT CARRIAGE REPAIR WORKSHOP, MANCHESWAR.

Advertised Value : ₹ 1,38,93,597.21, **EMD :** ₹ 2,19,500/-, **Cost of Tender Document :** ₹ 5,000/-, **Period of Completion :** 36 Months.

Bidding Start Date : 16.01.2026.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1500 hrs. of 30.01.2026.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete information including e-tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.reps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (POH-II), PR-1005/Q2-26

CRW/Mancheswar

Infant falls into hearth, critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, Jan 14: A two-month-old boy sustained serious burn injuries after slipping from his mother's lap into a burning hearth at Chalanti village under Jaleswar police limits in Balasore district Tuesday evening.

According to sources, the child's mother had lit a hearth in the courtyard to keep warm amid the cold. While she was warming herself with the infant in her lap, the baby accidentally slipped and fell into the fire due to negligence.

Family members rushed the baby to Basta community health centre. As the infant suffered severe burns to the lower part of his body, doctors referred him to Balasore Hospital for advanced treatment.

Van helper beaten to death in Balasore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Jan 14: A pickup van helper was allegedly beaten to death near a gymnasium at Sahada under Sadar police limits in Balasore Wednesday.

The incident taking place on the occasion of Makar Sankranti has spread shockwaves in the region.

The deceased was identified as Sheikh Makandar Mohammed of Astia village under Sadar police limits.

According to a complaint lodged by his brother Sheikh Jitender Mohammed, Makandar was on duty as a helper on a pickup van (OR-01-AM-9050) when several youths waylaid him near the gymnasium. The assailants identified as Bapu of Sahada village, Pawan of Azimabad village, Pintu of Old Balasore, Nepali of Patrapada and Chinu Telenga of Saragon allegedly attacked Makandar with sharp weapons, iron pipes and knives, inflicting severe injuries.

Police rushed the blood-soaked victim to the district headquarters hospital in a PCR van. However, he succumbed to his injuries during treatment.

Police sent the body for post-mortem and began a probe, officials said.

4 injured in firecracker blast

POST NEWS NETWORK

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As part of the celebrations, a fire was lit around which people stood and offered prayer.

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A team led by Bhandar-

division and five at Ramatirtha crocodile breeding centre, taking the total to 84.

Forest officials claimed the rise reflects the success of ongoing wildlife conservation and breeding efforts in Similipal.

Authorities attributed the gradual increase to the release of juvenile crocodiles from Ramatirtha breeding centre into rivers and streams. Environment experts also cited the availability of suitable habitats and a stable food chain as key factors contributing to the growth in the crocodile population.

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To hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition.

SRI AUROBINDO



Amateur Diplomats

Many elements of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's recent meeting with US President Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago were disconcerting, if not depressing. For starters, no American official met the Ukrainian head of state upon his arrival in Miami, which stands in stark contrast to the pomp and circumstance lavished on Russian President Vladimir Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, last August.

But even more disturbing was the complete absence of trained and experienced diplomats on the American side of the negotiating table. Instead, there were White House Chief of Staff Susie Wiles and her deputy, Steve Witkoff, a real-estate developer with long-standing connections to Russia, and Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Amid all the damage Trump has done in the first year of his second term, the destruction of America's diplomatic capacity has received relatively little attention. But alongside the gutting of the public-health system and the wanton abandonment of clean energy, it may prove to be the most consequential.

Of course, US presidents are entitled to appoint ambassadors to their liking, and many have chosen generous campaign donors. But these postings are always to less important capitals, where appointees perhaps can get away with a ludicrous lack of knowledge about their brief (something that Senator John McCain memorably exposed during Barack Obama's presidency).

But, as is so often the case, Trump's conduct is in a category of its own. The nepotism on display during his second presidency is shameless. Hence, he appointed Kushner's father, a convicted felon, as ambassador to France; and he named his son's former girlfriend as ambassador to Greece (whose citizens she once derided as "freeloaders").

Then there is the designation of completely unqualified figures to pursue missions that are not just sensitive but outright offensive. Trump's effort to "acquire" Greenland, a self-governing territory within the Kingdom of Denmark, is being led by the governor of Louisiana, adding insult to injury against a NATO ally. Other important posts have been left vacant, the size of the National Security Council has been halved, and the apparent lack of preparation for the day after the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro attests to the absence of a deliberative process, poor coordination, and a shortage of qualified personnel.

The gutting of US diplomatic capacity is partly the result of a misguided drive for efficiency (revising the failed effort by Trump's first-term secretary of state, the hapless former Exxon executive Rex Tillerson). But it is also a consequence of sheer inattention, which has resulted in a lack of coordination and chaos reminiscent of the first Trump administration.

This has not been lost on US adversaries. They are taking advantage of the situation, with some even de facto determining the

composition of US diplomatic teams. As a Wall Street Journal investigation showed, the Trump administration has allowed its own special envoy for Ukraine and Russia to be completely sidelined in favour of Witkoff. (Moreover, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, eager to assert a larger international role for the Kingdom, apparently played an instrumental role in arranging Putin's preferred outcome.)

In theory, relying on fresh faces and an unorthodox approach could be defensible. Those unencumbered by conventional wisdom may be able to find compromises by "thinking outside the box." Trump himself clearly believes that knowing nothing about a conflict is the easiest way to solve it. But this ignorance-is-strength strategy has yet to yield stable results.

Any hope that the US itself would derive benefits from becoming more unpredictable has been dashed, not least because Trump and the loyalists he sends out into the world are utterly predictable. They have openly declared a desire to pursue financially advantageous "deals," which implies that geopolitical or strategic concerns have been deprioritized. In every possible way, starting with "pausing" the enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the Trump administration has signalled that the US is not only open for business but happy to accept bribes.

From this perspective, the road to lasting peace is paved with mutually beneficial business opportunities. While ostensibly committed to "illiberalism," the Trumpists actually exhibit a naive, canonically liberal belief in what eighteenth-century thinkers called *doux commerce* ("gentle commerce"). But as Germany learned the hard way when it relied on trade ties to transform Russia for the better, the supposed benefits of interdependence will not materialize if one party has other priorities. The war on diplomats is part of a long-standing campaign against professionalism. While Trump's MAGA movement stokes resentment against "the elite," not everyone who is powerful is included under that label. MAGA supporters have no problem with billionaires dominating Trump's cabinet – only with those who claim authority on the basis of specialized training and education. In short: unelected bureaucrats bad; unelected real-estate developers good.

By creating the impression that professionals look down on ordinary folks and fail to see solutions that anyone with common sense could figure out, MAGA channels America's long-standing tradition of anti-intellectualism. In the process, Trump is making the United States poorer, weaker, and more manipulable on the world stage. While one can certainly find grounds to criticize the vaunted "liberal international order," at least it recognized that there is real global demand for common rules and stability.

Trump, now engaged in a brazenly neo-imperialist project in Venezuela, has handed China a golden opportunity to portray itself as the guarantor of such stability. China can also present itself as offering the kind of expertise that Trump has wantonly destroyed (even if its soft power is not anywhere close to that of the US). As with many other hallmarks of Trump 2.0, the gutting of American diplomacy will lead future historians to ask why the US decided to throw so much away, so swiftly and so senselessly.

The writer is Professor of Politics at Princeton University.

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WISDOM CORNER

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

MARIE CURIE

All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

LEO TOLSTOY

NIKOLA TESLA

FOCUS LABOUR RIGHTS

FROM LAW TO CODE

In legal discourse, the terms law and code are often loosely used, yet they embody fundamentally different ideas with far-reaching consequences for governance and social justice. This distinction becomes critically important when examining India's recent transition from a protective, welfare-oriented labour law regime to a consolidated framework of four Labour Codes.

In its classical sense, law is a broad and evolving concept. Jurists have defined law in multiple ways, but a commonly accepted understanding is found in Salmon's definition: law is "the body of principles recognised and applied by the State in the administration of justice." Similarly, the Supreme Court in *State of Madras v. VG Row* (1952) observed that law is not merely a set of rules but a mechanism to balance individual liberty with social order under constitutional values. Law thus includes statutes, constitutional provisions, judicial precedents, customs, conventions and principles of natural justice.

A code, on the other hand, is a specific legislative technique. Black's Law Dictionary defines a code as "a systematic collection, compendium, or revision of laws, rules, or regulations that relate to a particular subject." The Supreme Court echoed this understanding in *RS Nayak v. AR Antulay* (1984), where it described a code as a "complete and exhaustive statement of law on a subject, intended to replace scattered enactments." Therefore, while law is organic and multi-sourced, a code is rigidly statutory, structured and intended to standardise application.

Judicial practice illustrates this distinction clearly. In *Joseph Shine v. Union of India* (2018), the Supreme Court struck down Section 497 of the IPC, holding that even a comprehensive code must yield to constitutional morality and fundamental rights. This reaffirmed that codes do not exist in isolation; they are subordinate to constitutional law and judicial interpretation.



While economic growth is essential, the Constitution does not permit growth at the cost of dignity, security and collective rights of workers

This conceptual background is essential to understand the implications of India's labour law overhaul. Historically, Indian labour laws were not merely regulatory instruments; they were expressions of constitutional commitment to social and economic justice under Articles 14, 19, 21, 23 and the Directive Principles of State Policy. Laws such as the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948 and the Factories Act, 1948 emerged from decades of struggle, judicial refinement and tripartite consensus involving workers, employers and the State.

The consolidation of 29 such laws into four Labour Codes – on Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions – has been officially justified on grounds of simplification, ease of doing business and uniformity. However, codification in this context has not been a neutral exercise of organisation; it has significantly altered substantive rights, enforcement mechanisms and power balances, often to the detriment of workers.

The most troubling aspect of the new regime lies in its implementation philosophy. Unlike earlier labour laws that prioritised protection, the codes emphasise flexibility, employer discretion and executive rule-making. The Industrial Relations Code, for instance, raises the threshold for mandatory government approval for layoffs, retrenchment and closure from 100 to 300 workers. While

presented as an administrative reform, this change effectively removes job security for a vast segment of the organised workforce. The Supreme Court in *Workmen of Meenakshi Mills v. Meenakshi Mills Ltd.* (1992) had earlier upheld prior restrictions precisely because sudden unemployment threatens the right to livelihood under Article 21. The new code departs from this constitutional sensitivity.

Equally problematic is the dilution of collective bargaining rights. By tightening conditions for legal strikes and increasing procedural barriers, the Industrial Relations Code weakens trade unions' negotiating power.

The Code on Wages, while projecting universal minimum wages, leaves critical determinations to executive notifications. Without strong enforcement machinery and independent wage boards, minimum wages risk becoming not a living wage but a statutory formality. Past judicial interventions, such as in *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India* (1982), treated payment below minimum wage as forced labour under Article 23. The present code, however, weakens inspection systems and replaces them with "facilitation" models, undermining deterrence against wage violations.

The Code on Social Security is often cited as progressive for extending coverage to gig and platform workers. In practice, however, it creates entitlements without enforceable guarantees.

Benefits are dependent on schemes yet to be notified, budgetary discretion and employer contributions that remain undefined. The Supreme Court in *LIC of India v. Consumer Education and Research Centre* (1995) held that social security is an intrinsic part of the right to life. A framework that promises inclusion without legal certainty risks becoming symbolic rather than substantive.

Perhaps the most significant concern is the method of enforcement. The labour inspector, once a watchdog against exploitation, has been transformed into a "facilitator," reducing the likelihood of surprise inspections and criminal accountability. This administrative softening contrasts sharply with judicial observations in *M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu* (1996), where strict enforcement was deemed essential to prevent labour abuse.

Another serious issue is federal unevenness. Labour being a concurrent subject, the effectiveness of the codes depends on state-level rules. This has resulted in fragmented and delayed implementation, legal uncertainty and differential standards across states.

Workers' rights, which should be uniform and fundamental, now vary based on administrative readiness and political priorities.

Ultimately, the transformation of labour laws into codes reflects a deeper ideological shift. Codification has been used not merely to consolidate but to recalibrate labour relations in favour of capital mobility and investment competitiveness. While economic growth is essential, the Constitution does not permit growth at the cost of dignity, security and collective rights of workers.

The true test of the new Labour Codes will not be in their textual elegance but in whether courts, governments and society can restore the constitutional spirit that once defined India's labour law regime.

The writer is a service union representative and columnist.

SPECTRUM PUBLIC HEALTH

Water contamination: How states ignore warnings



Dhurjati Mukherjee

WATER CONTAMINATION IN INDIA HAS HIGH ECONOMIC COSTS, DUE TO THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF IT

The recent deaths of over 16 persons (with unofficial estimates suggesting the number could be as high as 20), coupled with an outbreak of diseases and the hospitalisation of hundreds in Indore—one of the nation's most reputedly clean cities—underscore significant concerns regarding drinking water contamination and the response by state and municipal authorities. A recent report from the Union government, conducted under the Jal Jeevan Mission, revealed that 38.7% of drinking water samples from rural areas in Madhya Pradesh were deemed non-potable, highlighting ongoing risks within village water supply systems.

Another report by the MP State Pollution Control Board had cautioned mixing of sewage with drinking water sources in Bhagirathpura, one of the hotspots along with 58 other spots in Indore way back in 2016-17. Sadly, such assessments are not seriously taken. There are now reports of sewage contamination of drinking water in Gandhinagar in

Gujarat and Bangalore which are reportedly grappling with a similar public health scare.

Additionally, a report of the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has noted that many states, especially Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, face widespread contamination. It pointed out that arsenic contamination is a major concern in the Ganges and Brahmaputra river basins and despite various studies is largely prevalent in West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha and very little has been done to counter such contamination in an effective manner. Uranium contamination, though less widespread, has been sporadically detected in parts of Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

The highest uranium concentration was observed in Punjab, where over half of the samples exceeded the limit, followed by Haryana, Karnataka and UP. Discharge of untreated industrial waste, excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides, improper waste disposal and sewage leakage in urban areas and over-extraction in groundwater may be listed as key factors for groundwater quality decline.

If even warnings do not matter and if a minimum need of potable water cannot be supplied to suburbs of a big city, one may imagine the situation in remote and backward areas of the country. It is indeed tragic that after over 75 years of Independence, safe and potable water cannot be supplied throughout the length and breadth of the country though we now claim to have emerged as the fourth largest economy.

As per as per government figures under Jal Jeevan Mission, 81% of rural households have tap water connections under the Jal Jeevan Mission, as of mid-2025. Though the figures may not be realistic, the problem lies in the quality of water. It has repeatedly been stressed that there is an urgent need to invent a low-cost spectrometer that measures TDS, heavy metals, nitrates, phosphates and microbial indicators. Whether AI can help in this regard is not known but it

is understood that experiments to this effect are being carried out by various research institutions. This is necessary as clean water must be made available at around ₹5 per 20 litres per family as the supply system may not be dependable.

It is a well-known fact that water contamination in India has high economic costs, due to the health and environmental impacts of it. The cost of environmental degradation due to water contamination is estimated to be \$80 billion a year, whereas the health costs are estimated to be \$6.7-8.7 billion per year.

Protocols for monitoring water quality are largely absent in much of the country, raising concerns about the effectiveness of state pollution control boards and municipal bodies in providing safe drinking water. Most citizens rely on municipal supplies and lack resources to regularly purify their water, so ensuring free potable water should be a top priority for any government. The big question is how soon will the ruling elite recognise the urgency?

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

Orissa POST

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Asymmetrical expectations

Sir, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit to India, his first in Asia, signals Europe's renewed courtship of New Delhi amid a global churn. With Germany anchoring the European Union's economy, the visit was clearly about preparing ground for the long-pending EU-India free trade agreement and broader strategic alignment. Yet, the outcomes—Joint Declarations of Interest and MoUs—underline a familiar pattern: ambition racing ahead of execution. While defence industrial cooperation and investment pitches are welcome, nudging India to reduce ties with Russia betrays a selective realism, especially when Germany's own trade dependence on China remains deep. Strategic convergence cannot be built on asymmetrical expectations. Equally, unresolved humanitarian issues such as the Arika Shah case dilute the moral high ground Europe often claims. Engagement is promising, but credibility demands consistency—in geopolitics and principles alike.

Gopalaswamy J. CHENNAI

Lifestyle diseases

Sir, Growing obesity is a major cause of concern now a days. Pizzas, burgers, sandwiches and momos have replaced our traditional food. Junk food is high in salt and low in fibre. It aids obesity. Regular intake of junk food causes mental health issues and bodily diseases. Many employees of IT and other industries are afflicted with obesity. Gone are those days when we ate home cooked foods and drank revitalizing beverages. In today's fast moving world nobody has time to cook. The result is obvious. Diabetes, high blood pressure, fatty liver and high cholesterol are becoming all too common due to growing obesity among the population. An obese body is prone to heart attack and brain stroke. Obesity is the mother of all diseases. However, obesity is a lifestyle disease. Regular exercise can ward off obesity. Meditation, moderate eating, and breathing exercises can go a long way in preventing obesity. With these approaches, obesity can be overcome.

Prabhudutt Dash, BHUBANESWAR

WISDOM CORNER

Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.

MARIE CURIE

All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

LEO TOLSTOY

Our virtues and our failings are inseparable, like force and matter. When they separate, man is no more.

NIKOLA TESLA



Art should be used to fight those trying to destroy peace: Pinarayi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Thrissur (Kerala), Jan 14: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Wednesday said art should not just bring pleasure, it should awaken people to the "burning experiences of life" and fight against those who try to destroy peace and happiness in the name of religion.

Vijayan was speaking after inaugurating the 64th Kerala School Kalolsavam (art festival) here where around 14,000 students will participate in 249 events at 24 venues, named after flowers, in Thrissur, which is considered as cultural capital of the state.

The CM said that in the past, various art forms were confined to a particular caste or religion due to the feudal system and social evils like untouchability prevalent at that time.

"With the end of feudalism and the birth of a new era based on democracy and secularism, the nature of arts changed. All arts became everyone's. Art brought secularism and democracy to life. School art festivals played a vital role in it," he said.

Referring to Kalamandalam Hyderali, a great singer from Thrissur district, the CM said that the artist had faced some "unfortunate experiences" on account of his religion.

"Being humiliated for being born in a different religion cannot be accepted in a democratic society," Vijayan said, addressing a gathering of students, parents and dignitaries, including Union Minister of State for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Tourism Suresh Gopi.

In his speech, the CM said that a broad mind to assimilate the experiences of people of other religions is what "makes us civilised and cultured".

But now, there were some people who were trying to confine art within a particular religion, he said.

Such persons contend that Muslims should not learn 'Bharatanatyam' and Hindus should not participate in 'Oppana', to create problems, he added.

"Even children's Christmas carols were attacked in the

country. In some places, Christmas holidays were abolished. Communalists will always try to create riots anywhere in the name of religion. Things are reaching a point where even characters in films are not allowed to be named Janaki, Sita, etc. Art is also a good weapon to fight against such rioters who destroy peace and happiness," he said.

Such moves should be blown to the wind by the new generation who should present the arts without looking at caste or religion, the CM said.

"May you be able to reject all divisive ideas that divide people and uphold art that unites minds. Let that be the message of this school art festival," he said. Subsequently, in an apparent response to the CM's remarks, Gopi, in his brief speech, said he was not going to reply to the "political statements" in order to "uphold the importance and dignity of the event".

"There are clear answers to those remarks and people are aware of the same," he added.

In his speech, the CM also said that when the art festival first commenced in 1956, it was called a youth festival and there were only 200 participants.

"The purpose of art is to make good human beings. That art should not be used for anything else," he added.

'CONNECT TO WORK' SCHEME

Kerala approves revised guidelines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 14: The Kerala Cabinet Wednesday approved revised guidelines for the 'connect to work' scheme, aimed at improving youth employment prospects through skill development and financial support.

Under the revised norms, applicants must be permanent residents of the state, aged between 18 and 30 years, with an annual family income not exceeding Rs 5 lakh, a CMO statement said.

Eligible candidates should either be undergoing skill training at recognised government, public sector or private institutions, universities, and deemed universities, or preparing for competitive examinations conducted by the UPSC, Kerala PSC, Staff Selection Commission, armed forces, banks, railways, and other central and state recruitment agencies. Chaired by CM Pinarayi Vijayan, the cabinet also decided that scholarships will be provided to the first five lakh eligible applicants.

Beneficiaries will receive a monthly scholarship of Rs 1,000 for 12 months, transferred directly to their bank accounts through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system.

The scheme will be implemented through the Employment Department, and applications can be submitted via the portal employment.kerala.gov.in.

MP govt orders premature release of 87 life convicts on Republic Day

AGENCIES

Bhopal, Jan 14: In a major decision ahead of the 77th Republic Day, the Madhya Pradesh (MP) government has approved the premature release of 87 life-term convicts from prisons across the state.

The Jail department issued the order in line with guidelines under a directive dated May 27, 2025, after a detailed review of 481 cases.

According to an official statement, district-level committees examined each case based on legal provisions, case background and relevant facts. Of the total reviewed, 394 convicts were found ineligible for early release.

The decision has been taken under Sections 432, 433 and 433(A) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, which empower the state to remit or commute sentences under specific conditions.

Authorities clarified that the releases will be subject to strict safeguards.

Prisoners with pending appeals in the High Court or the Supreme Court will only be eligible if their cases are resolved by January 26, 2026.

Those with fines must pay them or serve additional time, while convicts with sentences remaining in other cases will have to complete those before release.

Individuals facing pending trials will continue as un-



Officials said rejections were primarily in cases where convicts had not completed 20 years of imprisonment, including remissions, as required under state policy

convicts had not completed 20 years of imprisonment, including remissions, as required under state policy.

The move, timed with Republic Day, is part of an annual gesture aimed at promoting rehabilitation and reducing prison overcrowding, while ensuring public safety through case-by-case scrutiny.

Prison reform advocates have welcomed the decision, describing it as consistent with humanitarian principles. However, they stressed the importance of monitoring post-release behaviour to ensure reintegration into society.

With MP's prison housing thousands of inmates, such initiatives reflect the government's effort to balance justice with mercy. The releases are scheduled to take place January 26, symbolising hope, renewal and the spirit of freedom on Republic Day.

KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE

Bose Krishnamachari steps down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thousands offer prayers at Sabarimala on Makaravilakku

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pathanamthitta (Kerala), Jan 14: Thousands of devotees thronged the hill shrine of Lord Ayyappa here Wednesday to witness the 'Makaravilakku', marking the climax of the annual two-month-long pilgrimage season, amid heavy rush.

Clad in black attire and carrying the traditional 'irumudi kettu' on their heads, pilgrims waited for hours along the forest pathways and temple precincts to have darshan of the deity on the auspicious day.

Undeterred by the crowd, devotees continuously chanted the 'Swamiye Saranam Ayyappa' mantras as they moved slowly towards the sanctum sanctorum. In the evening, the sacred ornaments known as 'thiruvabharanam' were brought to the hill temple from the Pandalam palace, around 85 km away, in a ceremonial procession that began two days earlier.

Some minutes after the aarti, the 'makara jyothi', regarded by devotees as a divine light, appeared on the eastern horizon above Ponnambalamedu, a hillock located about eight km from the shrine, triggering loud chants of devotion.

Thousands of pilgrims gathered at various viewpoints in and around Sabarimala to witness the celestial event.

The state government and the TDB, which manages the shrine, had made extensive arrangements for crowd control and the safety of devotees across the temple complex and surrounding areas.

The jewels were later re-



People take a holy dip in the Narmada river on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' festival, in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Saksham Anganwadis transforming early childhood

AGENCIES



Neemuch, Jan 14: The Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan initiative, launched under the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is emerging as a transformative step in the field of women and child development. It is fast turning traditional Anganwadi centres into modern, vibrant hubs of learning, nutrition, and care.

Anganwadi centres under the scheme are being upgraded beyond their "conventional role of nutrition distribution". They are now being developed as well-equipped centres that are offering a blend of education, health, and recreation. Facilities such as LED televisions, RO water filters, modern teaching aids, toys, hygienic meal arrangements, and nutrition gardens are being provided, aimed at ensuring a child-friendly and engaging environment. This initiative has significantly contributed to the holistic development of children while also enhancing awareness among mothers regarding nutrition and health.

In Neemuch district, 58 Anganwadi centres have already been developed as Saksham Anganwadis. These centres offer smart learning, clean

drinking water, and nutritious meals, creating a sense of trust and confidence among families.

The smiling faces of children and the growing sense of security among mothers of the kids bear testimony to the success of the scheme. The initiative reflects a strong commitment to nurturing not only today's children but also the future of the nation.

As part of this effort, Anganwadi Centre No. 4 in Gram Panchayat Bharbhadiya and the Anganwadi Centre in Gram Panchayat Girdoda have also been up-

graded under the scheme.

According to officials, children at these centres are benefiting from digital learning through LED TVs, along with educational materials and play equipment. These items support their overall development. Nutrition exhibitions are regularly organised at the centres. At the same time, the first and third Tuesdays of every month are observed as Mangal Diwas, featuring 'Godhi Bhairai' programmes for pregnant women and 'Suposhan Diwas' activities.

Children attending the An-

ganwadi centres are receiving early education in an engaging, play-based manner, ensuring their all-around development. Pregnant women are provided with nutritious and healthily balanced meals, along with vaccination and health guidance. These ceremonies are also organised at the centres to promote maternal health and community participation.

Speaking on the initiative, Neemuch District Programme Officer (Women and Child Development) Ankita Pandya said that under the Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 schemes, special attention is

In Neemuch district, 58 Anganwadi centres have already been developed as Saksham Anganwadis. These centres offer smart learning, clean drinking water, and nutritious meals, creating a sense of trust and confidence among families

being given to the upgradation of Anganwadi centres and child nutrition. She informed that 58 Anganwadi centres have already been developed in the first phase, with 268 more selected for the second phase. Facilities such as electricity, toilets, drinking water, TV installation, nutrition gardens, rainwater harvesting, and toys for children have been ensured. She added that special focus is being laid on the nutrition of pregnant women and malnourished children, with four Mangal Diwas events organised every month as community celebrations.

Discussion on book about Babur cancelled at BLF; writer protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Jan 14: Architect-turned-writer Aaabhas Maldahiyar Wednesday took to X to lament the cancellation of a discussion on his book about Mughal Emperor Babur at the Bhopal Literature and Art Festival (BLF).

Police apprehended that right-wing organisations would oppose the event and there would be vandalism, claimed the organisers of the festival which was held from January 9 to 11.

Posting on X an open letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Maldahiyar said a session on his book 'Babur: The Quest for Hindustan' was cancelled after a newspaper wrongly accused him of trying to glorify Babur.

"On the basis of these baseless accusations, some so-called Hindu organisations issued serious threats, which included threats to burn my book and damage bookstores," he said.

Maldahiyar told PTI over phone from Bengaluru that it was unfortunate that without reading the book, 'Swadesh' newspaper published a story

which led to the cancellation of the event.

The newspaper, however, claimed that they were not against the writer or the book, but considered Babur to be "irrelevant".

According to Maldahiyar, he sent a clarification to the newspaper which was not published. Subsequently, the organisers arranged a session on 'Ancient Architecture', he said. Swadesh editor Atul Tare told PTI that they had no objection to the book or the author.

"What is or is not there in the book, is not an issue for us. Our protest is that Ram Mandir is already established. The flag has been hoisted. And this year, as Modi ji says, is for taking forward positive issues. This is the 150th year of Vande Mataram. It is the centenary year of the Sangh. So there should be many positive issues," said Tare.

"We have raised questions on the relevance of that issue for us and also on the entire working system of BLF. And you must have seen that without reading the book, 'Swadesh' newspaper published a story

national

of the
day quote

It is to the credit of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra that the protection of democracy and the Constitution of India became a central feature of the Lok Sabha 2024 election campaign and our public discourse today

JAIRAM RAMESH | CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY IN-CHARGE COMMUNICATIONS

Operation Sindoor is still ongoing, and we are keeping a close watch on every move of the enemy

UPENDRA DWIVEDI | ARMY CHIEF GENERAL

The latest order for mosques is interference in our religious affairs. If they have to do it, then they should start with other religions. Let them seek the details about priests in temples, and in which temple can shudras go and in which can Brahmins go

MEHBOoba MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

SHORT TAKES

ZUBEEN GARG DEATH

SINGER WAS DRUNK, HAD DECLINED LIFE JACKET: S'PORE

Zubeen Garg was severely intoxicated and several witnesses saw him trying to swim back to the yacht when he went limp and began floating with his face in the water

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Singapore, Jan 14: Popular Indian singer-songwriter Zubeen Garg was "severely intoxicated" and had drowned off Lazarus Island after declining a life jacket last September, a coroner's court in Singapore was told Wednesday.

Garg, 52, was with a yacht party September 19, 2025, when he died of drowning a day before he was slated to perform at the North East India Festival in Singapore.

The singer initially wore a life jacket but removed it and later declined to put on a second one offered to him, the chief investigating officer told the court in the opening of the inquiry, Channel News Asia reported.

At the time, Garg was also severely intoxicated and several witnesses saw him trying to swim back to the yacht when he went limp and began floating with his face in the water, the Channel said quoting the officer. Garg was promptly rescued

back to the yacht and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) was administered to him, but he was pronounced dead later that same day.

The singer had a medical history of hypertension and epilepsy, with his last known epileptic episode in 2024, the court was told.

However, it is unclear if he had taken his regular medicine for epilepsy on the day of the incident, with the evidence of eyewitnesses insufficient to establish that he had actually

taken it, it was added.

The Singapore police do not suspect any foul play in his death, according to the Channel report. A total of 35 witnesses are slated for the inquiry, including witnesses on the yacht, the boat captain, police officers and paramedics.

The chief investigating officer in the case told the court that Garg and 20-odd people on the yacht, including his friends and colleagues, had some snacks, drinks and alcohol on the boat.

Several witnesses said they saw Garg drinking alcohol, with one witness saying he had consumed a few cups of liquor, gin and whisky, along with a few sips of Guinness Stout, the Channel said.

An autopsy performed on Garg determined the cause of death to be drowning. Some injuries were found on his body but they were found to have been sustained during CPR and rescue efforts, the Channel report said. Medications for his hypertension and epilepsy were found in his blood, with no other drugs detected.

A toxicology analysis found that Garg had a blood alcohol concentration of 333 milligrams per 100ml of blood, which suggests severe intoxication resulting in impaired coordination and reflexes, the court was told.

For comparison, the legal limit in Singapore is 80 milligrams per 100ml of blood. The police also seized a 750ml bottle of Scotch whisky with 43 per cent alcohol from Garg's hotel room that was 25 per cent full.

29 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh's Sukma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



A woman performs rituals as people take a holy dip at the Sangam on the occasion of 'Makar Sankranti' festival, during the ongoing 'Magh Mela', in Prayagraj, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

6 women killed in car-truck collision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sukma (Chhattisgarh), Jan 14: As many as 29 Naxalites surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district Wednesday, a senior official said.

The cadres, all active as members of the frontal wings of the outlawed CPI (Maoist), turned themselves in before senior police and CRPF officials here under "Poona Margem" (from rehabilitation to social reintegration) initiative, Sukma Superintendent of Police Kiran Chavhan said.

They were impressed by the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, he said. Of them, Podiam Budhra, head of Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Majdoor Sangathan (DAKMS - frontal wing of Maoists) in the Gogunda area, was carrying a reward of Rs 2 lakh on his head.

The other cadres were members of DAKMS, militia, and Janata Sarkar wings of the Maoists, the official said.

The establishment of a security camp in the Gogunda area recently played a crucial role in the surrender. Following the setting up of the camp, intensified anti-Naxal operations, sustained pressure and continuous search operations significantly curtailed Maoist activities in the region, he said.

Gogunda area, owing to its difficult and remote terrain, was earlier considered a safe and strategic base for the Maoists' Darbha division.

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CBI to probe VOIP scam in Bihar

New Delhi: The CBI has taken over the investigation into an alleged illegal phone exchange operating from Narayanpur village in Bihar which was converting VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) calls into voice calls using a sophisticated setup to commit cybercrimes, officials said Wednesday. The probe agency registered an FIR against mastermind Mukesh Kumar, who was operating the exchange in Narayanpur village in Bhojpur, besides Rejaul Haque and Muktar Hossain, the Point of Sale operators based in Malda who had allegedly sold 67 suspicious SIMs used by Kumar.

Mumbai, Jan 14: As Maharashtra heads to the elections Thursday for 29 municipal corporations, the spotlight is firmly on Mumbai, where the BJP-led Mahayuti is locked in a keen battle with the United Thackeray cousins Raj and Uddhav for control of the cash-rich BMC.

Polling for the 2,869 seats spread across 893 wards will begin at 7.30 am and end at 5.30 pm. A total of 3.48 crore voters are eligible to decide the fate of 15,931 candidates. In the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), whose annual

budget is over Rs 74,400 crore, 1,700 candidates are vying for 227 seats in elections being held after a four-year delay.

Except for Mumbai, the other urban bodies have multi-member wards. Vote count will take place January 16.

The polls, being held after a gap of several years due to various legal and administrative delays, are being seen as a "mini-assembly" battle that will test the ground strength of the split factions of the Shiv Sena and the NCP, as well as the electoral prowess of the ruling Mahayuti and the Congress.

Chief Minister Devendra

Fadnavis, who spearheaded the campaign for BJP-led Mahayuti, has predicted that MNS leader Raj Thackeray would emerge as the biggest loser in his alliance with cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav.

He dismissed the coming together of rival NCP factions in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad as merely a localised development.

The CM led the ruling alliance's canvassing, traversing the state to campaign for candidates of the Mahayuti, which includes his party BJP and the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

These are the first BMC polls since the 2022 split in the Shiv

Sena when Eknath Shinde broke away with a majority of the party's MLAs. The undivided Shiv Sena held sway over India's richest civic body for 25 years (1997-2022).

More than 25,000 police personnel will be deployed across Mumbai to oversee elections to the BMC and vote counting.

In a significant political turn ahead of the elections, estranged cousins Uddhav and Raj Thackeray reunited after two decades in their bid to consolidate Marathi votes even as rival NCP factions forged a local alliance in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad.

Jumping on the bandwagon, Rural Development Minister Anirudh Singh Wednesday defended the officers and said it is not right to blame them for "one's own mistakes".

"Ministers should also know how to get work done from the officers," he told reporters here.

The remarks by Anirudh Singh came a day after PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh Tuesday asserted that unfair distribution of public funds by IAS and IPS officers posted in the state will not be tolerated.

Accusing some IAS and IPS officers from UP and Bihar of undermining the spirit of Himachal Pradesh, the PWD minister claimed they were misusing the central funds meant for various road and other projects.

Reacting to Vikramaditya Singh's statement, Revenue and Horticulture Minister Jagat Singh Negi Tuesday said, "I do not agree with the sweeping statement as several officers from outside the state are doing good work." He urged the PWD minister to name the officers instead of making a general statement.

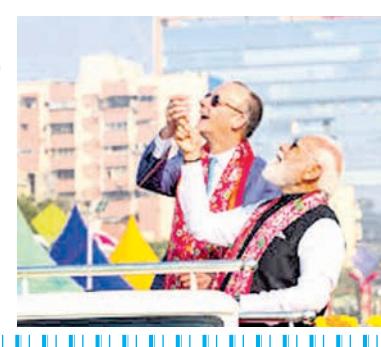
In December last year, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri had said that officials conspired against the ruling Congress government and visiting the houses of BJP leaders at night would be "finished" under the cover of darkness.

There is a need for Indianisation of administrative practices in tune with Indian values and contemporary governance needs

JITENDRA SINGH | UNION MINISTER

INDIA'S HIGH-FLYING GIFT FOR MERZ

A wall-mountable silk kite crafted from one of India's most prestigious textiles, Patola silk, and a custom pilot logbook made from high-quality leather are among the gifts presented to German Chancellor Friedrich Merz during his just-concluded visit to India. The gifts include a hand-crafted brass replica of Chancellor Merz's Diamond DA62 propeller aircraft



I-PAC RAIDS

Cal HC disposes of TMC's petition

ED says it did not seize anything from premises



Salt Lake and its director's residence on Loudon Street in south Kolkata during the raids.

The high court adjourned the central agency's plea after the ASG stated that it had filed two petitions before the Supreme Court with prayers, which are almost identical to the present application before it.

Raju argued that when a similar issue is pending before the apex court, a high court should refrain from hearing a matter on the same subject.

The Supreme Court is slated to hear Thursday the ED's plea, alleging interference and obstruction by the West Bengal government, including by Banerjee, in its probe and search operation at the I-PAC office and the premises of its director, Pratik Jain, in connection with an alleged coal-pilferage scam.

According to the cause list of the apex court, a bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Vipul Pancholi is likely to hear the matter.

The West Bengal government has also filed a caveat in the top court, seeking that no order should be passed without hearing it in connection with the ED raids against the political consultancy firm.

During Wednesday's hearing, TMC's counsel Menaka Guruswamy submitted that political parties have a right to privacy, as upheld by a Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court.

War of words erupts between ministers over working of IAS, IPS officers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla, Jan 14: Himachal Pradesh Cabinet colleagues have engaged in a war of words over the functioning of IAS and IPS officers from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

While some ministers have questioned the loyalty of officers, others have come out in their support saying they are doing good work.

Jumping on the bandwagon, Rural Development Minister Anirudh Singh Wednesday defended the officers and said it is not right to blame them for "one's own mistakes".

"Ministers should also know how to get work done from the officers," he told reporters here.

The remarks by Anirudh Singh came a day after PWD Minister Vikramaditya Singh Tuesday asserted that unfair distribution of public funds by IAS and IPS officers posted in the state will not be tolerated.

Accusing some IAS and IPS officers from UP and Bihar of undermining the spirit of Himachal Pradesh, the PWD minister claimed they were misusing the central funds meant for various road and other projects.

Reacting to Vikramaditya Singh's statement, Revenue and Horticulture Minister Jagat Singh Negi Tuesday said, "I do not agree with the sweeping statement as several officers from outside the state are doing good work." He urged the PWD minister to name the officers instead of making a general statement.

In December last year, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri had said that officials conspired against the ruling Congress government and visiting the houses of BJP leaders at night would be "finished" under the cover of darkness.

Encroachments, illegal mining in Aravallis severely impacted air quality

THE ARAVALLI RANGE, ONE OF THE OLDEST MOUNTAIN SYSTEMS GLOBALLY, IS A CRITICAL NATURAL BARRIER AND LIFE-SUSTAINING ECOSYSTEM FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (NCR) AND THE INDO-GANGETIC PLAINS OF INDIA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: Encroachments, deforestation, illegal mining and urban infrastructure expansion in the Aravalli ranges have severely impacted groundwater recharge, biodiversity, air quality and climate regulation, according to a study.

Extensive diversion of forestlands, particularly around Sariska and Bardoli Wildlife Sanctuaries prior to the 1980s, led to a substantial decline in native forest cover, fragmenting critical wildlife habitats and water catchments, it noted.

The research, Eco-restoration of the Aravalli Landscape, was undertaken by Sankala Foundation with support from the Embassy of Denmark in India and the Haryana State Forest Department.



ter Bhupender Yadav.

"Encroachments, deforestation, illegal mining, and urban infrastructure expansion have severely impacted groundwater recharge, biodiversity, air quality, and climate regulation in this fragile ecosystem and have weakened the Aravalli's capacity to act as a green barrier, accelerating desertification and

threatening the ecological stability of the northern plains," the study read.

The Sankala Foundation's initiative addresses these challenges through a site-specific, evidence-based, and community-inclusive ecological restoration model of a pilot area of four villages in the Aravalli belt of Gurugram, focusing on

the southern part of the district.

The study aims to create a replicable eco-restoration framework that integrates scientific analysis, community participation, and adaptive governance.

The study found that forest patches in the project area are highly degraded, fragmented, and invaded by species such as Prosopis juliflora, Lantana camara, and Parthenium hysterophorus. These invasive species have significantly suppressed native biodiversity and altered ecological functions.

"All villages report complete reliance on groundwater for irrigation. This overdependence has contributed to the depletion of natural aquifers and adversely affected forest health. A substantial proportion of households (over 43 pc) rely on forests for firewood, medicinal plants,

and fodder. Women play a key role in NTFP collection and resource management. However, alternative livelihoods remain limited," it added.

The study noted that semi-arid climate, rising temperatures, and scattered rainfall make restoration both urgent and complex. Ecosystem-based adaptation measures such as afforestation and water retention are essential for climate resilience.

The proposed eco-restoration model offers a robust framework for rehabilitating degraded forest patches in urbanising regions of the Aravalli range.

"This framework sets out a phased, adaptive approach, beginning with comprehensive baseline assessments, moving through targeted restoration measures, and culminating in long-term monitoring and policy integration," it said.

national



Goa has recorded a crime detection rate of 86 per cent, which is the highest in the country

PRAMOD SAWANT | CHIEF MINISTER, GOA

MUMBAI ARTIST FINALIST FOR \$1MN GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE

Rouba Nagi, an art and social science teacher based in Mumbai, was named a top 10 finalist for the 1-million-dollar Global Teacher Prize 2026 in London Wednesday. Nagi works on education in slums and rural communities across India as founder of the Rouba Nagi Art Foundation and Missal India



UAPA CASE

Delhi court convicts Kashmiri separatist Asiya Andrabi

Andrabi, the founder of the all-women separatist group DeM in 1987, was arrested in April 2018 and charges were framed against her under the UAPA for allegedly conspiring to commit terrorist acts, being members of a terrorist organisation, and providing support to such groups

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Jan 14: In a significant development, a special court here Wednesday convicted Kashmiri separatist Asiya Andrabi and two others for offences including conspiracy to wage war against the country and being members of a terrorist organisation under stringent anti-terror law UAPA.

Andrabi, the founder of the all-women separatist group Dukhtaraan-e-Millat (DeM) in 1987, was arrested in April 2018 and charges were framed against her under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for allegedly conspiring to commit terrorist acts, being members of a terrorist organisation, and providing support to such groups.

Additional Sessions Judge Chander Jit Singh, as the special National Investigation Agency (NIA) judge, had heard the case against Andrabi and her two associates - Sofi Fehmeeda and Nahida Nasreen.

The special judge found them guilty of offences under UAPA sections 18 (punishment for conspiracy) and 38 (offence relating to membership of a terrorist organisation) Wednesday.

The court also convicted the three under IPC sections 153 A (promoting enmity between different groups), 153B (imputations, assertions prejudicial to national-integration), 121-

A (conspiracy to wage war against Government of India), 120B (criminal conspiracy) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief).

The accused were physically present in the packed courtroom in the afternoon amid tight security for pronouncement of the judgement.

The court has now listed the case January 17 for hearing arguments on the quantum of sentence which may exceed imprisonment for life for the offences under the stringent provisions of the anti-terror law.

Andrabi and her two associates were formally charged with multiple offences under the stringent UAPA and the IPC in February 2021.

It was alleged that they plotted to wage war against the country, besides conspiring to carry out terror-related activities. In April 2018, on

directions of the Union Home Ministry, the NIA registered a case against them as well as the DeM.

According to the FIR, the central government has received information that Asiya Andrabi and her associates namely Sofi Fehmeeda and Nahida Nasreen are actively running a terrorist organisation named as 'Dukhtaran-E-Millat' (DeM) which is proscribed under the First Schedule to the UAPA.

"They are using various media platforms to spread insurrectionary imputations and hateful speeches that endanger the integrity, security and sovereignty of India. The DEM through Asiya Andrabi openly advocates secession of Jammu and Kashmir from the Union of India and has also called for Jihad and use of violence against India," the FIR alleged.

The sources said there will be no dilution of academic standards and that the revised percentile merely expands eligibility among already-qualified MBBS doctors.

NEET PG-2025 cutoffs lowered after two rounds of counselling

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: With over 18,000 postgraduate medical seats across the country remaining vacant, the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) has revised the qualifying percentiles for NEET-PG 2025 admissions, reducing it to zero percentile from 40 percentile for reserved categories.

According to the notice published by NBEMS Tuesday, the NEET PG cutoff for the general category has been reduced to seven percentile from 50.

The decision follows the completion of round two counselling. Official sources said the revision aims to ensure optimal utilisation of available seats, which are vital for expanding India's pool of trained medical specialists. Leaving such seats vacant undermines efforts to improve healthcare delivery and results in the loss of valuable educational resources, the sources said. NEET-PG serves as a ranking mechanism to facilitate transparent, merit-based allocation of seats through centralised counselling.

The previous percentile thresholds had restricted the pool of eligible candidates despite the availability of seats.

Listing the key highlights, official sources said the admissions remain strictly merit-based, determined by NEET-PG rank and candidate preferences.

Allotments will be made only through authorised counselling mechanisms and no direct or discretionary admissions are permitted. Inter-se merit and choice-based allocation will continue to guide seat distribution, the sources said.

The sources said there will be no dilution of academic standards and that the revised percentile merely expands eligibility among already-qualified MBBS doctors.

Looking forward to working closely with New Delhi: Gor



Gor, the 27th US ambassador to India, said it was an honour for him to serve in India at a time of such promise and opportunity in the US-India relationship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: US Ambassador Sergio Gor Wednesday said he was looking forward to working closely with New Delhi to advance shared priorities in areas of defence, trade, technology and critical minerals and to strengthen the overall partnership, as he presented his credentials to President Droupadi Murmu.

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"It is an honour to present my credentials to Indian President Murmu and to serve in India at a time of such promise and opportunity in the US-India relationship," he said.

"I look forward to working closely with the Government of India and the Indian people to advance our shared priorities in defence, trade, technology, and critical minerals, and to

further strengthen the partnership between our two great democracies," he added.

Prior to assuming his duties in New Delhi, Gor, 38, was assistant to the US President and Director of Presidential Personnel in the White House.

He arrived in New Delhi January 9 amid an unprecedented estrangement in ties between the two countries. The India-US ties have been reeling under severe stress after Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent including a 25 per cent additional duty for India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

Apart from the tariff, the relations witnessed a downturn on a number of other issues that included Trump's claim of ending the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year and Washington's new immigration policy. In an address at the US embassy, Gor said Monday that no country is as essential as India to the United States.

"You and I have an incredible once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redefine diplomacy. What it can accomplish could be the most consequential global partnership of this century," Gor had said.

Audit indicates 15 deaths linked to diarrhoea outbreak in Indore



so far confirmed the deaths of six persons due to vomiting and diarrhoea caused by drinking contaminated water.

Indore, Jan 14: An audit report has been submitted to the Indore administration on the deaths of 21 persons in Bhagirathpura, with findings suggesting 15 of the fatalities may be linked to a recent outbreak of vomiting and diarrhoea in the area, according to sources.

Five new cases of diarrhoea, linked to drinking contaminated water in the Bhagirathpura area of Indore, the country's cleanest city, were found Tuesday, a Madhya Pradesh health department official said.

Indore Chief Medical and Health Officer (CMHO) Dr Madhav Prasad Hasani said the new diarrhoea patients from Bhagirathpura visited the outpatient department (OPD) of health centres, where they were treated.

The local administration has

Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College here has submitted an 'audit' report to the administration on the deaths of 21 persons in Bhagirathpura.

Sources familiar with the contents of the report Tuesday said 15 of these deaths may be linked to the vomiting and diarrhoea outbreak in some way.

"A committee of senior doctors from the college was formed to analyse the causes of the deaths in Bhagirathpura. This committee has submitted its report," District Magistrate Shivam Verma told reporters on Tuesday. Verma, however, did not provide specific details about the 'death audit' report.

He said some fatalities in Bhagirathpura were likely due to vomiting and diarrhoea caused by unclean drinking water, but the deaths of some patients were unrelated to the outbreak.

The committee could not reach at any conclusion regarding the actual cause of death in some other cases, said the senior bureaucrat.

He said the district administration has so far provided financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh each to 18 affected families in Bhagirathpura.

Lift restrictions on news websites: Editors Guild to India, Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WATER CONTAMINATION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Jan 14: Editors Guild of India Wednesday urged governments of India and Pakistan to lift restrictions on news websites and restore access to cross border journalism.

In a statement here, the Guild admitted that there have been instances of media in both the countries crossing bounds of balanced and professional journalism and going overboard with misinformation.

"However, while such aberrations and instances of unethical journalism need to be dealt with more conscientiously, blocking all access is not the solution," the Guild said.

It said a blanket ban does not expunge ground realities, but only serves to build a climate of fear and mistrust.

"Such bans also run counter to the spirit of democracy and freedom of expression," it said.

INDIAN RAILWAYS' UNIQUE INITIATIVE



the railways into a "thought center" focused on holistic passenger satisfaction and cultural immersion.

A Symbol Of Unity In Diversity

India's strength lies in its diversity of language, attire, and especially

route, passengers can relish Kosha Paneer, while the Howrah-Puri route features Aloo Potol Bhaja, connecting travelers to Bengal's traditional kitchens. From Bihar, the famous Champaran Paneer and Champaran Chicken bring the rustic, earthy aroma of rural traditions to the tracks.

The Nagpur-Secunderabad route serves Kanda Poha, a staple Maharashtra breakfast. Simultaneously, the bold spices of Andhra Pradesh are showcased through Andhra Kodi Kura. On the CSMT-Madgaon line, Masala Upma offers a healthy, light alternative for coastal travelers. Gujarat's balanced flavors shine with Methi Thepla and Masala Lauki on the Sabarmati-Veraval route. Meanwhile, Odisha's comforting home-style cooking is represented by Aloo Phoolgobi on the Puri-bound trains.

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The Thiruvananthapuram routes offer a grand Keralite feast, including Appam, Kadala Curry, and the

sweet Palada Payasam, providing a complete immersion into the state's coconut-rich culinary legacy.

In the North, the Katra-Srinagar route introduces passengers to Dogri Ambal Kaddu and Kashmiri Tamatar Chaman, finishing with the iconic Keer Phirni.

Strengthening The Local Economy

Beyond the palate, this initiative serves a greater economic purpose. By sourcing local ingredients and employing traditional cooking techniques, Indian Railways is championing the "Local for Local" movement. This creates a robust supply chain that benefits regional farmers, local chefs, and small-scale entrepreneurs, ensuring that the progress of the railways translates into prosperity for the community.

Through this culinary revolution, the Vande Bharat Express is not just moving people across distances—it is bringing the heart of India to their plates.

of the day quote

India should take the next leap in promoting green technologies after it marked a record-breaking year in its clean energy journey in 2025, with non-fossil fuel installed capacity rising to 266.78 GW

CHANDRAJIT BANEREE | CII DIRECTOR GENERAL

Clients increasingly view Infosys as their AI partner with demonstrated expertise, innovation capabilities and strong delivery credentials. This has helped them unlock business potential and enhanced value realisation

SALIL PAREKH | INFOSYS CEO AND MD

2025 has been a year of purposeful and broad-based progress for us. What stands out is that our performance is rooted in consistent execution and long-term road map for India

PUSHY ARORA | MD AND CEO, SKODA AUTO VOLKSWAGEN INDIA

SHORT TAKES**India to grow at 7.2%: World Bank**

New Delhi: The World Bank has raised India's GDP growth forecast to 7.2 per cent for the current fiscal, up by 0.9 percentage points from its June projections, on the back of robust domestic demand and tax reforms. In its flagship report 'Global Economic Prospects', the World Bank also said growth in India is projected to slow to 6.5 per cent in 2026-27. The projection is based on the assumption that the 50-per cent import tariffs by the US remain in place throughout the forecast horizon. "Even so, India is expected to maintain the fastest growth rate among the world's largest economies," the report said.

Curtains on 10-min delivery

New Delhi: After Blinkit, major quick commerce players Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, and Flipkart Minutes have dropped their '10-minute' delivery branding following pressure from the government and labour rights groups over the welfare and safety of delivery partners. The move comes after Union Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in a meeting last week, urged quick commerce firms to prioritise worker safety by removing rigid 10-minute deadlines. It was being said that such hyper-fast delivery promises place undue stress on riders, potentially compromising their road safety. Quick commerce firms could not be immediately contacted for comments.

RBI nod to Japan's SMBC to set up wholly owned subsidiary

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Wednesday said it has granted "in-principle" approval to Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation (SMBC), Japan, for setting up a wholly owned subsidiary in India. SMBC is currently carrying on banking business in India in branch mode through its four branches in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Bengaluru. "The in-principle approval has been granted to the bank for setting up a wholly owned subsidiary (WOS) through conversion of its existing branches in India," the RBI said in a statement. The central bank further said it will consider granting a licence for commencement of banking business in the wholly owned subsidiary to SMBC on being satisfied that the bank has complied with the requisite conditions laid down by the RBI as part of 'in-principle' approval. In 2025, SMBC acquired 24.22 per cent stake in private sector lender YES Bank, to become its largest shareholder, while SBI continues to hold a significant stake of over 10 per cent.



You want to be on the edge of the latest technology. If I can bring that (upgrade) platform to home appliances and TV, that will enable consumers to recoup the resale value and move to the latest technology

JB PARK | SAMSUNG SOUTHWEST ASIA PRESIDENT AND CEO

India's trade deficit with China surges to \$116bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 14: India's exports to China posted a USD 5.5 billion increase compared to last year bucking the declining trend even as the trade deficit hit a record USD 116.12 billion, as per the annual trade data released by Chinese customs here Wednesday.

Bilateral trade, too, surged to an all time high to USD 155.62 in 2025, according to the data.

Indian exports to China which over the years struggled to make headway climbed to USD 19.75 billion between January and December last year, posting a 9.7 per cent increase, amounting to USD 5.5 billion, according to the data.

At the same time, Chinese exports to India increased 12.8 per cent to USD 135.87 billion last year.

While trade is picking up from both countries, the total bilateral trade surged to a record high of USD 155.62 billion in 2025, the year in which both countries faced US President Donald Trump's tariff hikes.

The trade deficit -- a constant problem in India-China trade -- touched a record high of USD 116.12 billion, crossing the USD 100-billion for the second time since 2023.

In 2024, the trade deficit was USD 99.21 billion with China's exports totalling to USD 113.45 billion, and India's outbound shipments to China stagnating at USD 14.25 billion.

China's annual trade data covers from January to December while India releases



its figures from March to April.

Observers said the USD 5.5 billion increase in Indian exports, though modest, is significant, pointing to a structural shift with items such as oil meals, marine products, telecom instruments and spices, making headway into the tough Chinese market, which is struggling to expand its domestic consumption.

Also, India over the years has been demanding China to open its IT, pharma, and agricultural produce, which are India's strong areas.

China's overall global trade continues to grow, defying trade tensions with the US.

Customs data showed that the surplus surged to a record of almost USD 1.2 trillion in 2025 an increase of 20 per cent compared to 2024, with exports at USD 3.77 trillion and imports at USD 2.58 trillion.

The growth in China's exports despite Trump tariff hike

was attributed to Beijing's diversification strategy.

Wang Jun, vice-minister of the General Administration of Customs, attributed China's robust export performance last year -- in the face of trade headwinds -- to supportive policies and the country's industrial depth.

"Our trading partners are increasingly diversified, and our risk-resilience has significantly strengthened," he told Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post.

Gary Ng, senior Asia-Pacific economist at French investment bank Natixis, noted that trade tensions remained, and external demand might not be as strong this year as in 2025, as most central banks no longer have much room for further rate cuts.

"I think Chinese exports will continue to grow in 2026, but at a slightly slower pace," Ng told the newspaper.

Rupee falls 11 paise to close at 90.34 against dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 14: The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day 11 paise lower at 90.34 against the US dollar Wednesday, as the likely central bank intervention was negated by a strong dollar, foreign outflows from capital markets, and elevated crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the rupee is likely to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and geopolitical tensions, however, rising odds of a rate cut amid softening inflation and any intervention by the central bank may support the rupee at lower levels.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.26 and touched the intra-day low of 90.38 and a high of 89.94 against the greenback. The currency finally ended the session at 90.34 against the dollar, down 11 paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee declined 6 paise to close at 90.23 against the US dollar.

"Indian rupee gained in early trade on likely central bank intervention. However, a strong dollar, FII outflows and a late fall in the domestic markets capped sharp gains," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Choudhary further added that "we expect the rupee to trade with negative bias on risk aversion in global markets and geopolitical tensions".

Traders now focus on the US Supreme Court ruling later in the day on the legality of the Liberation Day tariffs. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 89.95 to 90.50, he said.

INDIAN OIL TAPS ECUADOREAN CRUDE

Indian Oil Corp bought its first Ecuadorean Oriente crude cargo for end-March delivery via a tender, two trade sources said, as the country's top refiner expands its oil sourcing to partly replace some Russian oil. US and European Union sanctions on Russian producers and vessels are disrupting Russian oil imports, prompting Indian refiners to scout for alternative supplies



Silver zooms by ₹15,000 to hit ₹2.86 lakh/kg



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

scale yet another peak of Rs 1,46,500 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Wednesday. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 1,45,000 per 10 grams in the previous session.

In the past four sessions, the precious yellow metal prices have risen Rs 6,000, or 4.3 per cent, from Rs 1,40,500 per 10 grams on January 8.

So far this year, gold prices have gained Rs 8,800, or 6.4 per cent, from Rs 1,37,700 per 10 grams recorded on December 31, 2025.

The domestic bullion rally mirrors sharp gains in the overseas markets.

Spot silver breached USD 91 per ounce-mark for the first time, surging more than 5 per cent to a record of USD 91.56 per ounce while gold advanced by 1.14 per cent, to a fresh record of USD 4,640.13 per ounce.

Persistent geopolitical unrest across the globe and a weak dollar index boosted safe-haven demand, while softer inflation data increased expectations of a interest rate cut by the US Federal Reserve, underpinning safe-haven appeal," an expert said.

Stock markets extend losses for 2nd day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 14: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined Wednesday, extending their previous day's losses, due to weakness in IT, consumption, and select banking blue-chip stocks amid escalating geopolitical tensions. Besides, persistent foreign fund outflows and fresh tariff-related uncertainties also unnerved investors, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 244.98 points, or 0.29 per cent, to settle at 33,822.71. During the day, it fell 442.49 points or 0.52 per cent to 33,185.20. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 66.70 points, or 0.26 per cent, to 25,665.60.

Selective buying in markets and investors' interest in metals, commodities, and energy stocks provided limited support to indices. "Indian benchmark indices ended the session with marginal losses amid heightened volatility. The market witnessed selling pressure in the second half of the day, largely driven by continued FII outflows and uncertainty surrounding the US trade deal, which kept investor sentiment cautious," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, Maruti, Sun Pharma, Hindustan Unilever, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Tech Mahindra, HDFC Bank, and Larsen & Toubro were among the biggest laggards.

On the other hand, Tata Steel, NTPC, Axis Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the gainers. Investors remained hesitant amid mixed global cues and lingering geopolitical concerns. Overall sentiment was cautious to negative, with consolidation likely to persist as traders weigh FII outflows, global tariff pressures, and near-term technical supports, said Aakash Shah, Technical Research Analyst at Choice Equity Broking Private Limited.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.25 per cent, and the midcap index went up by 0.16 per cent.

WHOLESALE INFLATION AT 8-MONTH HIGH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: Wholesale price inflation increased for the second month in a row, rising 0.83 per cent in December 2025, driven by an uptick in prices of food, non-food articles, and manufactured items on a month-on-month basis, government data showed Wednesday.

After witnessing a deflationary trend in the previous two months, the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation returned to positive in December. In November and October, the pace of price rise was negative at (-)0.32 per cent and (-)1.02 per cent, respectively.

In contrast, WPI inflation was 2.57 per cent in December 2024. "Positive rate of inflation in December 2025 is primarily due to an increase in prices of other manufacturing, minerals, manufacture of machinery and equipment, manufacture of food products, and textiles, etc," the industry ministry said in a statement.

According to WPI data, deflation in food articles was 0.43 per cent in December, as against



4.16 per cent in November.

In vegetables, deflation was 3.50 per cent in December, compared to 20.23 per cent in November. Barclays India Chief Economist Aastha Gudivani said narrowing deflation in "food articles" and a rise in inflation in "manufacturing products" drove the increase in the headline WPI inflation in December. "We expect modest increases in WPI inflation to continue".

In case of manufactured products, WPI inflation inched up to 1.82 per cent from 1.33 per cent in December, from 0.71 per cent in November, driven by rising food prices.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reduced policy interest rates by 1.25 percentage points in the current fiscal year as inflation remained low.

The Reserve Bank, last month, significantly lowered the inflation projection for the current fiscal to 2 per cent from 2.6 per cent estimated earlier, as the economy continues to witness rapid disinflation.

Gupta Event Management to host 2nd Furniture, Interior & Lifestyle Expo-2026



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: Gupta Event Management Pvt. Ltd. announced the 2nd Furniture, Interior & Lifestyle Expo-2026, scheduled to be held from January 16 to January 26 at Club Town Ground, here.

The 11-day expo promises to bring together global craftsmanship, contemporary design, and lifestyle essentials under one roof.

Addressing a press meet, Payal Acharya Gupta, Director, Gupta Event Management Pvt. Ltd., said the expo has been planned keeping the ongoing wedding season in mind.

"Furniture and lifestyle products play a crucial role during the wedding season. This expo will offer a wide range of furniture, including

customised varieties, along with lifestyle products essential for both men and women," she said.

She said that exhibitors from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, UAE, Thailand, Korea, and other countries will participate, with France joining as an exclusive international exhibitor this year.

The expo will feature over 1,00,000 products from 10 countries and 22 Indian states, ranging from Iraani carpets and Kashmiri furniture to modern interior solutions and Korean fashion, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern luxury.

Sujeet Kumar Gupta, Managing Director, and Rashmi Ranjan Kanungo, Advisor, were also present at the press meet.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: Home loan demand is moving away from core metropolitan markets, with Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities emerging as the dominant contributors to growth in 2025, a report said.

Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities recorded an 81 per cent year-on-year growth in home loan volumes in 2025, significantly higher than the 52 per cent growth seen in Tier-1 cities, fintech-led mortgage distribution platforms Urban Money said in a report.

"This sharp expansion has increased the contribution of Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets to 64 per cent of total home loan volumes in 2025, compared to 60 per cent in 2024, highlighting a



distributed housing finance cycle," it said.

The findings indicate that housing demand growth is no longer concentrated within a few large metros or premium price segments, it said.

Instead, it said, improving infrastructure connectivity,

al homebuyers is entering the market through smaller cities and peripheral urban corridors, it said.

The report highlighted strong borrower activity across several Tier-2 and Tier-3 markets, including Chandigarh, Jaipur, Surat, Madurai and Palwal, which recorded significant increases in loan creation during the year.

The scale and consistency of growth across these cities reflect deeper penetration of formal housing finance beyond India's largest urban centres, it said.

Urban Money co-founder Amit Prakash said, "India's housing finance market is becoming more broad-based and structurally balanced. The current growth cycle is being

driven by steady expansion in first-time and mid-income homeownership across a wider set of cities."

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Mitchell, Young outshine KL

Mitchell, Young help New Zealand level ODI series with India



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ODI rankings: Kohli reclaims top spot after 5 yrs

Indian batting stalwart Virat Kohli regained the No 1 position, dethroning his teammate Rohit Sharma, who slipped to the No 3 spot in the latest men's rankings, following India's four-wicket victory over New Zealand in the first ODI. Kohli's score of 93 off 91 balls helped the hosts complete the chase, bringing him closer to India legend Sachin Tendulkar and moving him into second place on the all-time men's international run-scoring list. The 37-year-old batting stalwart has returned to the top of the batting charts for the first time since July 2021, after his performance helped India chase down New Zealand's 300-run target in Vadodara.

New Zealand not only adapted but also executed better than India on a sluggish wicket here at the Niranjan Shah Stadium to keep the hosts to 284/7 despite Rahul's 91-ball 112 not out (9 fours, 1 six), and overhauled the target in 47.3 overs to end at 286 for three.

The series-deciding third ODI will be played in Indore on Sunday.

Young and Mitchell, among the architects of New Zealand's 3-0 Test series win over India on their previous visit, batted with poise and control even as the asking rate hovered over six an over.

They cruised at a little above five during their second-wicket association which consumed 152 balls for 162 runs, and there wasn't any late hiccup to pre-

vent a turnaround.

Young's (87 from 98 balls; 7 fours) solidity in the middle was complemented by the adroitness of Mitchell, who brought out almost all kinds of sweep shots to notch up his third ton against India and overall eighth, finishing at 131 not out from 117 balls (11 fours, 2 sixes).

Earlier, KL Rahul held a faltering innings together on a sluggish surface with a gutsy hundred.

Rahul produced a gritty unbeaten 112 off 92 balls which included 11 fours and two sixes, forging vital partnerships in the second half and snatching control from the Kiwis who had ran through India's formidable batting line-up earlier.



TOP OF THE TABLE

HIL: Kalinga Lancers continue winning run



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Jan 14: Alexander Hendrickx found the net to help Vedanta Kalinga Lancers register a 1-0 win against Hyderabad Toofans and maintain their unbeaten run in the Men's Hockey India League here Wednesday.

There was little to separate the two sides in the opening quarter with both teams having four circle entries in the first fifteen minutes.

While Toofans had more of the possession, it was the Lancers who registered the only attempt on target as they threatened to make inroads with swift counter attacks.

Liam Henderson had the opportunity to give his side an early lead, but he was denied by Jean-Paul Danneberg, keeping the teams at level terms at the end of the first quarter.

There was more attacking impetus from both teams to

begin the second quarter as they made inroads, earning a penalty corner each. Keeping the lion's share of possession, the Toofans upped the ante significantly with 12 circle entries compared to Lancers' seven circle entries.

Despite Toofans dominating possession, it was the Lancers who came closest to opening the scoring with Liam Henderson's powerful attempt that hit the post. However, neither side could break the deadlock in what was an engaging first half.

Lancers got the opening goal of the game against the run of play after Hendrickx (40') converted his dragflick from a penalty corner, scoring his fifth goal of the season to give his side the lead.

The Lancers managed to see out the game rather comfortably with the Toofans failing to register an attempt on goal in the last fifteen minutes.

The report calls India's coaching ecosystem fragmented, inconsistent, and 'heavily dependent on individual effort rather than institutional strength'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 14: India's coaching ecosystem is fragmented, inconsistent, and heavily reliant on individual effort rather than institutional strength, says a Sports Ministry-appointed Task force led by Pullela Gopichand that has advocated primacy to coaches' authority over athlete "discomfort" when "training becomes difficult".

The 43-page report has suggested several remedies to fix the system that seeks international excellence, but given

that it was designed decades ago "cannot deliver the scale, quality, and speed required today." It has therefore proposed a three-tier system overseen by a certification board and a Government-funded Target Olympic Podium Scheme for coaches similar to what is in operation for athletes.

The nine-member panel headed by Gopichand, who is

also the national badminton coach, stresses on the need to move away from "borrowed solutions", an apparent reference to the trend of hiring foreign coaches across disciplines.

"If we aspire to become a consistent global sporting force, we must stop avoiding the complexity of the task. Building our own knowledge, our own expertise, and our own systems is the only way to ensure continuity, self-reliance, and long-term growth," the panel states.

"...our aspirations and our current institutional capabilities operate on completely different parameters. This gap is not a criticism -- it is a recognition that India has entered a new era of sport, and we must create an ecosystem that is aligned with that future," it adds.

"A proliferation of courses, universities, international certifications, and private training programs, while well

INDIA OPEN

SINDHU CRASHES OUT



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

I definitely need to be more consistent. Giving away easy or consecutive points is something I have to stop. That's the main takeaway for me

PV SINDHU

New Delhi, Jan 14: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu was knocked out of India Open but Kidambi Srikanth and HS Prannoy progressed to the second round on a mixed day for the hosts at the \$950,000 Super 750 badminton tournament, here Wednesday.

Sindhu, who reached the semifinals of Malaysia Super 1000 last week, couldn't maintain the pressure after narrowly pocketing the opening game to eventually go down 22-20 12-21 15-21 to Vietnam's Thu Linh Nguyen in 68 minutes.

"I don't think it was my day, she isn't an easy opponent. At this level, everyone plays well and you can't expect easy points or easy wins. She has good strokes, you had to keep the tempo and keep the shuttle in play. Small mistakes in those moments become decisive," Sindhu said after her exit.

Earlier, former world No 1 Srikanth had to dig deep to outlast fellow Indian Tharun Manepalli 15-21, 21-6, 21-19, while Malvika Bansod, returning from an injury layoff, displayed patience and defensive solidity to beat Chinese Taipei's Pai Yu Po 21-18, 21-19.

Prannoy, who received a last-minute entry in the tournament, made it count as he outwitted last year's runner-up

Lee Cheuk Yiu 22-20 21-18 to advance to the second round. He will next face eighth seed and former world champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore.

Delhi not the place to host badminton: World No 3 Anders Antonsen withdraws

Four-time world championship medallist shuttler Anders Antonsen of Denmark revealed that his withdrawal from the BWF India Open for the third year in a row is due to Delhi's "extreme pollution". "Many are curious as to why I have pulled out of the India Open for the third consecutive year. Due to the extreme pollution in Delhi at the moment, I don't think it's a place to host a badminton tournament," Antonsen shared on Instagram. The 28-year-old further expressed his hopes for improved conditions when the venue hosts the BWF Badminton World Championships in August. He stated, "Crossing my fingers that it will be better in the summer when the World Championship takes place in Delhi." Antonsen, who last competed at the India Open in 2023, where he was eliminated in the second round, also said his withdrawal has resulted in a USD 5,000 fine imposed by the Badminton World Federation. "As a result, BWF once again has fined me \$5000," he concluded. Antonsen's withdrawal came less than a day after his compatriot, Mia Blichfeldt, complained about hygiene conditions at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium. BAI, however, rejected the allegations by the World No 20 Dane, stating that her comments concerned general playing conditions and were not related to the playing arena for the BWF World Tour Super 750 event. Notably, Blichfeldt had also made similar allegations about the India Open last year, blaming the dense smog in India and bird droppings inside the stadium for the illness she developed after the event.

Chess Mahakumbh int'l conference unveiled by Vishy



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 14: The International Conference on Social and Educational Chess under the banner of Chess Mahakumbh was inaugurated at KIIT University Wednesday, heralding the beginning of a first-of-its-kind mega chess conclave in India.

Organised from January 14 to 16 with the support of the International Chess Federation (FIDE) and the All India Chess Federation (AICF), the conference brought global focus to the role of chess as a tool for education and social transformation.

The inaugural day also witnessed the launch of key chess infrastructure and initiatives at KIIT, including the International Chess Hall and the Viswanathan Anand Chess Academy, further strengthening the university's long-standing commitment to

promoting chess at both grassroots and international levels.

The event drew an impressive lineup of global chess administrators and legends, including FIDE President and former Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Arkady Dvorkovich, FIDE Vice President and five-time World Champion Viswanathan Anand, FIDE Deputy Chair and former Finance Minister of Latvia Daina Reizniece, AICF President

Nitin Narang, AICF Secretary Dev Patel, and FIDE Event Commission Member Ranjan Mohanty, among others.

Addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the inauguration, Viswanathan Anand, in his address, said he was delighted to return to Bhubaneswar and praised KIIT's consistent recognition at national platforms for institutional support to sports.

He underlined that chess was a powerful educational tool, noting that students who regularly played chess often performed better academically.

FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich thanked KIIT and KISS Founder Achyuta Samanta for his passion and unwavering commitment towards the promotion of chess. He said the game helped develop critical life skills and cognitive

Gopichand-led panel backs coaches' authority



The report calls India's coaching ecosystem fragmented, inconsistent, and 'heavily dependent on individual effort rather than institutional strength'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

also the national badminton coach, stresses on the need to move away from "borrowed solutions", an apparent reference to the trend of hiring foreign coaches across disciplines.

"If we aspire to become a consistent global sporting force, we must stop avoiding the complexity of the task. Building our own knowledge, our own expertise, and our own systems is the only way to ensure continuity, self-reliance, and long-term growth," the panel states.

"...our aspirations and our current institutional capabilities operate on completely different parameters. This gap is not a criticism -- it is a recognition that India has entered a new era of sport, and we must create an ecosystem that is aligned with that future," it adds.

"A proliferation of courses, universities, international certifications, and private training programs, while well

intentioned, has created confusion rather than clarity," the report says.

Tucked under the sub-head 'Balancing Art and Science of Coaching', the report touches upon the delicate balance that defines a coach-athlete relationship. Gopichand, who is known to be a tough taskmaster, has often spoken about the need for trust to be the foundation of this partnership. And his philosophy echoes in the recommendations.

"Every improvement lies at the edge of discomfort, and at times, a coach may unintentionally push slightly beyond what is optimal," the report says.

Acknowledging that there is no perfect formula that is universally accepted by every athlete, the panel says emphasis therefore should be on the overall direction of a coach's vision.

India face USA as U-19 WC begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bulawayo (Zimbabwe), Jan 14: Favourites India will look to flaunt their superabundance of talent as they begin the quest for a record-extending sixth Under-19 World Cup title with what is expected to be a rather easy outing against USA in the ICC showpiece beginning here Thursday.

Champions in five of the 16 editions, India are by far the most dominant team in the history of the competition, which started back in 1988 with Australia emerging winners in the inaugural event.

Having missed out on the last edition in 2024, when they lost to Australia in the summit showdown, India, who have won the trophy in 2000, 2008, 2012 and 2022 besides 2018, will be keen to add a sixth title to their tally this time around.