

HERE . NOW

Orissa Post



Savage reply

Actor Nora Fatehi reacts with sharp sarcasm to revived rumours connecting her to Bhushan Kumar

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United against Trump

Eight European countries targeted by Trump for opposing American control of Greenland blast the 10% tariff move

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Discoms turn profitable

Power distribution utilities in the country collectively record a profit of ₹2,701cr in FY25 after incurring losses for several years

BUSINESS | P11



Embarrassing loss

India slump to their first-ever bilateral ODI series defeat at home against New Zealand, losing the decider by 41 runs

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VOLUME 15, ISSUE 289 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | MONDAY | JANUARY 19, 2024

12 PAGES | ₹5.00



ON WARPATH: A woman pulls her children on a sledge during a protest against US President Donald Trump's policy towards Greenland in front of the US consulate in Nuuk, Greenland

PTI PHOTO

Subhadra aid for new beneficiaries Jan 22

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: The state government has rescheduled the disbursement of financial assistance under its flagship women-centric welfare scheme, Subhadra Yojana, for newly added beneficiaries. The payments, initially scheduled for January 18, will now be credited to beneficiaries' bank accounts January 22, 2024.

The announcement was made by Deputy Chief Minister Pravita Parida, who also holds the Women and Child Development department, through official social media handles. She clarified that the revised date applies specifically to newly enrolled and recently verified beneficiaries under the scheme.

According to official figures, around 4.57 lakh women will receive financial assistance in the upcoming installment cycle. This includes: 1.78 lakh newly added beneficiaries, who will receive the first installment under the scheme, 2.55 lakh reinstated beneficiaries, whose payments were earlier withheld due to technical issues such as NPCI mapping or e-KYC errors and over 24,000 applicants whose cases were resolved through the grievance redressal portal.

Officials said the decision to defer the payment date was taken to ensure a smooth and error-free DBT process. The additional time will allow departments to complete final technical verifications, including Aadhaar authentication and bank account linking, so that eligible women are not excluded due to procedural issues.

The Deputy Chief Minister has advised beneficiaries to ensure that their bank accounts are Aadhaar-linked and DBT-enabled.

Crypto hawala alarm

The recent rise of unauthorised crypto-based networks, which exploit unregulated digital currency transactions to move foreign funds into India, has emerged as a major concern. While India mandates registration and KYC compliance for Virtual Digital Asset Service Providers under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, off-grid peer-to-peer crypto trading continues to evade the mechanism. In such operations, crypto wallet holders convert digital assets into cash through unregulated traders in major cities, effectively breaking the audit trail and enabling the circulation of untraceable money. Authorities warn that these practices pose serious risks to national security, facilitate illicit financing, and undermine the integrity of India's financial system, including confidence in the Indian rupee and overall economic stability.

PNN & AGENCIES

Srinagar/New Delhi, Jan 18: Security agencies have flagged a sophisticated 'crypto hawala' network bypassing the country's financial safeguards to funnel untraceable foreign funds into Jammu and Kashmir, sparking grave concerns that the money is being used to support terror activities, officials said Sunday.

PNN & AGENCIES



This has put the security establishment on high alert, with officials warning that these shadow funds are intended to give a fresh lease of life to separatist elements and reignite the anti-national rhetoric within the Union Territory (UT) that had otherwise been virtually neutralised by a crackdown by police and central agencies, they said.

While India requires all Virtual Digital Asset Service Providers (VDA SPs) to register with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), this shadow network operates entirely off the grid.

For 2024-25 fiscal year, only 49 exchanges have registered as legal reporting entities, prompting the government to come out with fresh guidelines that include a mandatory live-ness detection and geograph-

ical tracking, besides asking users to take a 'live selfie' using software that verifies their presence, typically through eye-blinking or head movement.

The 'penny-drop' method, which involves processing a nominal Re 1 transaction to confirm that the bank account is active and belongs to the registrant, is required. In addition to a Permanent Account Number (PAN), users must provide a secondary ID, such as a Passport, Aadhaar or Voter ID, verified via OTP.

The J&K Police has already suspended the use of VPNs in the valley as registering in crypto wallets was increasingly seen in the region of late. The VPN is a handy tool for terrorists as well as separatists to avoid detection.

The officials said the foreign handler sends cryptocurrency directly into these private wallets, placing the funds under local control without involving a regulated financial institution, and the wallet holder travels to major cities like Delhi or Mumbai to meet unregulated peer-to-peer (P2P) traders and sell crypto to cash at negotiated rates.

This effectively "breaks the financial trail", allowing foreign money to enter the local economy as untraceable cash, the officials said.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Angul, Jan 18: In the wake of death of several elephants after consuming crude bombs, the Forest department has started joint raids, along with police, to trace the source of explosives being used in villages under this forest division.

Recent investigations have confirmed that explosives were responsible for the death of several elephants in Angul and Satkrosa forest divisions.

Although the Forest department has conducted raids in the past, the illegal use of

ED: Muscle power behind illegal mining in Ganjam

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: The ongoing investigations by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into the multi-crore illegal sand and black stone mining in Ganjam district Sunday revealed that the members of the crime syndicate forcibly took away the leases from the genuine holders by using muscle power and paying commissions.

This was revealed by the ED that seized ₹2.63 crore cash and several vehicles during raids at over 25 locations in Ganjam district, sources said. The raids covered the premises of syndicate members accused of forcibly conducting illegal mining of minor minerals by using muscle power and terrorising local people.

On the modus operandi of such illegal activities, the ED stated that the mining leases issued in the names of genuine leaseholders were unlawfully and forcibly taken over by syndicate members. This was allegedly done under the guise

of paying commissions at fixed rates, it said.

The agency said that mining licences are non-transferable under law, and their unauthorised use allowed syndicate members to extract far more sand and black stone than permitted.

"A large portion of the illegally mined minerals was sold in the grey market through cash transactions, often using forged Y Forms (transit permission). The proceeds of crime were allegedly routed through cash dealings, including country liquor businesses and other ventures, making most transactions unaccounted and unrecorded," the agency mentioned.

The ED raids were also based on reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), which flagged rampant illegal mining along the riverbeds of Rushikulya, Bahuda and Bada rivers in Ganjam district. The illegal activities allegedly caused huge losses to the government exchequer, it said.

POACHING WITH BOMB BAITS

Joint raids in Angul forests



Joint raids involving the Forest department and police have begun across all forest divisions under the Angul circle. He said the department will intensify efforts to trace the source of explosives being used in villages within Angul forest division.

The department will also conduct inspections of all licensed explosive dealers in the district.

Raids will be carried out at shops and establishments to verify whether the quantity of explosives stored matches the amount permitted under their licences.

Bomb threat forces emergency landing



Lucknow, Jan 18: An IndiGo flight from Delhi to Bagdogra in West Bengal carrying 222 passengers made an emergency landing at the Lucknow airport Sunday after a handwritten note on a tissue paper bearing the words "Plane mein bomb" (bomb on the plane) was found in the aircraft, police said.

The airline said that the plane was "diverted" to Lucknow after a "security threat" was detected on board.

All passengers, including eight infants, and seven crew members were safely evacuated, officials said, adding bomb disposal squads, security agencies and airport authorities launched a thorough check of the plane after it was parked in the isolation bay.

In a statement, an IndiGo spokesperson said that a "security threat was noticed onboard IndiGo flight 6E 6650 operating from Delhi to Bagdogra January 18 due to which the aircraft was diverted to Lucknow". "Following the established protocol, we informed the relevant authorities immediately and are fully cooperating with them in carrying out the necessary security checks," it said.

Mummified cheetahs shed light on lost population

ASSOCIATED PRESS

New York, Jan 18: Scientists have uncovered mummified remains of cheetahs, dating back to more than a century and a millennium, from caves in northern Saudi Arabia that would help them decode the reasons behind extinction of the big cats in the region.

Researchers said they have excavated seven mummies along with the bones of 54 other cheetahs from a site near the city of Arar. The remains range from 130 years old to over 1,800 years old, they claimed.

Mummification prevents decay by preserving dead bodies. Egypt's mummies are the most well-known, but the process can also happen naturally in places like glacier ice, desert sands and bog sludge.

The new large cat mummies

have cloudy eyes and shriveled limbs, resembling dried-out husks.

"It's something that I've never seen before," said Joan Madurell-Malapeira with the University of Florence in Italy, who was not involved with the discovery.

Researchers aren't sure how exactly these new cats got mummified, but the caves' dry conditions and stable temperature could have played a role, according to the new study published Thursday in the journal Communications Earth and Environment.

They also don't know why so many cheetahs were in the caves. It could have been a denning site where mothers birthed and raised their young.

Scientists have uncovered the rare mummified remains of other felines, including a sa-

ber-toothed cat cub in Russia.

It's uncommon for large mammals to be preserved to this degree. Besides being in the right environment, the carcasses also have

Scientists also peeked at the cheetahs' genes

and found that the remains were most similar to modern-day cheetahs from Asia and Africa



to avoid becoming a snack for hungry scavengers like birds and hyenas.

To find such intact evidence of cheetahs that lived long ago in this part of the world

is "entirely without precedent," study author Ahmed Boug with the National Center for Wildlife in Saudi Arabia said in an email.

Cheetahs once roamed across most of Africa and parts of Asia, but now live in just 9 per cent of their previous range and haven't been spotted across the Arabian Peninsula for decades. That's likely due to habitat loss, unregulated hunting and lack of prey, among other factors.

In a first for naturally mummified large cats, scientists were also able to peek at the cheetahs' genes and found that the remains were most similar to modern-day cheetahs from Asia and northwest Africa. That information could help with future efforts to reintroduce the cats to places they no longer live.

IRREGULAR by MANJU



If it's predictable, how is it news?

leisure

**STEVE COOGAN JOINS WHITE LOTUS 4**

Actor Steve Coogan became the latest addition to the star cast of the fourth season of HBO's dark comedy series *White Lotus*. Alongside Coogan, Caleb Jonte Edwards will also be joining the show. The roles of the characters are being kept under wraps

URBAN TALKS ABOUT LIFE AFTER DIVORCE

Country music star Keith Urban, following his recent divorce from Nicole Kidman, shared insights into his new creative phase. He's focusing on profound, philosophical poetry for inspiration, aiming for simplicity in his musical approach and daily life

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ARIES

Ganesha anticipates some exciting times for you. You are likely to meet some people today who will prove to be assets in the future. You apply yourself to perfection in work, and in your thinking. Towards that end, says Ganesha, you will have to remain practical.

**TAURUS**

You are going to be exceptionally intense in the way you communicate your emotions and feelings. You will, no doubt, succeed in making the impact, the impression you are striving to make, says Ganesha. You will be so involved in this that you are likely to get caught in the mysterious and magical web of relationships.

**GEMINI**

An occurrence from the past will become a cause of worry for you today. You will also be concerned owing to the deteriorating health of the elders in your family. You will encounter medical expenses. The latter half of the day should see your worries abate somewhat, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**

People will surround you. You will entertain them with your hilarity. Social contacts will benefit you. Students will excel and concentrate on their work. It will be a good day, says Ganesha.

**LEO**

You are businesslike and practical in your approach, however, you have a tendency to lose your temper. You will be able to channelise your aggression into business today. It is a good thing, since you need an outlet for your energy. The advise of your elders will help you. You will be able to comfortably sail through the day today, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

Don't procrastinate matters regarding your health, advises Ganesha. Today you are raring to take on some past wounds. However, peace and quietude are the dominant flavours today. Ganesha suggests that you go ahead and enjoy yourself, if only just to recharge your batteries.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says you will stay in accordance with your prestige or social status. Your innovative ideas will help you progress in your work field. Now is a good time to put into completion those ideas, which had taken a back seat. Ganesha wishes you a day full of joy and happiness ahead.

**SCORPIO**

Blood is thicker than water, and you will experience this in true sense today, says Ganesha. Dedicate this day to your family and friends, enjoy and make merry. Feel as if you are on the top of this world, when you set out on a secret date with your beloved. Life is beautiful, indeed!

**SAGITTARIUS**

Temper will fly today, warns Ganesha. Rein in your anger by the leash of control and restraint. But the buck will stop somewhere! When it does, dig your feet in and battle the crunch situation, advises Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**

You are witty and wise. With your extraordinary vision and intelligence you will help many their career and later, thanks to you, they will be near to their goals. Whenever some dark clouds of reality hover above your head, you know how to find the silver lining and get out of a problem.

**AQUARIUS**

The cupid may strike you today. You don't want to make a wrong first impression, so wear something nice and be presentable all the time. Professionally, the day will be favourable for you to make some important decisions. Overall, you are in a happy mood and you will spread the joy around, feels Ganesha.

**PISCES**

Organized and sorted as you are, you will still find yourself clouded with emotions today. Those you are thoughtful and calculative as a person, you will discover the joy of emotions and the warmth that accompanies them. You will take the time to feel things instead of thinking of them and this change in your behaviour will either be the cause of worry or amusement for those who are close to you, says Ganesha.

**Sara on fame, responsibility**

Mumbai: Sara Arjun is learning to balance fame with a growing sense of responsibility after the phenomenal success of her debut film *Dhurandhar*. The spy thriller, co-starring Ranveer Singh, has crossed the 1200-crore mark worldwide, instantly placing the young actor in the spotlight. Speaking at the trailer launch of her upcoming film *Euphoria*, Sara reflected on how success has reshaped her outlook rather than overwhelming her.

She shared that she doesn't measure change from one project to another, but feels it on a daily basis. According to Sara, the biggest shift has been realising how privileged she is to pursue acting as a profession, and how that privilege brings responsibility to consistently do better work.

When asked about the impact she hopes to create in the industry, Sara said, "More than what kind of impact I would like to make, I think I'm at such an early stage that I just want to make an impact. What kind of impact is not really in my hands. I just want to be known for my work. I'm just going to keep my head down and keep working until the day that I feel like I've made some impact."

The actress also spoke about the love she has been receiving from fans, revealing she joined Instagram only after *Dhurandhar* released.

Reading messages and watching fan videos, she said, has been deeply encouraging and emotionally strengthening.

AGENCIES

releasing. Reading messages and watching fan videos, she said, has been deeply encouraging and emotionally strengthening.

AGENCIES

**Nora claps back at troll**

Mumbai: Nora Fatehi has found herself back in the spotlight after a five-year-old Reddit post alleging an affair between her and T-Series chairman Bhushan Kumar resurfaced online. Unlike earlier instances when she chose not to react, the actor-dancer this time responded with sharp sarcasm, calling out those buying into the rumours.

The controversy re-ignited after a TikTok video discussed the alleged link-up, using screenshots of an old Reddit post that speculated about Nora's lifestyle, her luxury bags, outfits, cars, and confidence, and loosely connected it to Bhushan. A screenshot circulating on social media shows Nora com-

menting "wow" with a laughing emoji under the video, a response many saw as a savage dismissal of the gossip.

Her reaction sparked mixed responses online. While some users joked that her comment might only draw more attention to the rumours, others strongly criticised the practice of amplifying unverified Reddit gossip on platforms like TikTok, warning that such content can seriously damage reputations for the sake of views and likes.

The episode comes amid fresh online chatter linking Nora to Moroccan footballer Achraf Hakimi after he liked one of her posts. Bhushan, meanwhile, has been married to actor-filmmaker Divya Khosla since 2005; the couple welcomed their son in 2011.

On the professional front, Nora was last seen in the 2025 film *Uff Yeh Siyappa* and the song *Didbar Ki Aankhon Ka* from *Thamma*.

AGENCIES

**Lara opens up about motherhood**

Mumbai: Lara Dutta believes motherhood didn't merely add new layers to her identity but completely reshaped it. In a recent interview, the actor reflected on how becoming a mother transformed her sense of self and priorities. She described motherhood as a great leveller, explaining that in the early years it takes away your entire sense of individuality. Life, she said, stops being about you and becomes centred on another little person, a priority that never truly changes.

Now a mother to 13-year-old Saira Bhupathi, Lara shared that her experience has evolved with time. Having a teenager, she noted, is an entirely different ball game, with their relationship vastly different from what it was during childhood. Today, she feels she learns far more from her daughter than she teaches, seeing her role as that of a guide and mentor focused on raising an empathetic, confident human being.

Beyond parenting, Lara spoke about her entrepreneurial journey, which she says is rooted in lived experience rather than fleeting trends. Through her brand Arias, she aims to empower women to embrace beauty, fashion, wellness and lifestyle as interconnected expressions of self. Her focus is on women in their thirties and forties who value authenticity, intention and meaningful.

AGENCIES

Kangana's unpleasant experience

Mumbai: Amidst Oscar-winning composer AR Rahman's 'communal' remark controversy, actress Kangana Ranaut recalled her 'unpleasant' experience with him during her directorial venture *Emergency*.

Kangana revealed that as she was making the film, she was extremely keen on narrating the script to Rahman; however, he refused to even meet her, claiming he does not wish to a propaganda film.

post on Instagram Stories

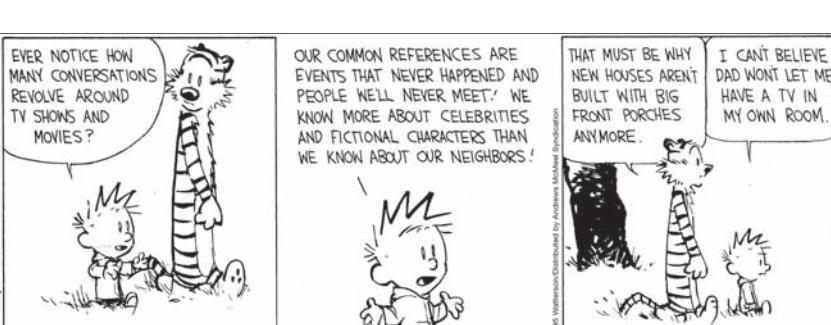
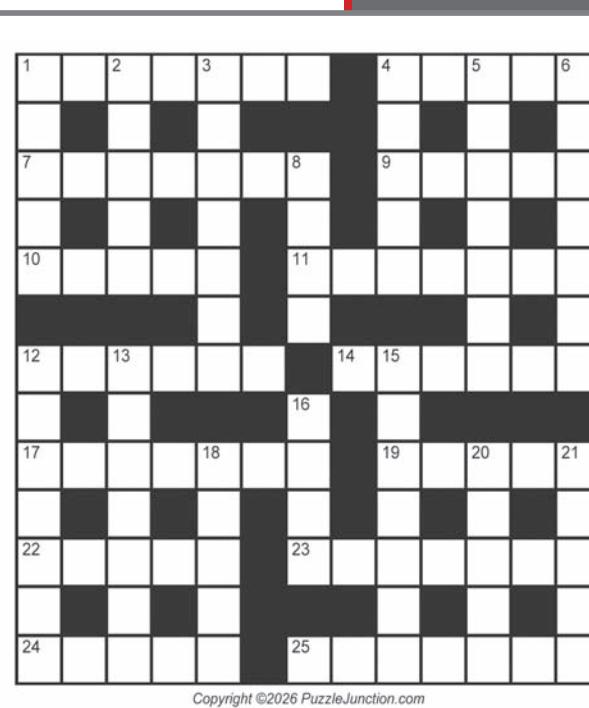
"Dear @arrahanji, I face so much prejudice and par-

tiality in the film industry because I support a saffron party yet I must say I have not come across a man more prejudiced and hateful than you, I desperately wanted to narrate my directorial *Emergency* to you, forget narration, you even refused to meet me. I was told you don't want to be a part of a propaganda film. (sic)"

Kangana further pointed out that, contrary to the composer's opinion, *Emergency* received a lot of praise from the critics. She added that even leaders from the opposition party sent her letters, praising the drama. As per the *Queen* actress, they lauded the balanced approach of the movie.

"Ironically *Emergency* was called a masterpiece by all critics even opposition party leaders sent me fan letters appreciating the film for its balanced and compassionate approach but you are blinded by your hate", Kangana added.

IANS

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

Across

- 1 Spirit rapping sessions
- 4 Gallivant
- 7 Glassy thermoplastic
- 9 Torcher's misdeed
- 10 Argentine dance
- 11 Tabloid topic
- 12 Rise and shine
- 14 Sounded like a cat?
- 17 Canadian police officer

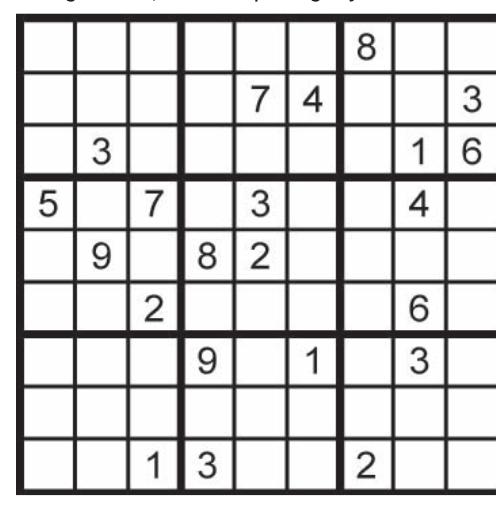
Down

- 19 Primitive weapon
- 22 Worker's demand
- 23 Cheops, e.g.
- 24 Not heavy
- 25 Place for a soak
- 26 Fleet commander
- 27 Humorous
- 28 Social climber
- 29 Half-moon tide
- 30 Larceny
- 31 Put into law
- 32 Doctor's order

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**

CM unveils ₹891.39cr development projects



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Sunday unveiled a major development push for Kalahandi district, inaugurating and laying foundation stones for 3,612 projects worth ₹91.39 crore at the valedictory ceremony of the Kalahandi Ghumura Mahotsav 2026.

Of the total projects announced, 971 projects worth ₹193.36 crore were inaugurated, while foundation stones were laid for 2,641 projects valued at ₹698.03 crore.

- 971 projects worth ₹193.36 crore were inaugurated, while foundation stones were laid for 2,641 projects valued at ₹698.03 crore
- Work on the ₹3,325-crore Utei Raul Irrigation Project, approved by the Union government, will begin shortly, boosting irrigation benefits for farmers

significantly improve the quality of life in both urban and rural areas.

The Chief Minister announced that work on the ₹3,325-crore Utei Raul Irrigation Project will begin shortly. Approved by the Union government, the project is expected to deliver major irrigation benefits to farmers in the region.

He also announced plans to develop the Kalahandi-Nabarangpur belt as a cotton production cluster, providing a major boost to cash-crop cultivation and farmers' income. In addition, the Belgaon inter-state reservoir project will commence soon, while work on the Sandul Barrage is nearing completion.

Highlighting the government's focus on agriculture-led growth, the Chief Minister said farmer welfare schemes and assured paddy procurement have renewed confidence among cultivators. He added that the state government is making arrangements to procure paddy from both small and large farmers, while the Union government has agreed to lift 8 lakh metric tonnes of rice.

He added that rising farmer registrations in Kalahandi reflect growing trust in government initiatives and a return of farmers to active cultivation.

Reiterating the government's commitment to balanced regional development, the Chief Minister said industrialisation will expand beyond coastal Odisha, with more industries planned for Kalahandi in the coming years.

He also announced that a public grievance hearing (Janashunani) will be held in Bhubaneswar to directly address citizens' concerns.

The Chief Minister emphasised that development priorities include better roads, clean drinking water for every household, strong education and healthcare infrastructure, and ensuring that growth reaches the last mile.

The large-scale project rollout at the Ghumura Mahotsav underlined the government's strategy of combining cultural celebration with concrete development initiatives, positioning Kalahandi as a key growth centre in western Odisha.

7 transgenders redefine sanitation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 18: The Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC) is operating its Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) at Matagajapur. While the plant plays a key role in ensuring scientific faecal sludge management and environmental protection, at the heart of this effort lies a compelling human story.

The operation and maintenance of the FSTP is being carried out by transgenders engaged under Odisha's GARI-MA scheme—individuals who once faced stigma, social exclusion and economic hardship. Today, they are respected contributors to an essential urban service, working with confidence, professionalism and pride.

Seven transgenders—Surbhi Seetal Bastia, Secretary of the Self Help Group; Tanushree Behera, President of the Self Help Group; and members Sibane, Pritam Singh, Suman, Tiki, and Ranjan Kumar Sahoo—form the backbone of the plant's daily operations. Together, they ensure the smooth functioning of a facility that treats faecal sludge collected from across the City, contributing directly to cleaner neighbourhoods and safer urban living.

The FSTP has a treatment capacity of 60 KLD, supported by 13 cesspool vehicles operated by trained drivers and desludgers, enabling regular and reliable desludging services for households and establishments in Cuttack. On an average, several hundred desludging trips are undertaken every month, ensuring safe and scientific treatment of faecal sludge and reducing environmental and public health risks.

Nod to 862 projects in 3rd Executive Council Meet

POST NEWS NETWORK

PANCHASAKHA SIKHYA SETU

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: The third Executive Council meeting of the Panchasakha Siksha Setu was held recently. In the meeting, 862 projects aimed at the development of various schools across 22 districts of the state were approved with a total estimated expenditure of rupees 12,62,48,373. Among all districts, Ganjam received the highest approval, with projects worth 1.91 crore.

The meeting was chaired by N Tirumala Naik, Chairperson of the Council and Commissioner-cum-Secretary, S&ME Naik emphasised the importance of school development through the leadership of alumni and discussed various related aspects.

For the development of schools, alumni, parents, School Management Committee members, and the local community contribut-

ed ₹4,41,65,582 as financial participation. With this contribution, Panchasakha Siksha Setu added double the matching grant, resulting in approval of 862 project proposals with a total outlay of ₹12,62 crore.

The meeting was attended by Ananya Das, Member Secretary of Panchasakha Siksha Setu and SPD, OSEPA; Durgaprasad Mohapatra, Additional Secretary; Shibashish Dhal, Special Secretary-cum-Financial Advisor; Ramesh Chandra Ghadei, Additional Financial Advisor; Niyati Pattnaik, Director, DHSE; Manoj Kumar Padhi, Director, TE&SCERT; Manorana Das, Joint Director, DEE; SP Panda, Joint Director, DSE; Jagajiban Panda from R&B; Rajalakshmi Dash, Chief Executive Officer, Panchasakha Siksha Setu; Maniprasad Mishra, Special Programme Officer; and Itishree Maharana, Financial Officer, among others.

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- Exchange for EPR Trading under roll out
...more to come



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...more to come



CUSTOMIZED APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

- Dashboards
- Websites and Portals
- Digitalising transactions

SAINIK SCHOOL DUMPING YARD ROW**Outfit to protest against illegal dump yard in front of BMC office**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: Intensifying their agitation against the alleged illegal garbage dumping yard near Sainik School in City, members of 'Save Sainik School and Remove Garbage Dump' campaign announced a sit-in protest in front of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) office January 27.

At a meeting held recently, members of the outfit expressed dissatisfaction over what they described as prolonged inaction by authorities regarding the Gadakana dumping yard, which they allege has been operating illegally and causing severe environmental and health hazards for over a decade.

Despite sustained efforts over a long period—including demonstrations, protests, strikes, and hunger fasts—Odisha State Pollution Control Board has only recently issued a warning letter to BMC, granting it time to take corrective measures. The activists criticised the board for merely issuing a cautionary notice instead of imposing penalties or initiating strict action against the civic body.

The campaign stated that it has now written to the BMC



Commissioner, giving a seven-day ultimatum to resolve the issue. Failing this, the organisation said it would go ahead with the planned protest.

Some of the key demand placed by the campaign includes immediate and complete closure of the Temporary Transit Station (TTS) or dumping yard, or a permanent relocation of the facility, with no further dumping until relocation is completed. The outfit also demanded a neutral, on-ground investigation at the Gadakana dumping site within seven days, involving campaign representatives, affected residents, members of civil society and health experts.

The organisation further sought adequate and exemplary compensation for individuals who have lost their lives

or suffered serious illnesses due to air and water pollution allegedly caused by the dumping yard over the past 15 years. It also demanded that environmental compensation and fines be imposed on BMC as per pollution control norms, calculated on an hourly basis for the duration of the illegal dumping.

In a significant demand, the campaign called for recovery of the entire compensation amount personally from former BMC commissioners who were in charge during different periods when the violations allegedly occurred. The activists argued that any penalty paid by BMC would ultimately come from public tax money, and hence accountability should be fixed on the officials responsible at the time.

Armed dacoity plan foiled in City; 6 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: Airfield police during the wee hours Sunday foiled a planned armed dacoity, arrested six persons from an abandoned room of a duplex building at Aryan Nagar in City.

Acting on a tip off from reliable sources, police arrested Kalu Charan Nayak (29), R Raju (20), Rahul Majhi (24), Pravat Nayak (19), Sujit Kumar Tripathy (24) and Bimal Mohanty (23).

Airfield Police Station Inspector-in-Charge Deepika Devi Ray formed a special team, which conducted a surprise raid at the spot and apprehended all six accused.

Cops seized a large cache of sharp weapons, including sword, knife, wire cutter, seven mobile phones and other incriminating articles from their possession.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Kalu Charan Nayak has multiple cases registered at Sorada and Nayapalli police stations, while Rahul Majhi has criminal cases at Capital and Nayapalli police stations.

The accused were booked under sections 310(4)/310(5) of the BNS read with Section 25(1)(a) of the Arms Act and forwarded to the court.

Further investigation is underway to ascertain their involvement in other criminal activities and to identify possible associates.

Drunken man halts Amrit Bharat Express

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: The Rangapani Nagarcoil Amrit Bharat Express was briefly halted Sunday after a drunk man obstructed the train by sitting on the railway track while it was entering Bhubaneswar station, officials said.

The man, identified as P Appana Rao (38), a resident of Laxmisagar area in the City, did not move from the track despite repeated horns by the loco pilot, they said. According to the official statement by the (East Coast Railway) ECoR, the incident took place at 9:49 am.

The loco pilot promptly applied emergency brakes and brought the train to a complete halt, East Coast Railway (ECoR) said in a statement.

RPF personnel and the train's escorting staff promptly reached the spot and took the person into custody. The official statement also informed that it was an alleged suicide attempt by the man which was averted.

Due to the incident, the train was halted for six minutes causing minimal delay in service.

Rao was found to be under the influence of alcohol, and necessary procedural action is being taken, an official said.

Following the inaugural addresses, cultural performances

Guv: Spend more time in natural environment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: Emphasising the importance of outdoor spaces for children, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati encouraged them to spend more time in natural environments, away from excessive screen exposure and noted that such open spaces help nurture imagination, promote physical activity, and support emotional well-being, while also strengthening family bonds through shared outdoor experiences.

Governor interacted with children at Lok Bhavan gardens and Atal Van Sunday, marking his second engagement with young visitors since the gardens opened for public. Governor informally inter-

acted with children, gifted pens, chikkis and chocolates, and engaged with them as they explored the lush green surroundings. His interaction added warmth and cheer to the vibrant atmosphere at Lok Bhavan, where families were seen enjoying the serene and well-maintained gardens in the sidelines.

Referring to the growing public footfall, Kambhampati observed that the enthusiastic response reflects citizens' appreciation for open, welcoming, and accessible spaces. He added that opening the Lok Bhavan gardens to the public is aimed at making public institutions more approachable and fostering a sense of shared ownership among the people.

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Following the inaugural addresses, cultural performances

MID-WINTER WATERFOWL CENSUS

from 3,43,226 of 92 species in 2025 to 3,97,587 of 106 species in 2026. Similarly, the number of migratory birds also increased in Chilika lake from 10,87,227 in 2025 to 11,10,257 in 2026, he said.

From among the visiting winged guests, the highest number was northern pintail (2,18,993), followed by Eurasian wigeon (1,53,318) and gadwal (1,43,127). While the census data of Chilika lake was available Sunday evening, the reports from other water bodies are awaited, Jha said. According to officials, the annual census

of water birds was conducted in various water bodies across all 51 forest divisions of Odisha. This includes major wetlands such as Chilika, Bhitarkanika, Hirakud, and Anupura, where the bird status survey was carried out by trained personnel from 6am to 12 noon Sunday.

Though earlier, the bird census was held on different dates in various forest divisions, since last year, this annual census is being conducted simultaneously across the entire state on a single day, he said.



PANEL DISCUSSION: Dharitri and **Orissa POST** Editor Tathagata Satpathy speaks during a panel discussion on infrastructure and development at the National Conclave on Developed Odisha, held at Hotel Swosti Premium in Bhubaneswar Sunday, as dignitaries including senior journalist Rajaram Satpathy, author and journalist Prakash Handa, and Brahmin Solutions (Agri) CEO Dillip Jena look on

OP PHOTO

Culture, fitness & festivity under one roof at second Patha Utsav

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: The Baramunda-Jagamara new road witnessed a massive public turnout as the second Patha Utsav, organised by Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), transformed the stretch into a vibrant hub of music, dance and recreation. Braving the winter chill and morning fog, thousands of citizens thronged the venue from early hours, turning the one-kilometre-long road into a lively festive carnival.

The event's sound system roared to life around 5:30am, gradually drawing crowds. By 6am, the entire stretch was packed with people. According to organisers, over 30,000 residents participated in and enjoyed the event.

The programme was inaugurated by Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi, who attended as chief guest. Other dignitaries including Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das and Deputy Mayor Manjula Kanhar, BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana and Cultural Standing Committee Chairman Ramchandra Ranasingh, along with other standing committee chairpersons and corporators were present on the occasion.

The guests watered saplings placed on the stage, conveying the message of a clean, green and beautiful Capital city, and formally inaugurated the second Patha Utsav.

Compared to the first Patha Utsav held earlier this month at Master Canteen, the second edition was more colourful, featuring new games and ex-



panded cultural activities. Special arrangements were made for children, including puzzle games, kids kingdom activities and drawing competitions. Face-painting and art stalls drew large crowds, while women self-help groups decorated the road with colourful art work, adding to the festive ambience.

The event also provided a platform to showcase hidden local talent through two 'Bhubaneswar's Got Talent' stages, where children, teenagers and youth captivated audiences with energetic performances. Traditional dance and music, mallakhamb, yoga, cycling, skating, DJ performances, bagha nacha, board games like ludo and a 360-degree camera experience kept visitors engaged throughout the stretch, transforming the road into a

BMC officials announced that the final Patha Utsav of the current winter season will be held February 1 (Sunday) at Infocity.



PICS: BIKASH NAYAK

Over 11.32L birds of 196 species flock to Chilika

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 18: More than 11.32 lakh birds of over 196 species were sighted during a mid-winter census carried out in Chilika Lake, the lone brackish water lagoon in Asia, a senior Forest department officer said Sunday.

Though there has been a marginal increase in the number of birds this time in comparison to last year, the enumerators have found two new species in the lagoon. They are - plain martin and bengal bush lark, the official said.

While the number of birds this time was recorded at 11,32,200, it was 11,27,228 in 2025, said Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden P K Jha. He said, "This year there is an increase of 4,972 birds."

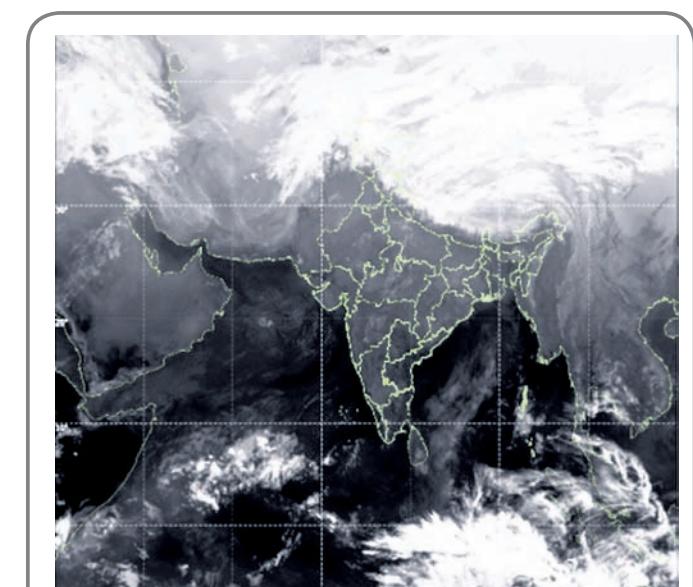
However, the PCCF (Wildlife) said that the bird count at Nalabana Bird Sanctuary within Chilika wetlands has increased

from 3,43,226 of 92 species in 2025 to 3,97,587 of 106 species in 2026. Similarly, the number of migratory birds also increased in Chilika lake from 10,87,227 in 2025 to 11,10,257 in 2026, he said.

From among the visiting winged guests, the highest number was northern pintail (2,18,993), followed by Eurasian wigeon (1,53,318) and gadwal (1,43,127). While the census data of Chilika lake was available Sunday evening, the reports from other water bodies are awaited, Jha said. According to officials, the annual census

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Though earlier, the bird census was held on different dates in various forest divisions, since last year, this annual census is being conducted simultaneously across the entire state on a single day, he said.



WEATHER	
Max Temp	30.2°
Min Temp	10.9°
Humidity	51%
Rainfall	Nil

Dry weather likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha

**CLASSIFIED****LOST**

I, Kamala Satanami, W/o- Loka Nath Satanami, Resident of Village/P.O./P.S.- Papadahandi, Dist- Nabarangpur do hereby solemnly affirm and state that I am purchasing a Land to an extent of Ac 0.90 cents under P. O. 90 cents under Papadahandi before the Dist Sub-Registrar Nabarangpur in year of 1983 vide Document No: 1241 of 1983. That the said sale deed & other's documents has been misplaced somewhere, while going towards Jeypore. That in spite of several search I couldn't traced out. So I have reported before Papadahandi Police Station. That the content of this affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge, belief and information.

Deponent

NGT joint panel to probe violations in Jajpur mine

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Jajpur, Jan 18: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered the constitution of a joint committee to probe alleged illegal mining and environmental violations at Manduka Murram Quarry in Jajpur district.

The eastern zone bench of the tribunal, comprising Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Expert Member Ishwar Singh, passed the order January 15 while hearing petitions filed by local residents and took cognisance of serious allegations of illegal mining and non-compliance with environmental norms.

The joint committee will verify mining activities that have allegedly been carried out in violation of the conditions of Environmental Clearance (EC).

The petitioners alleged that stone mining was carried out beyond the permissible depth, transportation of minerals was undertaken through village roads without authorisation, overloaded vehicles passed through residential areas and near a primary school, and that safety and buffer zones were not being maintained.



They also alleged dust generation due to uncovered mineral transport, non-submission of mandatory quarterly compliance reports, and failure of local authorities to take action.

The tribunal noted that the matter raises substantial issues relating to compliance with environmental norms.

Accordingly, notices have been issued to different stakeholders to file their replies, the order said.

Considering the seriousness of the allegations, the tribunal has constituted a Joint Committee comprising representatives of the Odisha State Pollution Control Board, Deputy Director of Mines, Regional Office of

the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Bhubaneswar, and the District Magistrate, Jajpur, who will act as the nodal agency, the order said.

The NGT has directed the committee to inspect the site, verify compliance with EC and Consent to Operate conditions and submit a status report along with recommendations within eight weeks.

The State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Odisha, has also been directed to file a separate status report on compliance with EC conditions. The matter has been listed for further hearing March 19, 2026.

Fly ash dumping in forest: NGT grants extension for plantation

DHENKANAL: In a separate case, the NGT has granted an extension until July 2026 for plantation work in connection with encroachment of forest land and illegal fly ash dumping in Dhenkanal district.

The green panel passed the order January 15, while reviewing compliance with its earlier directions issued July 22, 2025, when it had disposed of the matter with detailed instructions for eviction of forest encroachments, restoration of forest land through plantation, and investigation into the illegal dumping of fly ash.

The tribunal recalled that around 40,687 metric tonnes of fly ash, spread over about 4 acres of forest land, had been illegally dumped. The OSPCB had been directed to investigate the matter, identify the violator, and initiate proceedings for recovery of environmental compensation.

However, the original petitioner pointed out that the

tribunal's July 22, 2025, order was not complied with. The tribunal noted that the OSPCB had filed a compliance report December 23, 2025, and permitted the petitioner to obtain a copy of the report and file objections, if any.

The tribunal also allowed a miscellaneous application filed by the Forest department seeking additional time to complete plantation and restoration work.

Taking note of the assurance given by the Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF), the tribunal granted time till the end of July 2026 to complete the plantation work, the order said.

The tribunal held the authority concerned personally responsible and accountable for ensuring the survival of the plantation carried out in compliance with its directions. The matter has been posted for further consideration March 13, 2026.

Mother, 2 daughters critical in knife attack; suspect held



POST NEWS NETWORK

As Kumari opened the door, one of the attackers entered and slashed her neck with a sharp knife. Her daughters rushed to help but were also attacked and sustained severe injuries. The assailants then fled the scene on a motorcycle.

Neighbours, alerted by the cries, rescued the victims and informed police. The three were initially admitted to Digapahandi Community Health Centre and later referred to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur. Jhili was subsequently shifted to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack as her condition remained critical.

The injured have been identified as Kumari Sethi, 58, and her unmarried daughters, Sabita Sethi, 32, and Jhili Sethi, 24. The incident occurred around 11pm Saturday. According to sources, Kumari has been living with her daughters after death of her husband Pana Sethi. After dinner, the family went to sleep when a group of miscreants allegedly knocked on their door.

Auto overturns as monkey jumps on road; driver killed

POST NEWS NETWORK

He also alleged that cattle smuggling racket was being operated earlier under the protection of certain politicians and officers.

Mallik said that the state already has legislation in force, the Odisha Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, 1960. "We are planning to make provisions under the law more stringent. The Law department will soon amend certain provisions to make them tougher," he said.

Meanwhile, officers of Jharpokharia PS in Mayurbhanj district Sunday rescued over 400 cattle while they were being taken to West Bengal.

After Saturday's action, the smugglers did not use vehicle, but chose a different path to transport cattle from Odisha, a police officer said.

Nearly 400 cattle were rescued while being taken towards Jamshala border with West Bengal from Saraswana Haat. In this incident, 11 cowherds have been detained at the police station, and an investigation is underway, said an officer at Jharpokharia police station.

Severed body parts rake up child abduction case

POST NEWS NETWORK



the spot and launched a search with the help of a scientific team and sniffer dogs.

During the search, police recovered the skull and bones from beneath the bridge and seized them for examination.

Ghanshyam's parents said they could not confirm whether the recovered limb belonged to their son and stated that the trousers found were not his. They were also unable to identify the skeletal remains.

Police said the investigation is ongoing but declined to comment further. Meanwhile, the boy's family and villagers have questioned the delay in the probe and urged the state government to intervene.

IndiaOne Air to take care of deceased passenger's family

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Rourkela: IndiaOne Air CEO Prem Kumar Garg Sunday said the airline would take care of the family of the person who was killed in the crash landing of a plane near Rourkela. At least six people, including two pilots, were injured when a nine-seater IndiaOne Air plane made a forced crash landing in an open area near Rourkela January 10. One of the passengers, Susanta Kumar Biswal, who had received severe injury to his spine and head, succumbed to his injuries Saturday. "The company will take care of the expenses of the family of Susanta Biswal (47), who passed away. The family will certainly get a good amount of insurance amount and the company will take care of the family till then," Garg said during his visit here. Asked whether the company will provide a job to any member of Biswal's family, Garg said that IndiaOne Air stands by them. The two sons of Biswal are presently studying. The company will take care of them also.

He said the investigation to ascertain the cause of the crash landing of the plane will be known after the report is submitted by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

No leniency: Min warns cattle mafia



and take strong action against those involved in cattle smuggling in the state.

The state government will not show any leniency towards those involved in illegal cattle trade. Strict action was already underway against those involved in illegal cattle transportation, Mallik said.

The minister also cautioned the people involved in cow smuggling and asked them to reform themselves before the situation worsens. Mallik said the drive launched Saturday will continue, and strict action will be taken against everyone associated with this network.

He said the police have been instructed to act firmly

Malik said that the state already has legislation in force, the Odisha Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act, 1960. "We are planning to make provisions under the law more stringent. The Law department will soon amend certain provisions to make them tougher," he said.

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POLITICKLE by MANJUL

NEWBORN'S BODY NEAR POND SPREADS PANIC

POST NEWS NETWORK

Umerkote, Jan 18: In a shocking incident, the body of a newborn boy was recovered from the embankment of a pond at Koelarabeda village under this block in Nabarangpur district Sunday morning, police said.

Umerkote police reached the spot, seized the body and launched an investigation. Authorities said though it is yet unclear as to how the body landed on the pond embankment, a thorough probe will reveal the details.

According to police, some locals who had taken cattle out Sunday morning noticed the body beneath a date palm tree near the pond embankment. They alerted villagers and local Panchayat Samiti



(Block) member Ram Singh Pujari, who informed the police. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Ramakanta Sai and Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Narendra Golapi reached the spot, seized the body and sent it for postmortem. The body was cremated after the autopsy was conducted at Umerkote community health centre (CHC), police said.

A case (6/26) has been registered and further investigation is underway. Residents have demanded strict action against those responsible for the inhuman act.

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POST NEWS NETWORK

Balasore, Jan 18: The movement of red crabs along the seashore adds to the natural beauty of Balasore's beaches and remains a major attraction for tourists. Their playful scurrying across the sand draws visitors from morning till evening, packing the beaches with onlookers eager to witness the sight.

However, the population of these fragile creatures is steadily declining due to unregulated vehicular movement on beaches, dumping of waste and effluents into seawater and the impact of climate change, environmentalists said.

Red crabs significantly contribute to the environment by aerating soil and improving nu-

trient cycling through decomposition. They are also an important food source for marine life.

Odisha has a coastline stretching over 480 km. Beaches in Balasore district including Chandipur, Dublagadi, Dagara, Talasari and Udaypur are particularly known for their scenic beauty, marked by dense casuarina plantations and vast sandy stretches where red crabs are commonly found. Tourists travel from far-off places to experience this unique natural spectacle.

These crabs live in small burrows dug into the sandy beach. Activists alleged that illegal felling of casuarina trees along the coast and their rampant transportation by tractors on the beaches have severely damaged crab habitats. Con-

tinuous movement of tractors, fishing activities close to the shore and trampling of crab burrows during illegal collection of shells and other marine resources are causing the species to perish in large numbers.

Locals and environmentalists said a lack of awareness and poor enforcement of coastal protection norms are accelerating the decline in population of red crabs, calling for immediate steps to regulate beach traffic and protect their natural habitat.

Experts have warned that

chemical contamination is increasingly turning seawater toxic along the coast, threatening marine life.

Discharge of chemical-rich wastewater and industrial effluents into the sea, coupled with dumping of garbage and plastic waste into rivers and streams that drain into the ocean, is severely degrading water quality. The presence of microplastics in seawater is also rising with serious consequences for marine ecosystems.

"The increasing presence of chemicals and microplastics is reducing the reproductive capacity of marine organisms," said scientist Siddhartha Pati. "As a result, there is a growing threat of extinction of several marine species, including red crabs."

Experts also pointed out



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QUESTIONS BEYOND OIL

The practice of Yoga brings us face to face with the extraordinary complexity of our own being.

SRI AUROBINDO

Left Alone

The prospects of Turkey joining a Saudi Arabia–Pakistan security arrangement that mirrors NATO's collective defence principle could be a cause of major strategic concern for India. Ankara is in advanced talks with Riyadh and Islamabad to join the pact which is in line with NATO's Article 5, under which an attack on one member is treated as an attack on all. Under the emerging division of responsibilities, Saudi Arabia would act as the primary financial backer; Pakistan would bring in its nuclear deterrent, ballistic missile capabilities and military manpower, while Turkey would contribute operational expertise and its rapidly growing domestic defence industry which has set its focus on drone warfare technology.

Turkey's possible inclusion in the alliance is particularly noteworthy given its status as a long-standing member of the NATO and the holder of NATO's second-largest military after the US. Its participation would lend considerable military might and political weight to the pact. While Saudi Arabia and Turkey have historically competed for influence in the Sunni Moslem world, they share common concerns about Shia-majority Iran's regional role. They are also aligned in their support for a stable, Sunni-led Syria and in advocating Palestinian statehood.

Ankara's defence ties with Islamabad are already deep and multifaceted. Turkey is building corvette warships for the Pakistani navy, has upgraded a significant number of Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets, and has shared drone technology with both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It has also invited both countries to participate in its ambitious Kaan fifth-generation fighter jet programme, underlining the growing technological dimension of their cooperation.

The trilateral talks come in the aftermath of a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, which ended a four-day military standoff in May 2025. During that brief conflict, Turkey openly backed Pakistan, highlighting its willingness to take sides in South Asian security disputes. Pakistan had then used hundreds of Turkish drones that had swarmed Indian skies during the four nights. Although open hostilities between India and Pakistan have ceased since then, tensions remain elevated, with Islamabad also facing persistent friction with Afghanistan amid accusations that the Taliban is sheltering hostile militant groups while India, doing virtually nothing tangible, is constantly claiming 'Operation Sindoar' is still alive and active.

For Turkey, the alliance is lucrative as a means of strengthening its deterrence and strategic autonomy at a time when doubts linger over long-term US reliability and President Donald Trump's sceptical stance towards NATO.

On the other hand, a Saudi Arabia–Pakistan–Turkey defence pact would have significant strategic, diplomatic and military implications for India. The most immediate impact would be on India's security calculus on its western front. A pact that implicitly extends political and military backing to Pakistan could embolden Islamabad for its misadventures aimed at India. While Saudi Arabia, with which India has significant trade ties, is unlikely to offer direct military intervention against India, the perception of collective support could strengthen Pakistan's deterrence posture and complicate India's response. Such a scenario could be imminent in case of a future war with Pakistan given New Delhi's inept handling of foreign affairs.

The pact would also significantly add to Pakistan's conventional defence capabilities with Turkish drones, naval platforms, avionics and fighter jets. Combined with Saudi financing, this would strengthen Pakistan's overall military resilience, potentially narrowing India's conventional edge in certain domains such as UAV warfare and naval operations in the Arabian Sea.

The three-nation security grouping that spans the Middle East and South Asia is significant as the old world order is undergoing a major shift with the big three – the US, China and Russia – carving their own spheres of influence. Other regional powers are also nurturing alliances for the benefit of their people. India, sadly, finds itself alone in this world of emerging geopolitical alignments due to an inconsistent and visionless foreign policy followed over the past decade.

WISDOM CORNER

Immanuel Kant
All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason.

IMMANUEL KANT

Soren Kierkegaard
There is nothing with which every man is so afraid as getting to know how enormously much he is capable of doing and becoming.

SOREN KIERKEGAARD

Albert Schweitzer
An optimist is a person who sees a green light everywhere, while a pessimist sees only the red stoplight... the truly wise person is colorblind.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1809: Edgar Allan Poe, a short-story writer, poet, critic, and editor famous for his cultivation of mystery and the macabre, was born in Boston.

1825: Ezra Daggett and Thomas Kensett obtained a patent for a preservation process used to store food in tin cans.

1883: In the North Sea the German steamer Cimbria collided with the British steamer Sultan and sank, killing 340.

1966: Following the sudden death of Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri eight days earlier, Indira Gandhi became the country's first woman Prime Minister, assuming the office first held by her father, Jawaharlal Nehru.

1977: US President Gerald Ford pardoned Iva Toguri D'Aquino (Tokyo Rose), a Japanese-American broadcaster from Japan to US troops during World War II, who, after the war, was convicted of treason and served six years in a U.S. prison; mitigating information later raised questions about her guilt.

LOL

Driving down country lane

A husband and wife were driving down a country lane on their way to visit some friends. They came to a muddy patch in the road and the car became bogged. After a few minutes of trying to get the car out by themselves, they saw a young farmer coming down the lane, driving some oxen before him. The farmer stopped when he saw the couple in trouble and offered to pull the car out of the mud for \$50. The husband accepted and minutes later the car was free. The farmer turned to the husband and said, "You know, you're the tenth car I've helped out of the mud today."

The husband looks around at the fields incredulously and asks the farmer, "When do you have time to plough your land? At night?"



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

HERE NOW
OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010



Organised robbery

Sir, Let me say this without fear or softness: toll tax is organised day-light robbery. We are being forced to pay again and again for the same road, and this injustice has been normalised. When I buy a vehicle, I already pay road tax, which is meant for building and maintaining roads. I also pay income tax, a portion of which goes into infrastructure and road development. After paying both, I am still stopped at toll gates and asked to pay toll tax for using the same road. Roads are not luxury services. They are a basic public necessity. A daily commuter, a farmer, a truck driver—people who keep the economy running—are punished every few kilometres. Long queues, broken roads, failed FASTags, zero accountability, yet payment is compulsory. This system also infringes Article 19(1)(d) of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to freedom of movement throughout the territory of India. The excuse of cost recovery and PPP models does not justify exploitation. If toll tax is necessary, then abolish road tax. If road tax exists, toll tax has no moral ground. You cannot burden citizens from both ends and call it development.

Noopur Baruah, TEZPUR (ASSAM)



As the economic rivalry between China and the US intensifies, particularly in the race for AI dominance, reliable access to abundant energy while controlling energy flow to competitors will be indispensable

Early two weeks after US special forces invaded Venezuela to capture and extract Nicolás Maduro, many people believe that President Donald Trump was motivated to act by a desire to control the country's vast oil reserves. But to what end? Does Trump want to boost profits for the US Gulf Coast refineries equipped to process Venezuela's heavy crude? Or is the aim to flood the global market, lower oil prices for American consumers, and, as a bonus, break up OPEC?

Whatever the goal of commanding Venezuela's oil, achieving it depends on whether the country can significantly increase output.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, at an estimated 300 billion barrels, and has long been at the center of global energy geopolitics. Its heavy crude, especially from the Orinoco Belt, has historically played a critical role in supplying refineries optimized for such feedstock, including those along the US Gulf Coast. As a result, many US administrations have regarded Venezuela as a strategic interest.

But after Hugo Chávez, Maduro's predecessor, began a second wave of nationalization in 2007, seizing hundreds of private businesses and foreign-owned assets in Venezuela, the US came to rely more on crude from Canada – a politically stable ally. These long-life, low-decline reserves arrive through an intricate web of pipelines and are sold at a discount. Last year, the US imported an average of 6.2 million barrels per day of crude (mostly medium and heavy sour), of which more than 60% came from Canada.

By contrast, US refineries did not import any Venezuelan crude in the first few months of 2025, and started buying small amounts only after the Trump administration allowed Chevron to re-enter Venezuela for oil production and export under relatively strict conditions. Before Maduro's arrest, US refiners imported only about 150,000 barrels per day from Venezuela.

Moreover, Trump has announced that the 30-50 million barrels of sanctioned oil that Venezuela will "turn over" to the US will be sold on Venezuela's behalf, with the administration controlling how the proceeds are spent. Two trading houses are already in talks about selling this oil to Chinese and Indian refiners. Taken together, these realities demonstrate that Trump is not looking to satisfy Gulf Coast refineries' thirst.

Some have speculated that Trump may use Venezuelan crude to fill the US strategic petroleum reserves. But it has become an unwritten rule since

the 1990s that only domestic oil will be used for this purpose – a policy from which Trump is unlikely to deviate, not least because Venezuelan crude is too sour to meet the specifications required for SPR purchases.

Instead, based on Trump's comments and actions, he seems to be after money. Venezuela agreed to compensate US oil companies for their nationalized assets, but did not pay, even after these firms went to arbitration and won their cases. Trump wants to collect that money, but Venezuela is bankrupt, and oil is its most valuable resource.

These moves belie the claims that Trump is pursuing lower oil prices and taking aim at OPEC. Why would energy companies spend tens of billions of dollars reviving Venezuela's dilapidated oil industry, which is what Trump is asking of them, only to slash their own profits by flooding the market with crude and driving down prices?

In any case, Venezuela will not be able to increase production

meaningfully any time soon. To increase production by one million barrels per day requires roughly \$20 billion in investment and will take about three years. By that point, some forecasters project that global oil demand will have grown between 2-3 million barrels per day, while depletion will have reduced production by 12-15 million barrels per day, meaning that the world will need around 15 million barrels per day of new oil. Thus, any increase in Venezuelan production will not flood the market, nor will it lower prices. In fact, it would be a welcome addition to global supplies.

As for where this \$20 billion will come from, history suggests that most of it will be redirected from future projects in other countries, rather than additional spending above these firms' annual investment budget. The effects of increasing production in Venezuela will therefore be limited because it comes at the expense of increased production elsewhere in the world. The idea that such a shift would cause problems within OPEC is absurd.

The oil, and the money it brings in, are clearly driving Trump's interest in Venezuela. But broader political issues are also at play. In recent years, Venezuela has developed deep economic ties with China, which purchased most of its sanctioned oil. As the economic rivalry between China and the US intensifies, particularly in the race for AI dominance, reliable access to abundant energy while controlling energy flow to competitors will be indispensable.

The writer is an energy economist.

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SPECTRUM ECONOMY

When stability risks masking stagnation

By conventional macroeconomic yardsticks, India should enter FY27 Budget cycle with a degree of comfort. Growth is expected to remain above 7%, inflation has eased from its post-pandemic peaks, and fiscal consolidation appears broadly on track, with the fiscal deficit projected to narrow to around 4.4% of GDP. On the surface, in a slowing global environment, the economy looks resilient.

Yet budgets are not written for periods of comfort; they are crafted to anticipate stress. Beneath reassuring aggregates lie deep structural pressures that the Budget cannot afford to overlook—weak household savings, skewed public expenditure, a hesitant manufacturing sector, fragile private investment, external trade risks, and a farm economy mired in low productivity. Stability, in short, risks masking stagnation.

India's recent revenue performance has benefited from buoyant indirect taxes, improved compliance, and steady nominal growth. Yet the quality of revenue is critical. Net household financial savings fell sharply to approximately 5.2% of GDP in FY24, one of the lowest levels in decades as household indebtedness rose. This pattern suggests that tax buoyancy has been sustained in part by households consuming more and saving less. Such a fiscal base is inherently fragile. An economy can-

not indefinitely extract revenue from households whose financial buffers are shrinking. The FY27 Budget must, therefore, be cautious about over-reliance on consumption-led revenues and should seek to broaden the tax base—not by deeper penetration into already-stretched household finances, but through formal employment growth and productive investment.

Public expenditure has leaned heavily on capital outlays since FY21, with central capital expenditure now exceeding Rs 11 lakh crore. This emphasis has helped stabilise growth and strengthen physical infrastructure. However, the composition of spending reveals a growing imbalance.

Investment in human capital—education, skills, health, and research—lags badly. Education spending has stagnated around 3% of GDP, teacher vacancies remain unfilled, and learning outcomes continue to disappoint. R&D spending has stagnated near 0.7% of GDP, far below thresholds typical of innovation-driven economies. Infrastructure without corresponding investment in human capital risks creating assets the economy cannot fully utilise, weakening long-term returns on public investment.

In advance of the Budget's presentation on 1 February, the government has raised the GST rate on pan masala, cigarettes, tobacco and similar products to 40%.

In addition, the railways raised fares twice during the year, yielding about Rs 3,900 crore against a prior surplus of Rs 2,517.38 crore in 2022-23. These moves aim to support revenue and contain the deficit, as the IMF has flagged a potential "revenue squeeze" in the central budget.

Manufacturing remains a weak link in India's growth, with capacity utilisation still below levels needed to spur large-scale private investment and core industrial demand softening. While Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes have attracted nearly Rs 2 lakh crore in realised investments and generated over 12.6 lakh jobs, they cannot substitute for a broad revival on their own. Recent PMI data show India's factory activity cooling, with new orders and output growth slowing to multi-month lows.

The global environment adds further complexity. India cannot assume benign access to the US market in FY27 and beyond. At the same time, a slew of free trade agreements (FTAs) has delivered only modest export gains, and many have widened trade deficits without significantly boosting value-added exports—reflecting weaknesses in domestic competitiveness rather than market access alone.

Agriculture still employs nearly half the workforce while contributing less than a fifth of GDP. Productivity remains low, incomes are volatile, and

climate risks are rising. Budgetary support continues to be skewed toward subsidies rather than investment in irrigation, storage, crop diversification, and agro-processing. Recent changes to rural employment schemes and procurement policies risk weakening income buffers without offering sustainable alternatives. The FY27 Budget must tread carefully: weak farm incomes directly affect consumption, savings, and broader economic stability.

Despite improvements in Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) targeting, vulnerability remains high. Health shocks, income volatility, and inadequate insurance continue to suppress household savings and risk-taking. An economy that seeks higher investment cannot leave households one illness away from financial distress.

The central question for the Budget is not whether India can maintain stability—it likely can. The real challenge is whether it can convert that stability into sustained, broad-based growth. Achieving this will require hard choices: redirecting expenditure toward productivity, addressing institutional frictions that deter private investment, preparing for external trade shocks, and confronting long-neglected sectors like agriculture and human capital. India does not face a fiscal crisis. But it does face an institutional test.

INFA

Safety of gig workers

Sir, The government's decision to ban the headline promise of "10-minute delivery" by quick commerce platforms is commendable. In their frantic efforts to raise customer ratings, online shopping platforms lay all the pressure on gig workers. Customers are more concerned about the timely delivery of the products than the safety of gig workers. The pathetic sight of the delivery agents manoeuvring their vehicles through heavy traffic is deeply moving. While timely delivery of products is essential for gaining customers' trust, the human element in the system must not go unnoticed. For majority of gig workers, their income is not pocket money but primary income. Their safety must be top priority. Instead of pressuring the workers for fast delivery, the online commerce platforms must give more importance to quality, standard and dignity.

Venu GS, KOLLAM (KERALA)



RED FORT BLAST

Apple harvest keeps youth away from terror



The probe indicated that Nabi was not merely a terrorist but a strategic recruiter who was actively building secondary, independent cells to ensure the continuity of operations even if primary cells were compromised

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Srinagar, Jan 18: Investigations into the "white collar" terror module busted after the recent car bombing near Red Fort showed that the mastermind Dr Umar-un Nabi had attempted to recruit a second suicide bomber but could not succeed as he backed out of the terror plot citing the need to help his family during the apple harvest, officials said Sunday.

The Srinagar Police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) have uncovered a parallel terror module orchestrated by Nabi, the man who was driving the explosive-laden vehicle that detonated outside the historic Red Fort November 10, killing over 12 people.

Interrogations of the arrested suspects have highlighted recruitment tactics used by the doctor-turned-terrorist, leading to the nabbing of a Shopian resident, Yasir Ahmed Dar, by the NIA.

The officials said Nabi had successfully radicalised Dar as a potential suicide bomber, but during a meeting in August last year, he backed out at the last minute, citing the "apple harvest season" and repairs at home as reasons.

According to the officials,

poor economic condition and the belief that suicide was forbidden in Islam.

The suicide bomber scouting plot of the module, cracked by Srinagar police led by its Senior Superintendent of Police Dr GV Sundeep Chakravarthy, adds a dangerous new dimension to the investigation into the interstate terror network linked to the JeM.

As reported by the PTI earlier, Nabi, a 28-year-old doctor from Pulwama, emerged as the most radicalised and key operative in the network spanning Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. Officials believe he was planning a powerful Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast timed around the Babri Masjid demolition anniversary on December 6.

He planned to place the VBIED around a crowded place, either in the national capital or at some place of religious importance, and then disappear, the officials said.

According to the interrogation of the co-accused, Nabi's transformation began after a trip to Turkey in 2021 with co-accused Dr Muzammil Ahmad Ganaie, where they allegedly met JeM overground workers.

Following the trip, Nabi and Ganaie, who taught at Faridabad's Al Falah University, began accumulating vast quantities of chemicals from the open market, including 360 kg of ammonium nitrate, potassium nitrate and sulphur, much of which was stored near the university campus.

The December plot fell apart when Srinagar police's meticulous investigation led to Ganaie's arrest and the seizure of the explosives, which caused Nabi to panic and finally resulted in a premature blast outside the Red Fort.

The intricate inter-state terror network was exposed after a small but significant incident of the appearance of JeM posters on walls in Bupnora, Nowgam, on the outskirts of Srinagar on October 19, 2025.

Srinagar police registered a case and reviewed CCTV footage, leading to the arrest of three locals -- Arif Nisar Dar alias Sahil, Yasir-ul-Ashraf, and Maqsood Ahmad Dar alias Shahid, all with prior stone-pelting cases.

Their interrogation led to the arrest of Maulvi Irfan Ahmad, a former paramedic turned Imam from Shopian, who allegedly supplied the posters and used his access to radicalise the doctors.

The Meteorological Department has forecast snowfall in the higher reaches and also the plains of the Valley between January 22 and 24.



An artisan works on an idol of Lord Ganesh ahead of the 'Maghi Ganpati' festival, in Navi Mumbai, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

TEMPERATURE DROPS

Valley records 96% less rainfall in Jan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Jan 18: Minimum temperature again slipped several notches below zero in the Valley Sunday as Jammu and Kashmir faced a 96 per cent rain deficit in the first fortnight of January, the Meteorological Department said.

Meteorological Department officials said that during the first fortnight of this month, Jammu and Kashmir recorded a 96 per cent rain deficit, which is alarming because there is a probability of early bloom in trees that will not mature into fruit due to the low temperatures in February and March.

Early bloom in fruit trees spells disaster for fruit growers in the Valley, and if there is no imminent rain or snow, the agriculture and horticulture sectors will be the worst affected in recent years.

Contrary to common belief, horticulture, and not tourism, is the mainstay of Kashmir's economy.

The 40-day-long period of harsh winter cold called the 'Chillai Kalan' will end January 30, and unless a major snowfall occurs in Jammu and Kashmir, summer is going to be difficult because of water scarcity for drinking purposes, agricultural and horticultural irrigation.

The Meteorological Department has forecast snowfall in the higher reaches and also the plains of the Valley between January 22 and 24.

Maharashtra civic poll results likely to trigger MVA churn

Cong moves ahead of Sena (UBT), NCP (SP)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 18: The verdict in polls to 29 municipal corporations in Maharashtra is expected to redraw equations within the opposition bloc since the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) has been decimated in its stronghold in Pune, Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena (UBT) has put up a fight in its home turf in Mumbai while seeing its base shrink in others and the Congress has gained ground in several cities.

According to the final tally, the BJP won 1,425 out of a total 2,869 seats across 29 municipal corporations, Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena 399, Congress 324, Ajit Pawar-led NCP 167, Shiv Sena (UBT) 155, NCP (SP) 36, MNS 13, BSP 6, parties registered with the SEC 129, unrecognised parties 196, and 19 independents.

With the Congress coming third overall and having done much better than Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP), its allies in Maha Vikas Aghadi, political analysts said it will force a rethink as far as coordination, seat-sharing and leadership are concerned ahead of the 2029 assembly polls.

While Shiv Sena (UBT) lost its crown jewel, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, and the NCP (SP) saw its bastions in Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad crumble despite allying with Ajit Pawar's NCP, the Congress managed to be the single largest party in Kolhapur, Chandrapur and Bhiwandi.



pri-Chinchwad crumble despite allying with Ajit Pawar's NCP, the Congress managed to be the single largest party in Kolhapur, Chandrapur and Bhiwandi.

Congress sources said the party will now demand a larger share in the MVA pie claiming the "regional pride" card of Thackeray and Pawar had failed to arrest BJP's growth.

These sources said the Congress' decision to go solo or in limited alliances is being viewed as a "stress test" that showed the party can survive and thrive even at this juncture.

While Thackeray's party has managed to remain the main challenger for BJP in Mumbai, its influence in other parts of the state has shrunk, which would directly affect its claim to be senior partner in the MVA based on its organisational muscle, analysts said.

The results indicate vote division between Shiv Sena (UBT) and Shiv Sena has benefited the ruling alliance in several wards, they pointed out. While

Thackeray's party retains emotional connect and brand recall, translating this into ward-level victories remains a challenge in the absence of a unified organisational machinery, these analysts said.

The NCP (SP) has been the worst affected since the decimation in Pune district and single digit seats in most urban areas means its claim of being the "architect" of the MVA is now up for debate, they added.

The numbers suggest Congress is now the only party with a pan-Maharashtra footprint in the opposition, which will make it push for a common minimum program that prioritizes its national agenda, potentially forcing Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) to choose between playing second fiddle or risking a three-way split in the opposition vote, an analyst said.

The MVA constituents will also have to contend with groups like AIMIM, which did well in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar and Malegaon among others, and the Bahujan Vikas Aghadi that won in Vasai-Virar, he said.

"NCP (SP) and Sena (UBT) have no option but to leave behind their prejudices and align with Congress to ensure their symbol reaches pan-Maharashtra. The 2029 assembly polls are far away but starting from Zilla Parishad polls both these parties will have to go along with the Congress for this," senior journalist Prakash Akolkar said.

COLD CASES PURGE

After five decades, Mumbai court shutters ₹7.65 theft case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Jan 18: Nearly 50 years after the theft of ₹7.65, a Mumbai court has finally dropped the curtain on a 1977 cold case involving two unidentified accused and a complainant who remained untraceable despite decades of police searches.

The ruling is one of the many recent verdicts in decades-old cases that have remained in the cold storage, clogging the legal system.

The Mazagaon court closed the 1977 case as part of its endeavour to dispose of old cases, where the accused have either died, remained unidentified or untraceable.

The 1977 theft case involved two unidentified men accused of stealing ₹7.65, a significant sum five decades ago. However, the duo could not be traced despite non-bailable warrants, which put the matter into cold storage.

Judicial Magistrate First Class (Mazagaon court) Aarti Kulkarni, on January 14, closed

the case, noting that the matter was nearly 50 years old and had remained "pending unnecessarily without progress".

"More than sufficient time is taken. There is no point in keeping the matter pending," the court said in its order.

It discharged the two accused booked under Section 379 (theft) of the Indian Penal Code, and directed that the stolen sum of ₹7.65 be returned to the complainant.

If the informant isn't found, the amount will be deposited into the government account following the appeal period," the court stated in the order.

It held that since the stolen amount was under ₹2,000, the case was classified to be tried summarily under Section 260

Holistic agriculture plan reshapes J&K farming

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 18: The Holistic Agriculture Development Programme (HADP) has emerged as a key driver of agricultural transformation in Jammu and Kashmir, with more than 92,000 units established across the Union Territory, officials said Sunday.

With a total outlay of Rs 5,013 crore and 29 interlinked projects spanning agriculture, horticulture and livestock sectors, the flagship programme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2024.

It is designed with a clear objective -- to transition agriculture from subsistence-driven practices to sustainable, resilient and income-generating livelihoods, the officials said.

Agriculture and allied sectors are the backbone of Jammu & Kashmir's rural economy, supporting over 13 lakh families and contributing nearly one-fifth of the region's gross state value added.

As HADP advances into deeper stages of implementation, the officials said the transition from policy intent to on-ground delivery is clearly visible.



More than 3.7 lakh farmers have been registered under the programme, with around 171 activities opened for applications, while over 5.9 lakh applications have been received so far, of which nearly four lakh have been approved across districts, the officials said.

On the ground, more than 92,000 productive units covering farms, nurseries, livestock units, mushroom cultivation, poultry and value-addition enterprises have already been established, with over 86,000 units actively tracked through digital dashboards, they said.

The officials said capacity building has remained central to the programme.

national

of the day quote

andhra pradesh cm
The BRS party has to be defeated and its flagpole bases must be destroyed in Telangana. Then only it becomes a real tribute to NT Rama Rao

REVENTH REDDY | TELANGANA CM

When Javed Akhtar dismisses A R Rahman's concerns about the growing communalisation of Bollywood, he contradicts lived and shared realities of Indian Muslims including those of his own wife Shabana Azmi, who has openly spoken about being denied housing for being a Muslim in a cosmopolitan city like Bombay

MENBOOJA MUFTI | PDP PRESIDENT

Those who are at the helm of the affairs in the state are maintaining a stoic silence on these spine-chilling incidents while pretending to be saints

TEJASHWI YADAV | RJD LEADER

SHORT TAKES

Police bust extortion module linked to Brar

Ludhiana: The Punjab Police Sunday claimed to have dismantled an illegal arms and extortion module linked to foreign-based gangster Goldy Brar with the arrest of 10 people. Ludhiana Police Commissioner Swapna Sharma said 12 sophisticated weapons, including two Austrian Glock pistols, along with magazines and live ammunition, have been seized from them. He said the accused have been arrested in a three-week operation. These accused were tasked with trafficking of illegal arms, extortion and murders to create lawlessness in the state, the police officer said.

ED charges Magicwin owners

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Sunday said it has filed a chargesheet against an online betting website whose Pakistani directors are based in the UAE. A total of 14 individuals and companies have been named as accused in the case against Magicwin. India banned real-money online gaming and betting in 2025, calling it a financial and social menace as it drains the hard-earned money of users, especially the youth.

Cold wave in north India

New Delhi: Cold wave conditions prevailed in the northern parts of the country, with the minimum temperatures plunging across Kashmir and Punjab's Amritsar shivering at a low of 1.7 degrees Celsius Sunday. Two men, including a truck driver, were burned to death following a multi-vehicle pileup on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway in Haryana's Nuh Sunday morning amid dense fog, police said. The meteorological department has forecast spells of wet weather, especially in the higher reaches of the valley over the next few days.

Woman gangraped
Chandigarh: A 19-year-old woman was raped in Sonipat by three youths, who offered her a ride home but drove the car to an isolated spot instead, police said Sunday. One of the youths have been arrested in connection with the incident, they said. According to police, the crime took place January 16.



On the occasion of the 30th death anniversary of the great leader NTR, a man of destiny and a treasure for the poor, I offer my solemn tribute to that great soul

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | ANDHRA PRADESH CM

Stalin announces TN govt literary award for non-Hindi languages



In the first phase, awards will be for the best works in the languages of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Bengali and Marathi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 18: Chief Minister M K Stalin Sunday announced annual literary awards in 7 languages including Tamil, Bengali and Marathi and slammed the Centre for alleged political intervention in Sahitya Akademi awards.

The award, under the auspices of the Tamil Nadu government, will carry ₹5 lakh cash prize, he said, adding it is named as "Semmozhi Illakiya Virudhu (Classical Language Literary Award)."

In the first phase, awards will be for the best works in the languages of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Bengali and Marathi.

In his address at the valedictory event of the Chennai International Book Fair (CIBF-2026), the chief minister said the Sahitya Akademi awards announcement had been cancelled recently and it was discomfiting.

It was due to the intervention of the Union Culture Ministry, he alleged. Underlining what he called the uncertainty over the awards, he said "political interventions, even in art and literary awards is dangerous."

Under such circumstances, the CM said several writers and representatives of art/literary bodies had appealed to him for

an appropriate, constructive, counter-action plan.

He said: "We also have a realisation that this is the need of the hour and I would like to make an announcement that will make you all happy."

Accordingly, he said every year on behalf of the Tamil Nadu government, "national-level" awards would be given for best literary works in selected Indian languages. The CM said: "I am very happy to announce this. In the first phase, award in the name of 'Semmozhi Illakiya Virudhu' will be given for the best works in the languages of Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Bengali and Marathi. The award for each language carries ₹5 lakh cash prize."

The Tamil Nadu government will happily perform the role of the patron and will hand over the task of the selection process to independent experts.

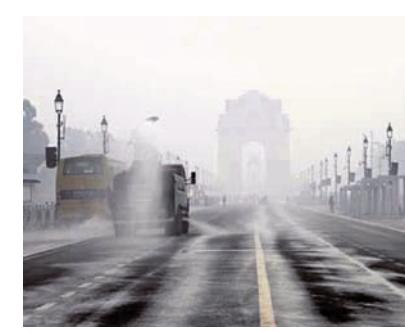
"In order to ensure the quality of literary works and transparency, a committee (to select the awardees) will be set up for each language, comprising reputed writers."

Further, he said the Dravidian model government led by him had taken several initiatives to take knowledge to every household and the book fair was an important step.

In this book fair, great importance had been placed on translations and copyright exchanges, he said. Further Stalin said: "The victory of International Booker Prize winner, Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq, who is present here, shows its (translations and copyright transfers) importance."

AIR QUALITY 'SEVERE'

The capital Sunday recorded a maximum temperature of 22.7 degrees Celsius, 3.1 notches above the seasonal average, with partly cloudy conditions throughout the day after dense fog enveloped most parts of the city during the early hours, according to the Met office



SC looks at cybercrime account freeze guidelines

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 18: The Supreme Court has directed that a plea seeking directions to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India to formulate a Standard Operating Procedure governing freezing and de-freezing of bank accounts during cybercrime probes be placed before Chief Justice of India Surya Kant.

A bench of Justices Pankaj Mithal and SVN Bhatti directed the apex court registry to seek instruction from the CJI and place the matter accordingly before appropriate bench after it was informed by the Centre that the CJI-led bench was already hearing a suo moto matter related to digital arrests, where the same issue is under consideration.

"Anil Kaushik, ASG further submits that as far as prayers 'B' and 'C' are concerned, they are the subject matter of consideration before another bench of this Court in Suo Moto Writ Petition (Crl.). In view of the above, the registry to obtain appropriate orders from the Chief Justice of India and post the matter accordingly," the top court said in its order January 16. The top court had earlier agreed to examine the plea



which have prayer 'B' stating that no bank account shall be frozen without a written reasoned order and intimation to the account holder within 24 hours of such action. The plea filed by petitioner Vivek Varshney, through advocate Tushar Manohar Khairnar, said he was aggrieved by the "arbitrary freezing/holding" of his bank account(s) by the Cyber Cell of Tamil Nadu police allegedly without any prior notice, communication or judicial approval, thereby violating his fundamental rights under Articles 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution.

Its prayer 'C' seeks direction to the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India to formulate a uniform Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) governing freezing and de-freezing of bank accounts during cybercrime investigations, so as to prevent arbitrary action and ensure procedural fairness nationwide. At the outset, Kaushik informed the bench that Centre has not freezed the bank

accounts of petitioners, who alleged the action was taken without intimation.

On January 6, the top court had asked the copy of the petition to be served on the Centre within three days, and listed the matter next week.

The plea also sought the issuance of appropriate guidelines to all investigating agencies, including cyber cells across the country, to ensure that no bank account is frozen without a written reasoned order and intimation to the account holder within 24 hours of such action. The plea filed by petitioner Vivek Varshney, through advocate Tushar Manohar Khairnar, said he was aggrieved by the "arbitrary freezing/holding" of his bank account(s) by the Cyber Cell of Tamil Nadu police allegedly without any prior notice, communication or judicial approval, thereby violating his fundamental rights under Articles 19(1)(g) and 21 of the Constitution. The petitioner claimed that the freezing order in his case has resulted in complete financial paralysis, restricting him from carrying out his professional and personal obligations, including payment of essential expenses, taxes and liabilities.



INS Sagardhwani, India's oceanographic research vessel under the Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL) of DRDO, during its flagging-off ceremony in Kochi, Kerala

9 killed, 80 injured after bus carrying marriage party overturns

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Latehar, Jan 18: At least nine people, including five women, were killed and over 80 others injured after a bus carrying wedding guests overturned in Jharkhand's Latehar district Sunday, police said.

The accident occurred at Orsa Bangladeshi valley under Mahuaon police station limits.

"A bus carrying a marriage party was coming from Balrampur district in Chhattisgarh for a wedding at Mahuaon in Latehar. The bus overturned, and five people died on the spot. Among them, four were women. The injured were taken to a hospital," Superintendent of

Police Kumar Gaurav told PTI. Two persons died during treatment in Latehar hospital, while two in Gumla Sadar hospital, another official said.

Gumla civil surgeon Shambhu Nath Choudhary said nine injured were referred to the Sa-

dar hospital here, of which two were brought dead. In a post on X, Chief Minister Hemant Soren asked the Latehar deputy commissioner to provide appropriate medical facilities to the injured. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Vipin

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national

of the day quote

Of the total inmates, 22,946 prisoners, about 50 per cent, are undertrials, and of these, 21 per cent belong to tribal communities, the highest in the country



UMANG SINGH | MP LEADER OF OPPN

Initially, a condition was imposed that women with an annual income of more than Rs 1 lakh would not be eligible for the scheme. Later, they said the amount (to be given to the eligible women) will be deposited in instalments every three months

KUMARI SELJA | CONG LEADER

Whether it is Narendra bhai, me, you, or anyone else, there is one single force that drives all of us. If the vehicle is driven by that force, there will never be an accident. That driver is dharma

MOHAN BHAGWAT | RSS CHIEF

POST OF THE DAY

Aadhaar is linked to PAN.
Aadhaar is linked to ration cards.
Aadhaar is linked to bank accounts.
Aadhaar is linked to gas connections.
Aadhaar is linked to mobile numbers.

Aadhaar is linked to job attendance.
Aadhaar is mandatory for govt schemes.
But Aadhaar is NOT linked to Voter ID.
Why? One simple link could stop double and triple voting.

Transparency is crying in the corner. Every country works with one primary ID. Why do we need so many?

@pushpendrakum

SHORT TAKES

Speeding car hits camel; driver killed

Jaipur: A 40-year-old car driver was killed, and three members of a family were injured after a speeding car collided with a camel in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district, police said Sunday. The accident occurred Saturday night near Brahmanon ki Sareri in the Asind area. The impact was so severe that the camel crashed through the roof of the car and got stuck inside, officials said. Asind police station in-charge Shradhha Pancholi said the car driver, Salim, a resident of Beawar, died on the spot.

Train derailment delays services

Palakkad (Kerala): A minor derailment of a goods train in Pattambi Sunday caused delays to several passenger trains, railway officials said. A spokesperson for the Southern Railway's Palakkad Division said the wheels of one bogie of the goods train derailed near Pallipuram station at around 11.30 am. "By around 12.50 pm, the wheels were restored to the track and passenger train services resumed at about 1 pm," the spokesperson told PTI.

Republic Day: Security beefed up in Kashmir

Srinagar: Security forces have intensified sanitisation and area domination exercises across Kashmir ahead of Republic Day to ensure smooth and peaceful celebrations in the valley, officials said here Sunday. Random frisking of vehicles is being carried out at all major intersections in Srinagar city and elsewhere in the valley to keep a check on any suspicious movement, the officials said.



“

How many cases did they (BJP) hand over to the CBI when they were in power and we were in the Opposition? If they didn't, then what moral right do they have to make such demands?

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

NEW INITIATIVES REMOVE STRAY CATTLE FROM ROADS

The Uttarakhand government has launched two schemes to remove stray cattle from roads and fields, under which people who provide shelter to these animals can earn up to Rs 12,000 per month, officials said Sunday



In Bengal, Modi calls for ending 'maha jungle raj'

With the state Assembly polls a few months away, Modi framed the electoral contest as one between "maha-jungle raj and good governance" and urged voters to back the BJP's "double-engine government" model

AGENCIES



Modi flags off Amrit Bharat express trains

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi flagged off three new Amrit Bharat Express trains from Singur through video conferencing Sunday. These Amrit Bharat Express Trains will run between Santragachi-Tambaram, Howrah-Anand Vihar and Sealdah-Banaras. Modi also inaugurated a new Rail line between Jayrambati and Maynapur (15 km) along with a new train between Jayrambati-Maynapur. Ravneet Singh, Hon'ble Minister of State for Railways, Satish Kumar, Chairman & CEO Railway Board, Anil Kumar Mishra, General Manager, South Eastern Railway, Lalit Mohan Pandey, Divisional Railway Manager, Kharagpur and other dignitaries were present at Santragachi Station during the inaugural run programme of three new Amrit Bharat Express Trains. 16107 Tambaram-Santragachi Amrit Bharat Express will leave Tambaram every Friday at 15:30 hrs and will reach Santragachi at 20:15 hrs, the next day. The train will have stoppages at Chennai Egmore, Sullurupeta, Nellore, Ongole, Chirala, Tenali, Vijayawada Jn, Eluru, Rajahmundry, Samalkot, Anakapalle, Duvvada, Pendurti, Kottavalasa, Vizianagaram, Srikakulam Road, Palasa, Brahmapur, Balugaon, Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jajpur Keonjhar Road, Bhadrak, Balasore and Kharagpur. 13065 Howrah-Anand Vihar Amrit Bharat Express will leave Howrah every Thursday at 23:10 hrs and will reach Anand Vihar at 02:50 hrs, the third day. The train will have stoppages at Bandel, Bardhaman, Durgapur, Asansol, Dhanbad, NSCB Gomoh, Parasnath, Koderma, Gaya, Anguraha Narayan Road, Dehri On Sone, Sasaram, Bhabua Road, Pt. Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Varanasi, Jaunpur City, Sultanpur, Maharaja Bihili Pasi (Nihalgarh), Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad, Gajraula, Hapur and Ghaziabad. 22588 Baranagar-Sealdah Amrit Bharat Express will leave Baranagar every Sunday, Tuesday and Friday at 22:10 hrs and will reach Sealdah at 09:55 hrs, the next day.

land for fencing, but nothing has been done". "The TMC can go to any extent to protect infiltrators by giving them shelter and creating fake documents," Modi said, urging voters to back the BJP to "secure borders, restore law and order and put Bengal back on the path of growth". Calling for a change of guard, the prime minister said it was essential to oust the TMC's "maha jungle raj" and bring in a BJP government committed to good governance.

"Shouldn't the TMC government be punished for acting against the interests of the people of Bengal?" he asked, asserting that voters across the country were increasingly punishing governments that blocked development and welfare delivery.

According to police, fake and misleading videos and AI-generated images, allegedly linked to Hindu deities, were circulated on X with the intent to hurt religious sentiments, spread misinformation, provoke public anger and disturb social harmony.

'Shinde, his corporators don't want BJP mayor'

FAKE IMAGES OF MANIKARNIKA GHAT

AAP MP Sanjay Singh, Pappu Yadav booked

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

been locked up should be released, the Shiv Sena (UBT) leader added.

Shiv Sena leader Sheetal Mhatre said her party and the BJP contested polls as Mahayati. She said 20 of the 29 corporators, who originally belonged to the Bal Thackeray-founded party before its division, do not want a BJP mayor in Mumbai.

As the mayoral race heats up in Mumbai after the BMC polls, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, who heads the Shiv Sena, has moved his 29 corporators to a luxury hotel in the city.

THE SHIV SENA SAID ITS CORPORATORS HAVE BEEN PUT UP AT THE HOTEL FOR A THREE-DAY WORKSHOP WHERE SHINDE WILL GUIDE THEM ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE BRIHANMUMBAL MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (BMC)

On Saturday, Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray had said his party could have its mayor if "Dev" (God) was willing. He also suggested that Shinde's party was scared of poaching attempts by its ally BJP.

"There were discussions between Uddhav Thackeray and MNS president Raj Thackeray (on the post of mayor). We are watching it neutrally. There are many things happening behind the curtains," Raut said.

Even Shinde does not want a BJP mayor in Mumbai, Raut claimed. He said if the corporators are locked up in the hotel, there are different sources of communication to send and receive messages.

The corporators who have

Club where fire killed 25 built illegally: Goa govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the property, Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar and Sunil Divkar, had filed a complaint before the Bardez taluka mamlatdar (revenue officer) December 21, 2023. The complaint was filed against the then Maizon Lake View Resort (later named as the Birch by Romeo Lane after it was leased out to brothers Saurabh and Gaurav Luthra). The complainants had signed an agreement for sale with Surinder Khosla, the proprietor of the resort.

Their complaint specifically mentioned that there was a construction without the conversion of land and without the change of zone. It alleged that there was construction in the tenanted land and the "traditional sluice gate was demolished."

The original owners of



'Naga Sadhus' from 'Shri Panch Dashnam Avahan Akhara' arrive to take a holy dip at Sangam on the occasion of 'Mauni Amavasya' during the ongoing Magh Mela 2026, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. More than 4.52 crore devotees took a holy dip at the Sangam Sunday on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, the most auspicious ritual bath of the Magh Mela, officials said

Encounter breaks out in J&K's Kishtwar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu: Three soldiers were injured in a gunfight with terrorists in a remote forested area in the upper reaches of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district Sunday, officials said.

Reinforcements have been deployed to neutralise the terrorists. The operation, which the Army's Jammu-based White Knight Corps has named 'Operation Thrash-I', began around noon, they said.

In a post on X, the White Knight Corps said the security forces came in contact with the terrorists in the general area Sonnar, northeast of Chatroo, during a deliberate search operation conducted as part of ongoing joint counter-terror exercises along with Jammu and Kashmir Police.

"Operations remain underway with additional forces inducted to reinforce the cordon, supported by close coordination with civil administration and security agencies," the Army said, commending the troops for their exceptional professionalism and resolve while responding to hostile fire under challenging terrain and conditions.

According to the officials, one of the search teams came across a group of two to three foreign terrorists allegedly belonging to Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), who fired indiscriminately and also lobbed a few grenades in an attempt to break the cordon.

The troops retaliated and reinforcements from Army, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and police were rushed to further tighten the cordon. There was intermittent firing between the two sides for some time, the officials said.

Advocates can't use RTI for client cases: CIC

QUOTING A MADRAS HIGH COURT ORDER, THE CIC UNDERLINED THAT "A PRACTISING ADVOCATE CANNOT SEEK INFORMATION RELATING TO THE CASES INSTITUTED BY HIM ON BEHALF OF HIS CLIENT"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi: The Central Information Commission (CIC) has ruled that advocates cannot use the Right to Information (RTI) Act to seek details regarding cases they are handling for clients, observing that using the transparency law in this manner fails to advance its core objectives.

Dismissing a second appeal filed by an advocate in a dispute related to the termination of a fruits-and-vegetables supply contract at a Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya in Haryana, Information Commissioner Sudha Rani Relangi noted that



the appellant had sought information "on behalf of his brother, who used to be supplier of vegetables/fruit to the respon-

dent public authority".

The commission said in the absence of any explanation as to why the supplier himself

could not seek the information, "it appears that the appellant has sought information on behalf of his client per se, which is not permissible".

Quoting a Madras High Court order, the CIC underlined that "a practising advocate cannot seek information relating to the cases instituted by him on behalf of his client".

The high court had cautioned that otherwise, "every practising advocate would invoke the provisions of the RTI Act for getting information on behalf of his client", which "does not advance the objects of the scheme of the RTI Act".

The commission further

quoted the ruling to stress that the "laudable objectives of the RTI Act cannot be used for personal ends and should not become a tool in the hands of the advocate for seeking all kinds of information in order to promote his practice".

Taking note of the claims made by the public authority that several records were destroyed in a fire and that personal information was rightly denied under exemptions, the CIC said it found "no infirmity in the reply furnished by the CPIO". The appeal was accordingly disposed of, with a direction to share copies of written submissions with the appellant.

The commission further

international



Two people were killed and dozens more wounded in a mass Russian drone attack across Ukraine overnight

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKYI |
PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE

INDIANS LEAD SRI LANKA TOURIST ARRIVALS IN 2025

Sri Lanka received a total of 2.3 million tourists in 2025, with Indian travellers accounting for the largest share, according to figures released by the tourism authority



Massive fire kills 6 in Karachi, destroys shopping centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Jan 18: Six people, including a firefighter, were killed, and several others remained trapped more than 12 hours later after a massive fire broke out at a huge shopping mall in Pakistan's Karachi, officials said Sunday.

Italy's right-wing premier, Giorgia Meloni, considered one of Trump's closest allies on the continent, said Sunday she had spoken to him about the tariffs, which she described as "a mistake."

The tariff announcement even drew blowback from Trump's populist allies in Europe.

Italy's right-wing premier, Giorgia Meloni, considered one of Trump's closest allies on the continent, said Sunday she had spoken to him about the tariffs, which she described as "a mistake."

The deployment to Greenland of small numbers of troops by some European countries was misunderstood by Washington, Meloni told reporters.

She said the deployment was not a move against the US but aimed to provide security against "other actors" that she didn't name.

French President Emmanuel Macron wrote on social media that "no intimidation or threats will influence us, whether in Ukraine, Greenland or anywhere else in the world when we are faced with such situations." He added that "tariff threats are unacceptable and have no place in this context."

Jordan Bardella, president of Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party in France and also a European Parliament lawmaker, posted that the EU should suspend last year's tariff deal with the US, describing Trump's threats as "commercial blackmail."

Trump also achieved the rare feat of uniting Britain's main political parties - including the hard-right Reform UK party - all of whom criticised the tariff threat.

The firefighters and rescue teams were trying to put out the fire 16 hours after it started, officials said. IG Aslam speculated that a short circuit might be the reason for the fire.

"Once the cooling starts, we will start further rescue operations, but the layout of the building is very complex as it houses a basement and mezzanine floor with hundreds of shops and stores," rescue 1122's Khan said.

As many as 40 snorkels were being used and 60 per cent of the fire had been put out, he said, adding that the fire caused cracks in the mall's walls.

TARIFFS OVER GREENLAND

In an unusual and very strong joint statement coming from major US allies, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland Sunday said troops sent to Greenland for the Danish military training exercise "Arctic Endurance" pose "no threat to anyone"

ASSOCIATED PRESS

GROWING CALLS TO TRIGGER UNUSED EU 'ANTI-COERCION INSTRUMENT'

EU PARLIAMENT MAY SUSPEND WORK ON EU-US TRADE DEAL

EU AMBASSADORS SUMMONED TO EMERGENCY MEETING IN BRUSSELS

SOURCE CLOSE TO FRENCH PRESIDENT SAYS WORKING TO COORDINATE EUROPEAN RESPONSE



Berlin, Jan 18: The eight European countries targeted by US President Donald Trump for a 10 per cent tariff for opposing American control of Greenland blasted the move Sunday, warning that the American leader's threats "undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral."

In an unusual and very strong joint statement coming from major US allies, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland Sunday said troops sent to Greenland for the Danish military training exercise "Arctic Endurance" pose "no threat to anyone."

Trump's Saturday announcement sets up a potentially dangerous test of US partnerships in Europe. The Republican president appeared to indicate that he was using the tariffs as leverage to force talks over the status of Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark that he regards as critical to US national security.

"We stand in full solidarity with the Kingdom of Denmark and the people of Greenland," the group said. "Building on the process begun last week, we stand ready to engage in a dialogue based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that we stand firmly behind. Tariff threats undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral."

There are immediate questions about how the White House could try to implement the tariffs because the EU is a single economic zone in terms of trading. It was unclear, too, how Trump could act under US law, though he could cite emergency economic powers that are currently subject to a US Supreme Court challenge.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said China and Russia will benefit from the divisions between the US and Europe. She added in a post on social media: "If Greenland's security is at risk, we can address

this inside NATO. Tariffs risk making Europe and the United States poorer and undermine our shared prosperity."

Trump's move was also panned domestically.

US Sen. Mark Kelly, a former US Navy pilot and Democrat who represents Arizona, posted that Trump's threatened tariffs on US allies would make Americans "pay more to try to get territory we don't need."

"Troops from European countries are arriving in Greenland to defend the territory from us. Let that sink in," he wrote on social media.

"The damage this President is doing to our reputation and our relationships is growing, making us less safe. If something doesn't change we will be on our own with adversaries and enemies in every direction."

"These tariffs will hurt us"

Six of the countries targeted are part of the 27-member EU, which operates as a single economic zone in terms of trading.

It was not immediately clear if Trump's tariffs would impact the entire bloc. EU envoys scheduled emergency talks for Sunday evening to determine a potential response.

At least 5K dead in Iran unrest: Official



REUTERS

tions of 800 people.

A day later, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a public speech branded Trump a "criminal" for the casualties he inflicted on Iran by supporting protesters.

"We will not drag the country into war, but we will not let domestic or international criminals go unpunished," Khamenei said, acknowledging "several thousand deaths" that he blamed on "terrorists and rioters" linked to the US and Israel.

Iran's judiciary indicated that executions may go ahead.

Mohareb, an Islamic legal term meaning to wage war against God, is punishable by death under Iranian law.

Trump said in an interview with Politico on Saturday: "it's time to look for new leadership in Iran".

US-based rights group HRA-NA said Saturday the death toll had reached 3,308, with another 4,382 cases under review. It said it had confirmed more than 24,000 arrests.

The Iranian official said the verified death toll was unlikely to "increase sharply", adding "Israel and armed groups abroad" had supported and equipped those taking to the streets.

The military push into the city deep into eastern Syria after tensions between Damascus and the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, flared up

earlier this month, leading to deadly clashes and the government taking control of three Aleppo neighbourhoods from Kurdish fighters. The SDF is also losing ground in Deir el-Zour province. The SDF didn't immediately comment on the developments, but earlier said its forces prevented attacks by the Islamic State group in some neighbourhoods in the city.

An Associated Press reporter in the area said that large mil-



Pro-immigration protesters stand on the sidewalk in Minneapolis

AP PHOTO

Syrian govt forces sweep into Raqqa

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Raqqa (Syria), Jan 18: Syrian government forces Sunday entered the city of Raqqa in its ongoing push in areas held by Kurdish-led forces in eastern Syria.

The military push into the city deep into eastern Syria after tensions between Damascus and the US-backed Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, flared up

earlier this month, leading to deadly clashes and the government taking control of three Aleppo neighbourhoods from Kurdish fighters. The SDF is also losing ground in Deir el-Zour province. The SDF didn't immediately comment on the developments, but earlier said its forces prevented attacks by the Islamic State group in some neighbourhoods in the city.

An Associated Press reporter in the area said that large mil-

itary convoys have swept into the city and were greeted by residents. It appeared that the SDF had withdrawn.

US efforts to bring calm

Earlier, the military seized Tabqa in the province of Raqqa which is viewed as critical because of a dam that controls the southward flow of the Euphrates River, and is also home to a military air base. The government also took control of oil fields in the province.

Navarro renews attack on India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York/Washington, Jan 18: White House trade advisor Peter Navarro has renewed his criticism of India, questioning why Americans are paying for Artificial Intelligence in India.

Navarro's comments on Saturday came amid a strain in India-US ties, which began after US President Donald Trump slapped a 50 per cent tariff on New Delhi, including a 25 per cent additional duty for its purchase of Russian crude oil.

In an interview on Real America's Voice, Navarro said, "It's like, why are Americans paying for AI in India? Chat GPT (is) operating on US soil, using American electricity, servicing large users of Chat GPT, for example, in India and China and elsewhere around the world. So that's another issue that's got to be dealt with."

His comments came as ties between New Delhi and Washington are reeling under strain on several other issues apart from tariffs, including Trump's claim of ending the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year and Washington's new immigration policy.

Last year, Navarro consistently ranted against India for Delhi's purchases of Russian oil and high tariffs, calling India the "Maharajah of tariffs."

Trump's Gaza peace board seeks \$1bln membership fee

Under the proposal, countries seeking permanent membership would be required to contribute at least \$1 billion, Bloomberg reported, citing a draft charter

AGENCIES

Paris, Jan 18: A draft charter sent to about 60 countries by the US administration calls for members to contribute \$1 billion in cash if they want their membership to last more than three years, according to the document seen by Reuters.

"Each Member State shall serve a term of no more than three years from this Charter's entry into force, subject to renewal by the Chairman," the document, first reported by Bloomberg News, shows. "The three-year membership term shall not apply to Member States that contribute more than USD \$1,000,000,000

in cash funds to the Board of Peace within the first year of the Charter's entry into force." Under the proposal, countries

seeking permanent membership would be required to contribute at least \$1 billion, Bloomberg reported, citing a draft charter. The draft document states that Trump would

Pak claims Trump invited Sharif to join Gaza peace body

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Sunday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has been invited by President Donald Trump to join the Board of Peace for Gaza. The White House released a list of appointed members to the founding Executive Board of the Board of Peace Friday as the country moved to the second phase of Trump's 20-point peace plan for Gaza. President Trump has already declared himself as the chair of the body. In response to media queries, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Tahir Andrabi confirmed that Pakistan did get a formal invitation.

serve as the board's inaugural chairman, with authority to invite member states, approve the organization's seal, and retain veto power over all resolutions.

While decisions would formally be adopted by majority vote—with one vote per member state—all resolutions would remain subject to the chairman's approval, according to the draft.

The charter describes the board as "an international organization that seeks to promote stability, restore dependable and lawful governance, and secure enduring peace in areas affected or threatened by conflict." It would become operational once three member states ratify the charter.



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The steady rise in business confidence shows industry's ability to navigate external headwinds, anchored by resilient domestic demand and a robust reform agenda

CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CII

India's growing stature in global clean energy manufacturing has received a boost with Adani Solar emerging as the only Indian company to feature in Wood Mackenzie's Global Solar Module Manufacturer Ranking for the first half of 2025. It was ranked No 8 on the Wood Mackenzie Global Solar Module Manufacturer Ranking



Mcap of 3 of top-10 most valued firms jumps by ₹75,855cr



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Turning point: Discoms turn profitable after years in red

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 18: Power distribution utilities in the country collectively recorded a profit of ₹2,701 crore in FY25 after having incurred losses for several years, an official statement said Sunday.

Distribution utilities as a whole have been reporting losses for past several years since unbundling and corporatization of State Electricity Boards.

The utilities collectively posted a loss of ₹25,553 crore in FY24 and a loss of ₹67,962 crore in FY14, the power ministry said in a statement.

Commenting on the profit in FY25, Power Minister Manohar Lal said this marks a new chapter for the distribution sector and is a result of several steps taken by the ministry to redress the concerns of the

POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES POST ₹2,701CR PROFIT IN FY25

UTILITIES COLLECTIVELY POSTED LOSS OF ₹25,553CR IN FY24 AND A LOSS OF ₹67,962CR IN FY14

distribution sector.

"India is driving not only its growth but also the growth of the world, with the energy sector playing a significant role in this," Lal said.

He said the government is committed to the required reforms in the sector so that the power sector can support India's growing economy and play its part in the journey towards Viksit Bharat.

The ministry said the result of reforms is evident not just in the PAT posted by distribution companies (discoms) after so many years, but also in other



performance indicators.

The Aggregate Technical & Commercial (AT&C) losses have reduced over the years, signalling a transformation.

The AT&C losses have reduced from 22.62 per cent in

₹1,39,947 crore in 2022 to just ₹4,927 crore by January 2026 while bringing down distribution utility payment cycles from 178 days in FY 21 to 113 days in FY 25.

Some of the transformative initiatives in the distribution sector include Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS): Enhancing financial viability through infrastructure modernization and accelerated smart metering.

In addition to the different policy initiatives, extensive engagements with states and UTs have emphasized reforms in the distribution sector.

These include discussions led by Power Minister Manohar Lal during the Regional Conferences of Energy Ministers of States/UTs in 2025 - Gangtok, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chandigarh and Patna.

New Delhi, Jan 18: The combined market valuation of three of the top-10 most valued firms jumped ₹75,855.43 crore in a holiday-shortened last week, with State Bank of India and Infosys emerging as the biggest gainers, in an otherwise sluggish trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex dipped 5.89 points, and the NSE Nifty went up by 11.05 points.

While ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys were the gainers, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro faced a combined erosion of ₹75,549.89 crore from their valuation.

The combined erosion of these seven firms was less than the total m-cap addition of ₹75,855.43 crore of the three companies - ICICI Bank, State Bank of India and Infosys.

SBI's market valuation jumped ₹39,045.51 crore to ₹9,62,107.27 crore, becoming the biggest gainer. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys surged ₹31,014.59 crore to ₹7,01,889.59 crore.

ICICI Bank added ₹5,795.33 crore taking its valuation to ₹10,09,470.28 crore. However, the mcap of Reliance Industries tumbled ₹23,952.48 crore to ₹19,72,493.21 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of Infosys surged ₹31,014.59 crore to ₹7,01,889.59 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation eroded by ₹11,615.35 crore to ₹14,32,534.91 crore and that of Bharti Airtel tanked ₹6,443.38 crore to ₹11,49,544.43 crore.

The mcap of Bajaj Finance declined by ₹6,253.59 crore to ₹5,91,447.16 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever diminished by ₹3,312.93 crore to ₹5,54,421.30 crore. The valuation of TCS dipped by ₹470.36 crore to ₹11,60,212.12 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued domestic firm followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Larsen & Toubro.

ing more than 175 firms of varying sizes. Moreover, investment and hiring intentions remain robust. Notably, 69 per cent of respondents expect the RBI to cut the repo rate by the end of Q4 FY26 (January-March end).

CII expressed confidence that the reform momentum will continue in the Budget to sustain India's growth.

SILVER JUST SHY OF ₹3 LAKH MARK

The white metal has jumped 22% in Jan so far to settle at ₹2,87,762/kg Friday



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 18: Silver prices have continued their remarkable rally, rising another 22 per cent in January so far, strengthening investor interest and keeping the white metal firmly in focus.

The sharp surge has helped silver emerge as the top performer among major asset classes, supported by strong demand and multiple positive global factors.

After an extraordinary 170 per cent rise earlier, MCX silver prices have maintained strong momentum this month.

From the April close of ₹95,917/kg in 2025, silver has climbed nearly 200 per cent to settle at ₹2,87,762 per kilogram Friday, a performance usually associated with multibagger stocks rather than commodities.

Prices have also touched fresh record highs, with the latest peak of ₹2,92,960 per kilogram recorded last week. As silver surged past earlier expectations much faster than anticipated, analysts have been quick to revise their targets upward.

Last year, domestic brokerag-

es had projected silver prices at around ₹1,10,000 per kilogram by the end of the year, but those levels were crossed well before the midpoint.

The rally did not stop there, with prices going on to hit ₹2,54,000 per kilogram, more than doubling earlier estimates.

As these above-ground reserves shrink, holders of physical silver are demanding higher prices, further pushing rates upward.

At the beginning of 2025, silver was largely overlooked by investors, with few expecting it to deliver such a sharp rally amid ongoing economic uncertainty and geopolitical tensions.

Adding to the bullish sentiment is a shift in global central bank behaviour. After accumulating significant quantities of gold over the past three years, central banks are now reported to be adding silver to their reserves as well. This trend has provided additional support to prices, keeping MCX silver close to the ₹3 lakh level.

With the latest close of ₹2,87,762 per kilogram, silver is now just about 4.2 per cent away from crossing the ₹3 lakh milestone.

from last year.

This came following an outflow of ₹1.66 lakh crore (\$18.9 billion) recorded in 2025, triggered by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions and concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched market valuations.

This sustained selling pressure by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) has significantly contributed to the nearly 5 per cent depreciation of the rupee against the dollar during 2025.

According to data from NSDL, FPIs pulled out ₹22,530 crore from Indian equities between January 1 and 16.

Market experts attributed the continued withdrawal to a

SELLING SPREE

FOREIGN INVESTORS PULL OUT ₹22,530CR FROM EQUITIES IN JAN SO FAR

THIS CAME FOLLOWING AN OUTFLOW OF ₹1.66L-CR RECORDED IN 2025

combination of global and domestic factors.

"Rising US bond yields and a stronger dollar have improved risk-adjusted returns in developed markets, prompting capital reallocation away from emerging markets," said Sachin Jasuja, Head of Equities and Founding Partner at Centricity WealthTech.

Echoing similar views, Himanshu Srivastava, Principal-Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said elevated US bond yields and dollar strength have made US assets relatively more attractive.

According to VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments, lin-

Selling trend can continue until clear positive triggers emerge for a sustained market rally

VK VIJAYAKUMAR | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEOJIT INVESTMENTS

gering uncertainty over the US-India trade agreement has also dampened investor sentiment.

On the domestic front, relatively rich valuations in certain market segments, along

with mixed cues from the ongoing earnings season, have led to profit-taking and portfolio rebalancing by foreign investors.

The persistent depreciation of the rupee, down nearly 5 per cent in 2025 and weakening further to around 90.44 per dollar recently, has eroded dollar returns despite stable index levels, adding further pressure on FPI flows.

CII's Biz Confidence Index climbs to five-quarter high

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 18: Rising for the third consecutive quarter, CII's Business Confidence Index climbed to a five-quarter high of 66.5 in Q3 FY26, driven by optimism around demand, profitability, and investment conditions, the industry lobby said Sunday.

Domestic demand remains the key driver, with two-thirds of firms reporting higher demand in Q2 FY26 and 72 per cent expecting further growth in Q3 FY26, aided by GST rate cuts and festive consumption, the industry body said in the survey. CII-Business Confidence Index (BCI) is based on a sample survey of firms cov-

ering all industry sectors, including micro, small, medium, and large enterprises, from different regions. The survey also enumerated responses across industry groups, both in the public and private sectors, engaged in the manufacturing and services sectors. It was conducted during the first to third week of December 2025, cover-

ing more than 175 firms of varying sizes. Moreover, investment and hiring intentions remain robust. Notably, 69 per cent of respondents expect the RBI to cut the repo rate by the end of Q4 FY26 (January-March end).

CII expressed confidence that the reform momentum will continue in the Budget to sustain India's growth.

AI adoption outpaces training

71% of professionals expect role changes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 18: Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption at workplaces is outpacing corporate training programmes, with 71 per cent of professionals believing their roles will change over the next few years as new tools and workflows become mainstream, according to a report.

There is a sharp gap between AI adoption and training, as employees brace for rapidly evolving job responsibilities, the report by Genius HRTech said. The Genius HRTech and Digipoll report is based on an online survey conducted among 1,704 professionals across sectors in November 2025.

One of the clearest gaps identified by the report is training,



with a substantial 61 per cent of respondents saying their organisation has not provided adequate guidance on effective AI usage, while only 37 per cent reported receiving proper training. This lack of structured support appears to influence how employees perceive AI adoption within their functions, as 55 per cent believe AI adoption is driven by necessity, whereas 37 per cent feel

it is trend-driven rather than need-based, the report said.

It also found a deeper shift in workforce expectations, with 71 per cent of respondents believing that their role or responsibilities will significantly change in the next 2-3 years due to AI integration, reflecting both anticipation and uncertainty.

According to the report, 67 per cent of respondents have already started using AI tools to simplify or automate their daily work, showing how quickly the technology is being adopted across roles.

This shift isn't completely

AI is no longer a distant concept, but it's now shaping daily workflows across industries. While professionals value the efficiency it brings, they also expect companies to equip them with the right training and clarity. The future workplace will thrive only when human intelligence and AI complement each other, not compete

RP YADAV | CHAIRMAN AND MD, GENIUS HRTech

smooth, as 69 per cent of respondents said that AI has made their work processes simpler, but 25 per cent felt it has added complexity, suggesting that even though AI cuts down on repetitive tasks, it can also create new challenges for some employees, the report showed.

Trust remains a significant barrier, with only 49 per cent of professionals saying that they trust AI-generated insights without manual cross-verification, 36 per cent do not trust them, and 15 per cent argued that trust varies depending on the task.

Utility vehicle dispatches witnessed a 32 per cent increase last year at 4,27,219 units as against 3,23,624 units in 2024.

Passenger car shipments rose 3 per cent to 4,25,396 units in 2025 as compared with 4,12,148

units in the corresponding previous year. SIAM noted that demand has been steady across most markets, including in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Maruti Suzuki led the space with dispatch of 3.95 lakh units in 2025 as compared with 3.26 units in 2024.

The automaker said it remains on course to achieve its target of 4 lakh unit exports for FY26. "Maruti Suzuki today contributes 46 per cent of all passenger vehicle exports from India and there is every reason we should capture a large share of global trade," Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer Corporate Affairs Rahul Bharti said.

Robust demand lifts auto exports

Maruti Suzuki led the space with dispatch of 3.95 lakh units in 2025 as compared with 3.26 units in 2024

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 18: Automobile exports from India rose 24 per cent in 2025 driven by robust demand for cars, two-wheelers and commercial vehicles in the overseas markets, as per the latest SIAM data.

Overall exports last year raced to 63,25,211 units as against 50,98,474 units in the 2024 calendar year, up 24.1 per cent. Passenger vehicle exports rose to 8,63,233 units, up 16 per cent as compared with 7,43,979 units in 2024.

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TATA STEEL MASTERS
Erigaisi upsets Pragg; Gukesh registers draw



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Jan 18: Virat Kohli's magnificent, combative century, forged with trademark resolve under mounting pressure, proved heartbreakingly insufficient as India slumped to their first-ever bilateral ODI series defeat at home against New Zealand, losing the decider by 41 runs at the Holkar Stadium here Sunday.

Kohli's 124 off 108 balls was a study in controlled aggression and steely temperament. The chase master shouldered the responsibility almost single-handedly, counter-punching a disciplined New Zealand attack with crisp drives, well-judged pulls and calculated risks over the ropes.

As wickets tumbled regularly at the other end, Kohli dug in, refusing to let the chase drift away, but once he fell late in the innings, India's resistance finally collapsed at 296 in 46 overs while chasing a stiff 338.

The defeat not only handed New Zealand a 2-1 series win but also marked a historic first - India had never before lost a home ODI series to the Kiwis.

Earlier, Daryl Mitchell's second consecutive hundred and Glenn Phillips' blistering century powered New Zealand to a competitive 337 for eight

despite early jolts from India's pace attack.

Mitchell (137) and Phillips (106) stitched together a 219-run partnership for the fourth wicket that turned the innings on its head.

India were controlling the

innings at one stage, having

reduced the visitors to 58 for

three but Mitchell and Phillips

made it a contest.

In reply, India's chase began

shakily. Rohit Sharma fell early for 11, caught by Kristian Clarke off Zak Foulkes, and

Shubman Gill was dismissed for 23 by Kyle Jamieson, leaving India two down inside seven overs.

Kohli immediately set about

rebuilding the innings with

purpose. Shreyas Iyer and KL

Rahul failed to provide sup-

port, departing cheaply as India

slipped to 71 for four.

Kohli, however, remained unflustered, rotating strike ef-

ficiently and punishing loose

deliveries. His partnership with

Nitish Kumar Reddy (53 off 57

balls) revived India's hopes, with

the duo adding valuable runs

through intelligent placement

rather than reckless hitting.

Harshit Rana's late cameo of

52 off 43 balls briefly reignited

hopes, but the asking rate

proved too steep. Kohli's dis-

missal at 292 for nine - caught

by Daryl off Kristian Clarke

- sealed India's fate.

As New Zealand celebrated

a landmark triumph on Indian

soil, Kohli walked off to a stand-



WINNERS

DOUBLE EMBARRASSMENT: In 2024, New Zealand won a Test series in India by whitewashing the hosts 3-0, and now they have defeated the world No 1 ODI side in an ODI series putting coach Gautam Gambhir under the lens

ing ovation, his innings a lone beacon on a night of collective disappointment for the hosts.

There are areas we need to look back, reflect and do better

SHUBMAN GILL | SKIPPER, INDIA

First time a NZ team has won an ODI series here, that's special

MICHAEL BRACEWELL | CAPTAIN, NZ

At 45 years, Williams became the oldest player to compete in the Australian Open in the Open Era, drawing loud support from the Melbourne crowd in her first-round clash.

Despite the loss, Williams impressed with nine aces and a 71 per cent success rate on first-server points.

It was Williams' first appearance at Melbourne Park since 2021 and the first time she has competed outside the United States since 2023. Of her seven Grand Slam singles titles, none have come in Melbourne. Venus reached the final twice, in 2003 and 2017, and both times her sister and 23-time Grand Slam champion, Serena Williams, emerged victorious.



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Melbourne, Jan 18: Seven-time Grand Slam champion Venus Williams' historic return to the Australian Open ended in a first-round defeat as she went down 6-7, 6-3, 6-4 to Serbia's Olga Danilovic at the John Cain Arena in Melbourne Sunday.

At 45 years, Williams became the oldest player to compete in the Australian Open in the Open Era, drawing loud support from the Melbourne crowd in her first-round clash.

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Lancers edge past Dragons in shootout



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneshwar, Jan 18: Vedanta Kalinga Lancers maintained their unbeaten run with a 4-1 penalty shootout win against Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons in the men's Hockey India League here Sunday.

The two teams were tied 1-1 at the end of regulation time at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium here. Blake Govers opened the scoring to put the Dragons in front before Alexander Hendrickx equalised for the Lancers.

Krishan Pathak was exceptional in goal for table-toppers in regulation time, while Jed Snowden came off the bench to dominate in the shootout, helping his side record their sixth successive win.

Earlier, the Dragons managed to break the deadlock in the second quarter, earning a penalty stroke that was con-

verted by Govers (19th).

The Lancers thought they bagged an immediate response with Dilpreet Singh finding the back of the net. However, his goal was ruled out after a referral and the Dragons led at the half time.

Krishan Pathak's saves were complemented by Alexander Hendrickx in the 44th minute,

who converted his dragflick from their fourth penalty corner. Towards the end, neither side could make it count though which forced a shootout to decide the winner.

After his shootout heroics earlier in the tournament, Snowden proved to be the difference once again for the Lancers.

Taide's century leads Vidarbha to Vijay Hazare Trophy triumph



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 18: Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi claimed his maiden Super 750 title in men's singles, while world number one An Se Young of South Korea underlined her supremacy by securing the women's singles crown at the \$950,000 India Open here Sunday.

The 26-year-old Lin, currently ranked 12, completed a sharp turnaround from an early exit at last week's Malaysia Open

INDIA OPEN

Super 1000, powering his way to the men's singles title with a 21-10, 21-18 win over third seed Jonatan Christie in the final.

In women's singles, top seed and defending champion An Se Young was once again in control as she defeated China's world number two Wang Zhiyi 21-13, 21-11 to claim her second title of the season.

Lin's victory came in a shoot-

out between the two players.

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