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OrissaPOST

Shocking decision

Neha Kakkar announces a break from personal and professional commitments, citing the need to step away from relationships and work

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Japan snap poll

Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi calls February 8 snap election to seek mandate for spending, tax cuts, defence push

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Rich now richer

Billionaire wealth surged at three times its recent pace last year to reach its highest level on record

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Saina retires

Trailblazer Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal has confirmed her retirement from competitive badminton

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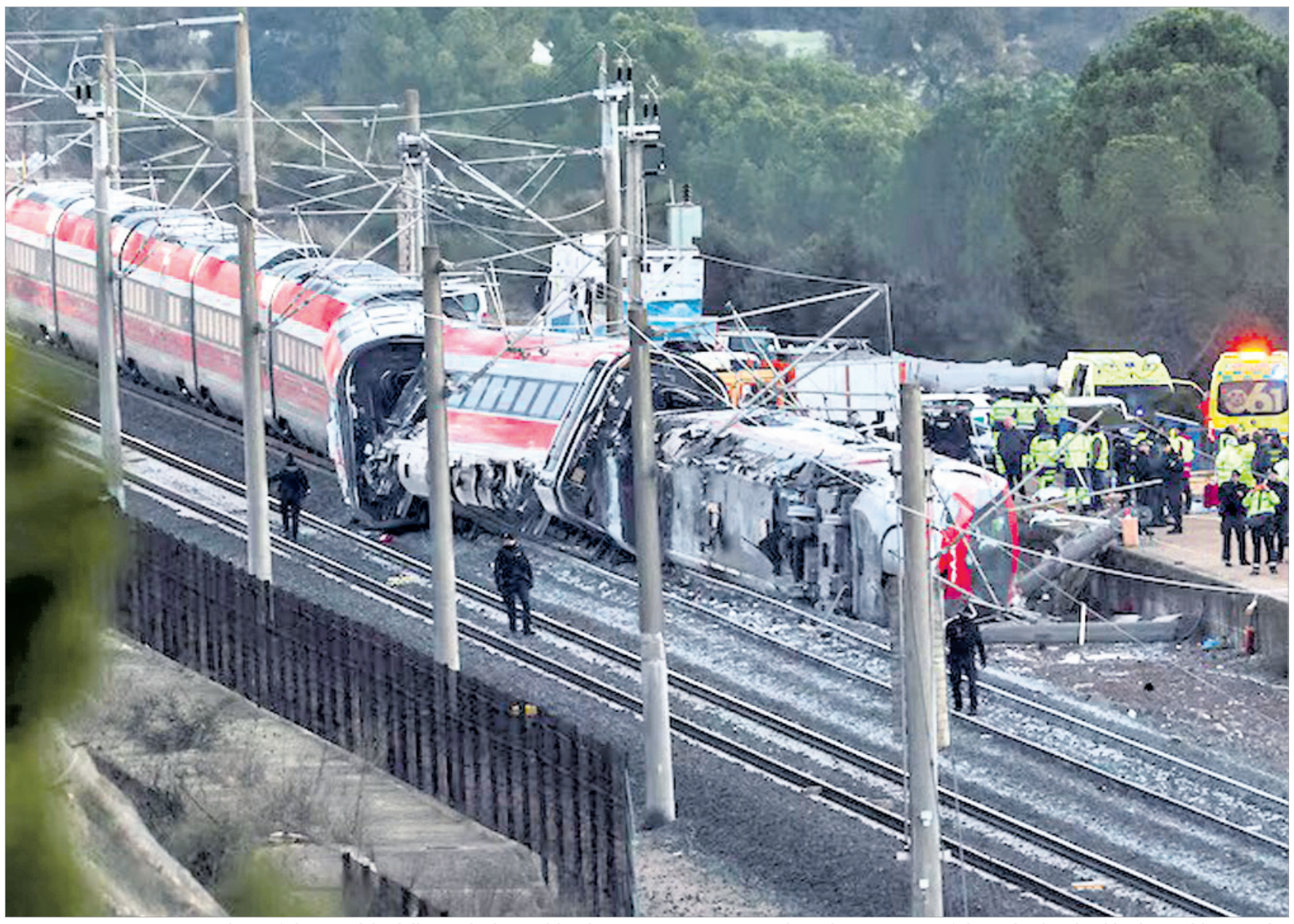
VOLUME 15, ISSUE 290 I www.orissapost.com BHUBANESWAR | TUESDAY | JANUARY 20, 2026 12 PAGES | ₹5.00

Nitin Nabin elected BJP prez unopposed

NEW DELHI: Forty-five-year-old Nitin Nabin was Monday elected unopposed as the BJP national president, the youngest ever to occupy the post as it seeks to further expand its influence in uncharted territories. Nabin, a five-term Bihar MLA, emerged as the sole candidate for the top party post with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior BJP leaders filing nomination papers in his support. Nabin will be formally declared as BJP president Tuesday. He will succeed JP Nadda, who has been at the helm for an extended period since 2020. "I hereby announce that only one name, that of Shri Nitin Nabin, has been proposed for the post of national president of Bharatiya Janata Party," K Laxman, the returning officer for the presidential election, said in a statement.

UNNAO: DELHI HC JOLT FOR SENGAR

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court Monday refused to suspend the 10-year jail term of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the custodial death case of the Unnao rape survivor's father on the grounds of delay in trial, saying it was partly caused by the multiple applications he had filed in the matter. "The application seeking suspension of sentence is dismissed," said Justice Ravinder Dudeja. The judge observed that while Sengar has undergone prolonged incarceration of about seven-and-a-half years, relief could not be granted on the ground of delay alone, as the appellant had repeatedly moved applications for interim suspension, extension of bail and regular suspension of sentence. P8



TRAGEDY ON TRACKS: Members of the Spanish Civil Guard, along with other emergency personnel, work next to one of the trains involved in the accident, at the site of a deadly derailment of two high-speed trains near Adamuz in Cordoba, Spain, Monday REUTERS

HIGH-SPEED TRAIN COLLISION LEAVES 39 DEAD IN SPAIN

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Adamuz (Spain), Jan 19: Spanish police said Monday that at least 39 people are confirmed dead in a high-speed train collision the previous night in the south of the country, as efforts to recover the bodies continue with authorities expecting the death toll to rise.

The crash occurred Sunday at 7:45 pm when the tail end of a train carrying some 300 passengers on the route from Malaga to the capital, Madrid, went off the rails at 7:45 pm. It slammed into an incoming train travelling from Madrid to Huelva, another southern Spanish city, according to rail operator Adif.

The head of the second train, which was carrying nearly 200 passengers, took the brunt of the impact, Spanish Transport Minister Oscar Puente said. That collision knocked its first two carriages off the track and sent them plummeting down a 4-metre (13-foot) slope. Puente said that it appeared the largest number of the deaths occurred in those carriages.

Andalusia regional president Juanma Moreno said Monday morning that emergency services were still searching what he described as a mass of twisted metal where the smashed carriages had derailed.

Passengers reported climbing out of smashed windows, with some using emergency hammers to break the windows, according to Salvador Jimenez, a journalist for Spanish broadcaster RTVE, who was on board one of the derailed trains. Spanish police said 159 people were injured, of whom five were in critical condition. A further 24 were in serious condition, authorities said

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

Instead of infrastructure, the state machinery should've built human values. That could've saved many lives

Silver tops ₹3L/kg

Heightened geopolitical situation and robust industrial demand have propelled silver to an unprecedented ₹3 lakh per kg on MCX, while gold surged ₹1,900 to a record ₹1,48,100 per 10 gm. Investor sentiment turned cautious after US President Donald Trump threatened to impose additional tariffs of up to 25 per cent on European countries over Greenland if no agreement is reached by June. The renewed trade tensions triggered a flight to traditional safe havens such as gold and silver. Besides, a weaker rupee made silver both dearer and safer as ETFs, jewellers and even central banks rushed to hoard the metal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Silver prices surged ₹10,000 Monday to breach the record ₹3 lakh-per-kilogram mark in the national capital, driven by strong demand in domestic and global markets, according to marketmen.

The white metal traded at ₹3,02,600 per kilogram Monday against the previous closing level of ₹2,92,600 per kg.

Gold prices also witnessed robust gains in the local bullion market and scaled a fresh record. The yellow metal climbed ₹1,900 to ₹1,48,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had finished at ₹1,46,200 per 10 grams Friday.

"Gold and silver surged to fresh record highs on Monday, driven by geopolitical tensions, and escalating tariff-related uncertainty after US President Donald Trump threatened to impose additional tariffs on several European countries over the weekend," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

According to forex.com, spot silver increased to touch a fresh record of USD 94.13 per ounce, while gold rose to hit an all-time high of USD 4,690.80 per ounce in the international market.

"Spot gold hit a fresh record high of USD 4,690 per ounce in the global markets on safe haven demand as Trump announced a 10 per cent tariff on eight EU nations in retaliation for their opposition to his Greenland initiative," Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Meanwhile, Trump Saturday threatened to implement a 10 per cent tariff on goods from European nations, including Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Finland, the UK and Norway, starting from February 1.

Tariff will be increased to 25 per cent June 1, 2026. The proposed tariff will be due and payable until a deal is reached for the complete and total purchase of Greenland.

President Trump's Greenland-related tariff moves endanger the NATO alliance, a Western security alliance that has been in place since the Second World War, Singh said.

Bank heist: Gold worth ₹7.5cr looted in Barbil

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barbil, Jan 19: Armed miscreants looted gold jewelry worth an estimated ₹7.5 crore and cash of about ₹4.34 lakh from the Bank of Maharashtra's Barbil branch in Keonjhar district Monday afternoon, police said.

The robbery took place at the branch located barely 200 meters from the Barbil sub-divisional police officer's (SDPO) office.

According to officials, five to six armed men entered the bank, threatened staff and customers at gunpoint, and forced bank officials to open the strong room. The assailants fled with around 5 kilograms of gold jewelry and cash before police could arrive.

Keonjhar SP Nitin Kusalkar Dagudu and his team rushed to the spot and launched an investigation. Police sealed the state borders and intensified search operations, Barbil IIC Ashok Nayak said.

Police flagged serious lapses in bank security, including the absence of a security guard and the alleged failure to follow SOPs.

The looters, wearing masks and helmets, entered the branch in the afternoon when BM Pankaj Barnwal and ABM Priyam Ranjan Hota were on duty. An accountant, Subhas Adhikari, who entered the bank during the incident, was also accosted and relieved of his phone. The assailants remained inside the bank for about 20 to 25 minutes.

After news of the robbery spread, customers who had pledged gold ornaments to avail loans gathered outside the bank, expressing concern over the safety and recovery of their valuables.

Panic over gas pipeline burst

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Jan 19: A gas pipeline burst in the CDA area during construction work Monday, causing panic among the people, police said.

Emergency teams were rushed to the spot for immediate repairs, a senior officer said.

The incident took place at Sector 9 of the CDA area, where many former judges and senior advocates of the Orissa High Court reside.

An earthmover struck an underground pipeline of Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) during excavation work, causing it to burst. Panic spread among the people as LPG started leaking.

Cuttack Additional Commissioner of Police Ananya Awasthi, who has reached the spot, said that the area has been cordoned off as a preventive measure to prevent any untoward incident.

Fire services personnel also reached the spot and were coordinating with the gas company's technical team to repair the pipeline.

China's population shrinks to historic low

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, Jan 19: China's population shrank for the fourth consecutive year as birth rates in 2025 fell by about 10 million from a decade earlier, a trend widely blamed on the long-term effects of the former one-child policy.

According to the data released by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Monday only 7.92 million babies were born in 2025 compared to 9.54 million in 2024, a decline of 17 per cent.

This marked the lowest birth figure since records began in 1949 and broke the previous lowest record set in 2023, the year India overtook China as the most populous country, according to a United Nations report.

Based on the current fertility rates in China, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) estimated in 2024 that China's population would decline to 633 million by 2100. As per NBS data released on Monday, China's total population fell by 3.39 million in 2025 to 1.4049 billion from 1.4083 billion a year earlier.

Also, China is currently grappling with a rapidly ageing population. According to the official data at the end of 2024, the number of people aged 60 and above in China had hit 310 million.

By 2035, this demographic is projected to exceed 400 million.

By sheer numbers last year marked the steepest annual population decline on record, apart from during China's devastating famine from 1959 to 1961, the Hong Kong based South China Morning Post reported. Meanwhile, about 11.31 million people died last year- One of the highest totals in five decades.

China's serious demographic crisis is blamed on the decades-old one-child policy followed by the ruling Communist Party. Amid warnings that the demographic crisis will seriously impact the economy, China scrapped the one child policy in 2016 and permitted all couples to have two children.

As it failed to make an impact, China revised the population policy in 2021, allowing people to have three children in an attempt to address the reluctance of couples to have more kids due to mounting costs.

In the last few years China has implemented policies to boost the birth rates which included the national childcare subsidy scheme offering up to 10,800 RMB (USD 1,534) per year for each child. Beijing also increased the condom tax to encourage couples to have more children.

The pace of the decline of population in China is striking, particularly in the absence of major shocks, Su Yue, principal economist for China at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The reluctance among young people to get married, along with rising economic pressures "particularly an increase for women in the perceived cost of stepping away from employment" served as major birth deterrents, she told the Post.

SJTA lodges complaint over Lord Jagannath's AI videos

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, Jan 19: The authorities of the Jagannath temple in Puri Monday filed a police complaint against a social media account for circulating AI-generated photos and videos of Lord Jagannath that went viral, triggering widespread outrage among devotees.

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration's (SJTA) complaint was filed at the Singhadwar Police Station against an account named 'vishvrajcreation' for allegedly posting objectionable and fabricated visuals of the deity on social media platforms.

"It has come to our notice that some unacceptable AI-generated photos and videos of Lord Jagannath have been posted on social media. These objectionable pictures and videos are being circulated by a person using the handle 'vishvrajcreation'," the SJTA said in a statement.

According to the complaint lodged by the temple administration's Special Security Officer, the AI-generated content has hurt the religious sentiments of devotees and sparked resentment.

One of the videos shows milk being poured over Lord Jagannath in front of the Puri temple using a crane-an entirely fabricated and unrealistic depiction with no basis in temple tradition, said Jagannath culture researcher Bhaskar Mishra.

leisure

BEN AFFLECK'S SHARP TAKE ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Ben Affleck drew online praise for his measured views on artificial intelligence during *The Joe Rogan Experience*. Questioning the hype, he said AI's buzz fuels inflated valuations, arguing it cannot deliver true creativity or replace human imagination in writing and filmmaking

ZOOTOPIA 2 BECOMES HIGHEST GROSSING ANIMATED MOVIE EVER

Since its release, *Zootopia 2* has earned rave audience responses and critical acclaim, breaking records worldwide. According to *Collider*, the animated sequel grossed USD 1.7 billion globally, overtaking *Inside Out 2* to become the highest-grossing animated film of all time ever released in cinema history

FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Of late you have been very preoccupied with work and social life. It is about time you gave yourself a break to indulge in something for your own benefit. Your health could be a cause of concern. Ganesha advises you to put everything else on the back-burner if you are feeling stressed out.

TAURUS

This day you are likely to make wasteful expenditure. You will be more reckless, extravagant than you can afford to be. Your expenses are sure to outweigh your income. Be as tightfisted as you can. Not buying anything unnecessary or too costly can help control losses, points out Ganesha. Think twice before you decide before purchasing anything.

GEMINI

You will meet all kinds of people in matters related to work. You will need to understand their demands and needs and will have to strive to fulfill them. Your courteous nature will endear you to people. You will receive praise for your intelligence as well, says Ganesha.

CANCER

You may have a way with words, but women somehow always have their way with you. Your problem is that while you may use your words to pull some strings, the master puppeteer, in most cases, will be a woman. So, to keep yourself happy, you may have to make the concerned woman happy.

LEO

You will accomplish all your tasks with courage today. As a result of which, the efforts you have made in the last few months will now bear fruit. You need to make a schedule of the tasks you need to tackle today. You need to guard against over-stressing yourself, otherwise your health could suffer, says Ganesha.

VIRGO

Today, you will be aspire to be a master of your own destiny. You have the ability to see through the façade that people put up to shield their true self. You will choose your company wisely and plan for success. Polish your presentation skills and you may need to work an extra bit to get your ideas approved, says Ganesha.

LIBRA

Love is in the air, and passion lurks right around the corner. So keep your eyes and ears open, because you may soon find yourself entrapped in a passionate love episode. But the price of new love is always steep, and your beloved may burn a hole in your pocket. Still, with someone like that, you are always assured of getting good value for your money!

SCORPIO

It's business time and shock your competitors with the launch of the new product. However, stars are not aligned in a favourable way, which indicates that you may come across some hurdles. Take your time, sort out the troubles and go ahead with your launch with much fanfare and celebrations.

SAGITTARIUS

The sage within you will take the lead today. You are likely to prescribe yourself to your own medication for peace of mind. Wise and content that you are today, you will spread the message of love around you. All in all, a peaceful day is in store for you today.

CAPRICORN

For you everything is fair in love and war, and you utilise every possible means to achieve your targets. You have a strong sixth sense and it will direct you while making the right decisions, feels Ganesha. You are a soft hearted person and it makes you sad to see others in sadness and trouble. Instinctively, you will help those in need.

AQUARIUS

Expect the unexpected today! Success, money, love, whatever it is that you'd lost hope of will suddenly come your way! In the evening, you may catch up with reading, research, discussion or other such activity, says Ganesha.

PISCES

You will delay taking important decisions in the office or regarding business. You will take you time to come to a conclusion and put in all the required thought and this will grant you clarity on all the issues at hand. While this will be great for you, Ganesha advises you not to make hasty decisions regarding your personal life.

Shruti's nostalgic dive

Mumbai: 2026 seems to be the year of reliving your past memories and keeping up with the spirit, actress Shruti Haasan went to see her college once again after a long time.

However, Shruti did not go inside her college but decided to explore the street where the college is located. The video uploaded by the *Salaar* actress on her official Instagram handle opened with Shruti saying, "I am so happy to be back in my college lane after so many years. I used to walk here every day."

Shruti also showed the place where they used to come after college to enjoy some snack time.

"We did not come here every day. I would have gone broke otherwise", she added.

Excited to enjoy the mutton roll yet again after such a long time, Shruti went inside the eatery.

However, to her disappointment, she found out that the place no longer serves those mutton rolls.

"What happened to the roll? Things change in life", she shared.

Sharing another memory from the college days, Shruti revealed that she was once called to the Principal's office for colouring her hair pink. She further revealed that she also realised her love for singing in college.

"A Trip down memory lane", Shruti captioned the post. IANS

Ankita recalls life's toughest chapter

Mumbai: Joining the "2026 is the new 2016" trend, a popular name in the television industry, Ankita Lokhande remembered 2016 as 'the toughest chapter of my life'.

She looked back at the time that broke her completely and changed her forever.

Refreshing your memory, 2016 was the year Ankita and late actor Sushant Singh Rajput reportedly broke up after years of being together.

Although Ankita did not mention anything clearly in her post, it is possible that she is hinting at her heartbreak after parting ways with Sushant.

Looking back at what she referred to as the toughest chapter in her life, Ankita shared on her Instagram, "2016 ki yaadein... The toughest chapter of my life…A year that tested me, broke me quietly, and changed me forever..And today, I only feel grateful and proud of how far I have come from there to here..(sic)."

The *Laughter Chefs* contestant further reminisced about some other memories from 10 years ago, like her first-ever Insta post.

For the unaware, Ankita and Sushant first met on the sets of their popular show *Pavitra Rishta*, where both played the lead. Soon, the two fell for each other and got into a relationship. They were together for a long time before going their separate ways. IANS

Ahan talks about 'testing time'

Mumbai: Actor Ahan Shetty has spoken about 'testing times' post his debut *Tadap* in 2021, ahead of his second Bollywood movie *Border 2* release.

The actor sharing a few stills from *Border 2* on his social media account, spoke about how 'periods of uncertainty, quite struggles and life lessons' followed, post the box office failure of his debut movie *Tadap*.

"December 3, 2021… *Tadap*, my first film. The beginning of a dream I stepped into with hope, fear, and everything in between," wrote Ahan.

"What followed tested me deeply… Periods of uncertainty, quiet struggles, and lessons that only time and patience can teach. Growth rarely comes without pain, and every moment shaped who I am today," he added.

The actor further expressed gratitude for all the learning lessons and said that he was now looking forward to his second Bollywood movie. "I'm grateful for all of it. January 23, 2026… Just a few days away now from my second film, *Border 2*, coming to you. A new chapter born from patience, perseverance and belief. With a fuller heart, steadier faith, and the same dream, now stronger than ever."

He added, "I hope you'll stand with us, experience this journey, and support this film from the heart. It would mean more than words can express." IANS

Neha creates buzz with latest post

Mumbai: Bollywood singer Neha Kakkar announced that she is taking a break from her personal and professional commitments, citing the need to step away from responsibilities, relationships and work.

She took to her Instagram stories section, where she posted a now-deleted note, which read: "Time to take a break from Responsibilities, Relationships, Work and Everything I can think of right now. Not sure if I'll be back or not. Thank you (sic)."

She then requested the shutterbugs and fans to not "film her at all".

"And I request Paparazzi and Fans to Not to film me at all. I hope you respect my privacy and let me live freely in this world. No Cameras Plz! I request! This is the least you all can give me for my peace (sic)," Neha concluded the post.

The *Lollipop* singer did not disclose the reason behind her decision.

Neha is the younger sister of playback singers Tony Kakkar and Sonu Kakkar. She began performing at an early age at religious events. In 2005, she participated in the second season of the singing reality show, Indian Idol.

She made her Bollywood debut as a chorus singer in the film *Meerabai Not Out*. She rose to prominence with the release of the dance track *Second Hand Jawaani* from *Cocktail* in 2012. IANS

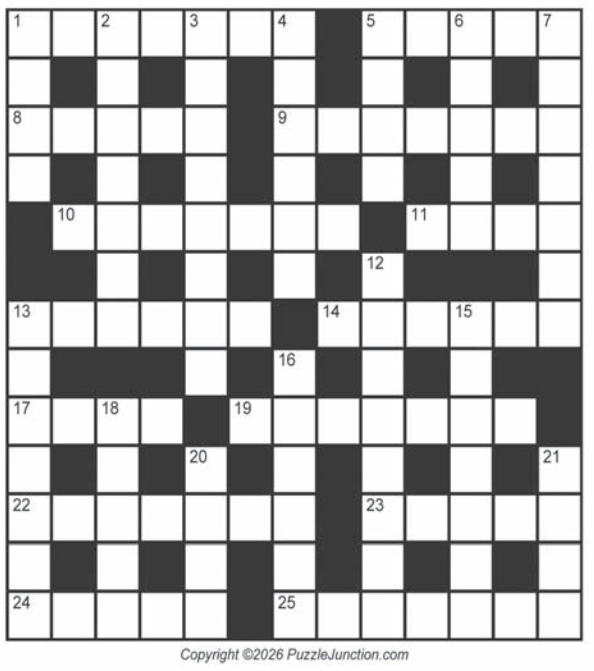
FUN post

PEANUTS

CALVIN AND HOBBES

BREVITY

CROSSWORD



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Across
1 Nonsense talk
5 Popular wedding gift
8 Repair a ship
9 Theme park
10 Parachute part
11 Four-wheel vehicle
13 Worker with a kiln
14 Hummocks
17 Begrudge
19 Masquerade wear
22 Non-religious
23 Internet messages (1-4)
24 Atlanta-based airline
25 Sharpshooter

Down
1 Mountain pool
2 Cause suffering
3 Separated
4 Elbow grease
5 Sugar source
6 Picture
7 Pertinent
12 Execration
13 Delighted
15 Citrus drink
16 Berthed
18 Outspoken
20 Cantina cooker
21 Sheltered, at sea

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.

		1				5	3	
	7	6	9	3				
7		8	6				4	
			7					
	5	4					1	8
				7			8	
	9	3		2				
			1		8			6

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

S	E	A	N	C	E	S		D	R	I	F	T
M		P		A				R		N		A
A	C	R	Y	L	I	C		A	R	S	O	N
R		O		Z		Y		M		I		G
T	A	N	G	O		S	C	A	N	D	A	L
				N		T				E		E
A	W	A	K	E	N		P	U	R	R	E	D
D		M				N		P				
M	O	U	N	T	I	E		S	P	E	A	R
I		S		H		A		T		N		E
R	A	I	S	E		P	H	A	R	A	O	H
A		N		F				R		C		A
L	I	G	H	T		B	A	T	H	T	U	B

SUDOKU

6	4	9	5	1	3	8	2	7
1	2	8	6	7	4	5	9	3
7	3	5	2	9	8	4	1	6
5	8	7	1	3	6	9	4	2
4	9	6	8	2	7	3	5	1
3	1	2	4	5	9	7	6	8
2	7	4	9	8	1	6	3	5
9	5	3	7	6	2	1	8	4
8	6	1	3	4	5	2	7	9

EMBRACE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INNOVATION: GUV

BHUBANESWAR: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Monday called upon students to embrace entrepreneurship, innovation and technological advancement, urging them to become job creators rather than job seekers. He was addressing the Third Convocation of Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) at its campus here.Encouraging graduates to explore entrepreneurial opportunities, the Governor said startups and entrepreneurship offer powerful pathways for innovation, employment generation and economic growth. He noted that the state and Union governments are nurturing vibrant startup ecosystems through policy support, funding, incubation and mentorship, and appealed to students to make full use of these opportunities and dare to build something new.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CERTAIN

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Formation of a Legislative Council in Odisha now appears certain, a move expected to create political space for young leaders. The promise of a Legislative Council had earlier helped BJD pacify multiple ticket aspirants during 2014 and 2019 elections. Many of those youth later realised the assurance was largely hollow.

The BJD government approved a Cabinet proposal on forming a Legislative Council August 24, 2018, apparently to keep young leaders engaged. Had the party been serious, it could have pursued approval from the Centre, as several opportunities existed. Its failure to do so strengthened the perception that the promise lacked intent.

The issue has resurfaced amid plans to construct a new Lok Seva Bhawan and a new Assembly building on 71-acre land. The foundation stone was laid January 12, 2026. About the project, Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said the existing Assembly building would not be demolished but preserved as a museum. He added that if a Legislative Council is formed, the old building would be used for that purpose.

The minister's remarks suggest the government is planning with a long-term vision. Political observers say such a statement would not have been made lightly or without deliberation. Under BJP rule, ministers are unlikely to make major announcements without consulting the Central leadership.

Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan has said the existing Assembly building would not be demolished but preserved as a museum. If a Legislative Council is formed, the old building would be used for that purpose, the minister asserted

After Harichandan's statement, several young political aspirants are said to have gravitated toward the ruling BJP, hoping for a future berth in the Legislative Council. The claim has gained traction because Odisha now has a "double-engine" government, improving the prospects of implementing such decisions. As a result, the formation of a Legislative Council in Odisha is increasingly being viewed as inevitable.

India currently has 28 states and eight Union Territories (UTs). BJP-led governments are in power in 19 states and two UTs. Legislative Councils exist in six states — Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. Of these, four are governed by NDA, while Karnataka and Telangana have Congress governments. In the remaining states and UTs, BJP governments have shown little inclination toward forming Legislative Councils.

Salaries and allowances for Legislative Council members vary by state, but they are generally on par with those of MLAs, including pension benefits after completing a term. Many states argue that Legislative Councils are unnecessary. National-level debates have often noted that states with Councils have not shown significantly better governance or development because of them. A Legislative Council would also place an additional financial burden of several hundred crore rupees on a state/UT.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first two terms, Rajya Sabha frequently posed hurdles to legislation. At state level, Legislative Councils function in a similar manner, though both Rajya Sabha and Councils have defined constitutional roles.

If Odisha establishes a Legislative Council, its structure is likely to follow the 2018 Cabinet proposal. The Council would have one-third the strength of the Assembly. With Odisha's Assembly having 147 members, the Council would have 49 seats. Of these, 16 would be elected by MLAs, 16 by local body representatives, nine nominated by the Governor, and eight elected by teachers and graduates.

It may also be recalled that the BJP, BJD and Congress recently joined hands to pass a Bill raising salaries and allowances for MLAs, ministers, the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and former legislators. CPI(M) MLA Laxman Munda opposed the hike. Public backlash followed, forcing Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi's party colleagues to seek withdrawal of the decision. The BJD and Congress later echoed the demand.

Against that backdrop, formation of a Legislative Council could once again raise concerns about additional financial burden on the state.

JSW accused of illegally extracting groundwater

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kujang, Jan 19: Even as the government has imposed curbs on groundwater extraction to conserve the fast-depleting resource, allegations have surfaced that JSW is illegally drawing large quantities of groundwater at its under-construction steel plant in Dhinkia-Charidesh area of Ersama block in Jagatsinghpur district.

Residents of Dhinkia-Charidesh —covering Dhinkia, Gadagujang and Nuagaon gram panchayats — have expressed concern that indiscriminate extraction of groundwater for the JSW project could have serious long-term consequences for the local population. They fear that unless immediate corrective steps are taken, the area may face an acute drinking water crisis in the coming years.

According to sources, the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) had granted permission at the preliminary stage of the project to dig only three borewells for construction purposes. However, it is alleged that the company has illegally drilled more than 300 borewells and has been extensively using groundwater for construction activities.

Following complaints lodged with the CGWB, the company authorities reportedly removed the upper pipes of several borewells. However, fresh allegations have now emerged that borewells are again being drilled in the area to supply water to labour colony and batching plant.

Earlier, several borewells exceeding depths of 1,000 feet were reportedly drilled and made operational. Locals now apprehend that excessive deep extraction could lead to saline water intrusion into shallow tube wells in Dhinkia-Charidesh area in the near future.

Such a development, residents warn, would severely affect the availability of potable and usable water, pushing the region towards a serious water crisis.

Despite this, no action has been taken by the CGWB or the district administration, said Deen Dayal Paradip Industrial Workers' Union president Khirod Chandra Parida and Jindal-affected Dhinkia-Charidesh Unnayan Samiti convenor Bijay Ketan Sahu.

They warned that industrialisation should not be allowed to push human lives towards danger.

They said the company had earlier entered into an agreement to draw water through pipelines from the Jobra anicut of the Mahanadi river for use in construction and other activities. However, no arrangements have been made for this so far.

Parida and Sahu said a proper inquiry would bring all facts to light and demanded an investigation into the matter.

Attempts to contact JSW project public relations officer Mitrabhanu Choudhury for comment were unsuccessful, as he did not respond to phone calls.

State ready for its finest decade: Dy CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo has said that Odisha is ready for its finest decade, and that the state would transform into a trillion-dollar powerhouse by 2036. He said this while addressing 'Uday India National Conclave 2026' at Swosti Premium here Sunday.

The day-long event brought together ministers, legislators, academics, industry leaders, doctors, journalists, entrepreneurs, and thought-leaders united by a single aspiration—to help shape a Developed Odisha by 2036 and support the state's larger vision for 2047.

Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy inaugurated the conclave and called for an era of cooperation between citizens and the state.

"Odisha's journey to 2036 must be rooted in collaboration. When citizens, institutions and policymakers come together, development becomes a shared destiny and not a distant aspiration," she noted.

Delivering the keynote address, Singh Deo asserted that the state is poised for a decade of unprecedented transformation.

"Odisha is ready for its finest decade. With clear vision, strong governance and people's participation, we can transform Odisha into a trillion-dollar powerhouse by 2036," he said, highlighting reforms in infrastructure, industrial growth, social development, and governance efficiency.

He also emphasised the importance of aligning Odisha's civilisational identity, its temples, traditions, and arts, with a modern development framework built on innovation, technology, and inclusive growth.

The conclave featured four major thematic discussions, each offering insights into the pillars of a developed Odisha; Health, Education, Infrastructure & Development, and Tourism & Culture.

Law, Works and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan spoke about inclusive governance. "A developed Odisha will emerge not through government alone but through collective wisdom. Uday India's initiative brings citizens' voices to the heart of policymaking."

Similarly, Revenue & Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari, FS&CW Minister Krushna Chandra Patra and FARD Minister Gokulananda Mallik also spoke on the occasion.

In his founder's address, Group Editor of Uday India, Deepak Rath, reflected on the mission behind the conclave: "This conclave is a bridge—connecting ideas to action, citizens to policymakers, and heritage to the future. Odisha's next leap will be powered by such collective conversations."

DEITY OF WISDOM: An artisan gives colourful strokes to an idol of Goddess Saraswati at Nayapalli Durga Puja Mandap in Bhubaneswar Monday PHOTO: MANORANJAN MISHRA

Cong: Cooperative institutions heading towards bankruptcy

BHUBANESWAR: All India Kisan Congress (AIKC) national coordinator Amiya Kumar Pattanaik Monday alleged that cooperative institutions in Odisha are steadily moving towards bankruptcy. Pattanaik said that during the last 25 years of BJD rule and under the present BJP government, cooperative institutions have turned into centres of large-scale corruption, while the legitimate demands of cooperative employees continue to be ignored. He alleged that cooperative-based oil mills, spinning mills and sugar mills have become defunct, and regulated market committees (RMCs) are failing to function effectively for farmers. The senior Congress leader said the acute shortage of warehouses for storing paddy and other crops, along with the complete absence of cold storage facilities for vegetables across the state. "State's cooperative institutions are surely heading towards bankruptcy," Pattanaik said. To address these issues, Pattanaik announced that the Odisha Pradesh Congress Cooperative Cell Monday launched the 'Cooperative Protection Campaign', starting from Ganjam district. The campaign aims to strengthen the cooperative sector from grassroots by making institutions active, transparent and free from corruption. He said the Congress has prepared a detailed roadmap to create widespread awareness about various welfare schemes implemented through cooperatives for people of all sections during previous Congress governments.

Tributes pour in on Parbati Giri's birth centenary

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi were among the prominent personalities who paid tributes to freedom fighter and social reformer Parbati Giri on her birth centenary Monday.

Born January 19, 1926 at Samlaipadar village in Bargarh district, Giri joined the Quit India Movement at the age of 16 after being influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and was imprisoned for two years.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Leader of Opposition in Assembly Naveen Patnaik also paid tributes to Giri on the occasion.

Taking to X, Modi said, "Paying homage to Parbati Giri ji on her birth centenary. She played a commendable role in the movement to end colonial rule. Her passion for community service and work in sectors like healthcare, women's empowerment and culture is noteworthy. I had also said this in last month's #MannKiBaat."

Shah said, "On the occasion of the 100th birth anniversary of great freedom fighter and social worker Parbati Giri, millions of tributes to her."

"At a very young age, Parbati Giri joined the Quit India Movement and the Swadeshi Movement, playing an unparalleled role in the struggle for the motherland's independence. Dedicated throughout her life to the upliftment of tribal communities and national service, her sacrifices and patriotism remain a source of inspiration for the younger generation even today," Shah said.

Pradhan, who hails from Odisha, said Giri was the embodiment of Odisha's pride and sacrifice. Kambhampati, in his message, said that Giri's contributions to the welfare of the poor and helpless in society, and women's empowerment shall remain an eternal source of inspiration.

Majhi said, "I salute freedom fighter Parbati Giri. From the freedom movement to social service, and in the field of women's empowerment, her contribution remains forever unforgettable. Her dedication to public service and her ideals will eternally remain a source of inspiration for us."

Patnaik said that Giri's struggle and sacrifices for the country's Independence were unparalleled. Her contribution towards tribal welfare remains an eternal inspiration.

Murrah buffalo bulls, Punganur cow to steal the show at MPSO

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Elite livestock breeds including Murrah buffalo bulls 'Surveer' and 'Inder' from Haryana, a rare Punganur cow from Andhra Pradesh, and a Kankrej bull from Gujarat will be the major attractions of the State-level Matsya Pranee Samavesh Odisha 2026 (MPSO-2026), scheduled to be held from January 21 to 23 at Janata Maidan here.

Murrah buffalo bulls and Kankrej bull are expected to create awareness among dairy farmers of Odisha about scientific breeding practices, particularly the benefits of Murrah breeding for enhanced milk productivity. The display of the small-sized Punganur cattle will introduce cowherds to new dimensions of traditional cattle rearing and Gopalan practices.

Addressing a presser here, Fisheries and Animal Resources Development (FARD) Minister Gokulananda Mallik said the Samavesh would emerge as a major platform for awareness, innovation, and prosperity for fish farmers and livestock rearers across the state.

Held under the theme "Innovative Interventions in Fisheries and Livestock for Vikashit Odisha," the three-day conclave will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, while the valedictory session will be graced by Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati.

The minister said more than 8,000 farmers, entrepreneurs, and women self-help group (WSHG) members are expected to attend the three-day event. As many as 348 farmers and entrepreneurs will be honoured as 'Champions' for their outstanding contributions to fisheries and livestock farming.

Additionally, the best 20 officers from FARD sector will be felicitated for their exemplary service.

Lead farmers, entrepreneurs, and WSHG members will participate in 12 interactive panel discussions covering fisheries, animal husbandry, and agriculture. Experts from across the country, along with select overseas panelists, will deliberate on emerging trends and technologies in the sector.

DAIRY BOOST

MORE THAN 8,000 FARMERS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND WSHG MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE THREE-DAY EVENT

AS MANY AS 348 FARMERS AND ENTREPRENEURS WILL BE HONOURED AS 'CHAMPIONS' FOR THEIR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO FISHERIES AND LIVESTOCK FARMING

AN INTERACTIVE PROGRAMME TITLED 'ASK THE MINISTER' WILL ALLOW FARMERS FROM ACROSS ODISHA TO DIRECTLY RAISE THEIR CONCERNS AND QUERIES

A special interactive programme titled 'Ask the Minister' will allow farmers from across Odisha to directly raise their concerns and queries, which will be addressed by the minister.

More than 100 exhibitors representing companies, NGOs, national institutions, state government departments, cooperatives, and directorates will showcase modern technologies in fisheries, animal resources, and agriculture across 208 stalls in three hangars.

Live demonstrations of animals and fish will be held in two open hangars, featuring bio-floc technology, cage culture fish farming, high-yielding crossbred cows, sex-sorted semen calves, and environmentally controlled poultry houses.

To mark the inaugural day, a walkathon will be organised from Kalinga Stadium to Janata Maidan at 6am, January 21.

To engage youth and promote the event's theme, eloquence and painting competitions will be conducted among veterinary, fisheries, and management college and polytechnic students. Winners will be felicitated during the Samavesh.

Odisha fast-tracks major road projects to boost connectivity

Chaired by Works department Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh, the review meeting focused on strengthening a seamless road network across the state

PNN & AGENCIES

The meeting reviewed the construction and widening of several key road projects, with special focus on the proposed 111-km Capital Region Ring Road around Bhubaneswar

Discussions were held on measures to ease traffic congestion in Cuttack city and on developing a direct road link connecting Bhubaneswar with Jagatsinghpur and Paradip

Officials were directed to prepare the alignment plan and Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a new Greenfield road from near Dhakulei Peetha to Kandarpur

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: In line with the vision of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan to strengthen Odisha's road infrastructure, the state government has intensified efforts to build a robust road network connecting all major regions of the state, aimed at improving mobility and accelerating overall development.

Chairing a review meeting of four key road projects Monday, Principal Secretary of the Works department Sanjay Kumar Singh said focused measures are being taken to strengthen road infrastructure across Odisha.

The meeting reviewed the construction and widening of several important road projects, with special emphasis on the proposed 111-kilometre Capital Region Ring Road around Bhubaneswar.

Singh directed departmental officers and engineers to expedite project execution, including the speedy completion of land acquisition and obtaining necessary forest and environmental clearances.

Discussions were also held on easing traffic congestion in Cuttack city and developing a direct road link from Bhubaneswar to Jagatsinghpur and Paradip.

Officials were instructed to prepare the alignment plan and Detailed Project Report (DPR) for a new Greenfield road from near Dhakulei Peetha to Kandarpur.

Once completed, the new road will allow vehicles travelling from Bhubaneswar to Jagatsinghpur and Paradip to bypass Cuttack city, significantly reducing travel distance and time. The meeting further reviewed land acquisition and widening work for the 206-kilometre Koraput–Mohana road. Progress on the upgradation and widening of the Khurda–Nayagarh road was also assessed, with instructions to ensure execution strictly as per the approved DPR.

Meanwhile, in a separate meeting chaired by Department's Principal Secretary, discussions were held on the effective implementation of the 15-point directives issued by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to accelerate the state's overall development.

MAHARASHTRA CMO TEAM VISIT

Delegation lauds state's PSS school initiatives

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: A five-member delegation from the Maharashtra Chief Minister's Office, currently on a five-day visit to Odisha, visited the office of the Panchasakha Shikhya Setu (PSS) and highly appreciated its innovative initiatives aimed at holistic school development.

The delegation lauded the programme's unique model of strengthening schools through active participation of alumni and community groups. They described the initiative as a significant step towards improving both educational quality and overall school development, calling it an exemplary and replicable model.

The visiting team included Special Officer to the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Priya Khan, Administrative Officer (Chief Minister's Office) Rahul Mhatre, along with three other officials. The delegation first visited the Panchasakha Shikhya Setu office, where a detailed interaction was held in the conference hall.

The Member Secretary of PSS and State Project Director of OSEPA, Ananya Das, joined the meeting virtually. She welcomed the delegation and highlighted the importance of alumni engagement in strengthening the school education system. The Chief Executive Officer of PSS, Rajalakshmi Dash, was also present and explained the organisation's vision, mission, and objectives. She elaborated on the transformative changes brought about in schools through alumni contributions.

During the presentation, officials briefed the delegation on various initiatives undertaken under Panchasakha Shikhya Setu, including CSR-supported programmes, heritage schools, Chief Minister's Education Awards, school safety and maintenance measures, aspirational curriculum initiatives, and other developmental activities. Ms Priya Khan appreciated the comprehensive approach adopted by PSS and engaged in discussions comparing the education systems of Maharashtra and Odisha.

In the afternoon, the delegation visited Badagada High School and Kushabhadra High School at Banamalipur, where they observed various infrastructure and academic improvements achieved through alumni support. The team also interacted with former students to understand their role in driving the school's development.

The visit concluded with the delegation expressing keen interest in adopting similar alumni-driven school development models in Maharashtra.

YouTuber faces complaint over Ambedkar remarks

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Several Ambedkarite groups Monday filed a complaint at the city's Capital police station against YouTuber Tapi Mishra for allegedly making derogatory remarks against BR Ambedkar on social media.

According to the complainants, a Facebook user named Tapi Mishra has been repeatedly sharing posts that insult and demean Dr Ambedkar.

The complaint further stated that an earlier case had been registered at the Capital police station in December 2025 over objectionable remarks targeting the slogan 'Jai Bhim'. Despite this, Tapi allegedly shared another Facebook post on January 18, 2026, displaying Ambedkar's photograph along with a caption containing derogatory language and mockery of both Dr Ambedkar and the SC/ST Act, the complaint informed.

The complainants alleged that Dr Ambedkar, a highly respected figure among the SC/ST community, was deliberately insulted through written and visual content, amounting to an offence under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. They urged the police to take strict legal action to prevent further misuse of social media platforms to hurt community sentiments.

Congress holds protest over VB–G RAM G scheme in City

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: The Congress, under the banner of the Rajiv Gandhi Panchayati Raj Sangathan (RGPRS), Monday, organised a 'satyagraha' at the Lower PMG Square in Bhubaneswar, protesting the replacement of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) with the newly introduced VB–G RAM–G scheme.

The protesters later submitted a memorandum to Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati over the issue.

The protest was led by Sunil Panwar, National Chairman of RGPRS; Sudarshan Das, State Chairperson of RGPRS; and several senior executive body members and supporters, who sat in the agitation as a mark of protest, demanding the immediate restoration of MGNREGS.

Reacting to the issue, Panwar said that crores of poor people in the country, whom he described as the real owners of the nation, have been demanding their rightful share for a long time.

"The Congress gave them the right to work in the form of MGNREGS, a rights-based law. However, last month the BJP government abolished the MGNREGS Act in the Parliament and brought in a new scheme-based law under the name VB–G RAM–G," he alleged. Panwar added that the fundamental difference between the two was that MGNREGS was a rights-based legislation, while VB–G RAM–G is a scheme-based programme that can be discontinued at any time.

"Under MGNREGS, registered job cardholders had the legal right to demand work within 15 days. That right has now been taken away under VB–G RAM–G," he said.

He also added that earlier, Panchayati Raj institutions had the authority to decide what kind of work would be undertaken in villages and when workers could seek employment during any month of the year.

"If work was not provided within 15 days, the worker was entitled to unemployment allowance. All these safeguards have been removed, depriving the labour class of their rights," Panwar said.

Criticising the revised funding pattern implemented by the Union government, Panwar said that earlier the Central government bore 100 per cent of the wage cost, while states were responsible only for administrative expenses.

"Now a 60:40 funding ratio has been imposed. States with weak finances will not be able to start development works, effectively denying employment to rural workers," he warned.

Addressing the gathering, Das alleged that the present BJP government has repealed the spirit of the original MGNREGS Act by introducing VB–G RAM G scheme, which, he claimed, dilutes the constitutional intent of the right to work enshrined under the Directive Principles of State Policy.

BDA's eviction drive in Ghatikia

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) here Monday carried out an encroachment eviction drive on its land at Ghatikia under the Bharatpur police station limits.

As per reports, the eviction was undertaken following a requisition from the Officer on Special Duty (Land), BDA, vide Letter No. 781/BDA dated January 12, 2026, and targeted unauthorised structures adjacent to BDA Plot No. K-8/999 in Mouza Ghatikia.

During the partially executed drive, enforcement teams demolished seven ACC shed rooms and removed approximately 100 metres of fencing wire. As a result, around 2,630 square feet of valuable BDA land was reclaimed from illegal encroachment. One JCB machine was deployed for the operation by the BDA.

The drive was led by Debaraj Sethi, OSD (Enforcement), BDA, with support from Subhransu Sekhar Mohanty, Liaison Officer, BDA. Police assistance was provided by Havildar Kanhu Charan Bhimram of Bharatpur police station. Along with Enforcement Squads No. 3 and 4, three sections of police, including a section of lady police were also deployed at the spot.

Officials stated that while the eviction was carried out partially Monday, the remaining encroached portions in the area would be cleared in subsequent phases as per the programme.

BMC holds discussion on Khandagiri Mela

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: With the Khandagiri Kumbh Mela scheduled to commence from January 25, detailed discussions on preparations for the event took place during a zonal-level meeting of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) held Monday.

The South-West Zone meeting was chaired by Mayor Sulochana Das and attended by Deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar. All corporators of the South-West Zone, comprising 21 wards, were present. Zonal Commissioner Rakesh Kumar Patro, along with other officials, also attended the meeting. During the meeting, Zonal Commissioner Patro presented a detailed status report on works completed and those pending for the Khandagiri Kumbh Mela. Mayor Das directed officials to expedite and complete all remaining works at the earliest.

The meeting also reviewed ongoing developmental works across various wards. Corporators shared feedback on pending projects in their respective areas and discussed developmental activities planned for the coming days. The issues discussed and decisions taken at the meeting will be placed before the upcoming Corporation meeting. Highlighting the importance of zonal-level reviews, the Mayor said such meetings help address ward-level issues more effectively, adding that one zonal meeting will be held every month in each zone.

Odisha tops AB-PMJAY card distribution: Min

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: Odisha has secured first position in distribution of Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards to eligible persons in just nine months of its implementation in the state, Health and Family Welfare (H&FW) Minister Mukesh Mahaling said here Monday.

Mahaling was speaking at the National-level Chintan Shivir on AB-PMJAY and Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) here. After inaugurating the two-day conference, Mahaling said the AB-PMJAY was launched in Odisha April 11, 2025 in convergence with the state's own scheme of Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) in which each beneficiary family was entitled to cashless treatment of ₹5 lakh per year with an additional provision of ₹5 lakh for female members of the family.

Around 80 per cent of Odisha's total 4.5 crore population was included under the converged scheme, Mahaling said.

"Within nine months of its inauguration, Odisha ranked first in the country in the distribution of AB-PMJAY cards to eligible beneficiaries and fifth in the issuance of Ayushman Vay Vandana Yojana (AVVY) cards for senior citizens aged 70 years and above," Mahaling pointed out.

"Over 22.41 lakh senior citizens above 70 years of age in the state are entitled to get benefits of the AVVY," he said, adding that all senior citizens above 70 years of age, irrespective of their economic category, were also entitled to the same benefit under AVVY.

"AB-PMJAY is the outcome of National Health Policy 2017 launched by our visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi to bring a revolutionary transformation in the healthcare scenario of the country. It has now become the largest universal healthcare system in the world," he said.

Around 42 per cent of India's bottom-level population was brought under this healthcare system, he added.

IIM-Sambalpur partners with National SC-ST Hub

Bhubaneswar/Sambalpur: The 6-day Business Accelerator Program for SC-ST entrepreneurs in collaboration with the National SC-ST Hub, Ministry of MSME, GOI, kicked off at IIM Sambalpur Monday. It will continue till 24th January. The objective of this programme is to strengthen the entrepreneurship ecosystem by building capacity and up-skilling SC-ST entrepreneurs with essential business, financial, and digital skills, in alignment with the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. The programme consists of 12 days of training, including 6 days of on-campus sessions at IIM Sambalpur and 6 days of online learning. The first cohort of the Business Accelerator Programme included 25 participants from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra. The second cohort of the Business Accelerator Program will commence in February 2026, offering a 72-hour hybrid learning experience through virtual weekend sessions and a 6-day on-campus module at IIM Sambalpur.

A DAY WITH THE COMMISSIONER

CMC rolls out student outreach initiative

POST NEWS NETWORK

- Under the campaign, one selected student will spend a full working day with the Municipal Commissioner and closely observe the functioning of the civic body
- The programme is open to Class IX and X students from government, private and aided schools within the CMC jurisdiction
- Applications will be invited through a Google Form hosted on the official Cuttack Municipal Corporation website, where detailed guidelines will be available

Cuttack, Jan 19: The Commissioner of Cuttack Municipal Corporation (CMC), Kirandeep Kaur Sahota, Monday announced a new student outreach initiative titled "A Day with the Commissioner" during a press meet held in Cuttack.

Briefing the media, the Commissioner said the programme has been conceptualised to expose school students to the real-world functioning of urban governance and to inspire them towards leadership and public service at an early age. Under the initiative, one selected student will get the opportunity to spend an entire working day with the Municipal Commissioner and closely observe the functioning of the civic body.

The programme is open to Class IX and X students from government, private and aided schools within the CMC jurisdiction. Applications will be invited through a Google Form hosted on the official website of the Cuttack Municipal Corporation, where detailed guidelines will be made available.

Explaining the selection process, Sahota informed that applicants will appear for a 50-mark written test, wherein they will have to write an essay in Odia by choosing one topic from a set of five. The essay must be between 800 and 1,000 words and uploaded in PDF format, with a maximum file size of 1 MB.

Another 50 marks will be awarded for extracurricular achievements across ten categories, including NCC, Scouts & Guides, NSS, social awareness activities, sports, science projects or innovations, cultural activities, digital and cyber awareness, disaster management and first aid, cleanliness drives, voter and traffic awareness, and leadership roles in school clubs or committees. Students will be required to upload supporting certificates wherever available.

The selected student will spend a full working day with the Municipal Commissioner, attend review meetings, and visit key municipal facilities such as sanitation and waste management units. The student will also gain insights into how policy decisions are formulated and implemented at the city level.

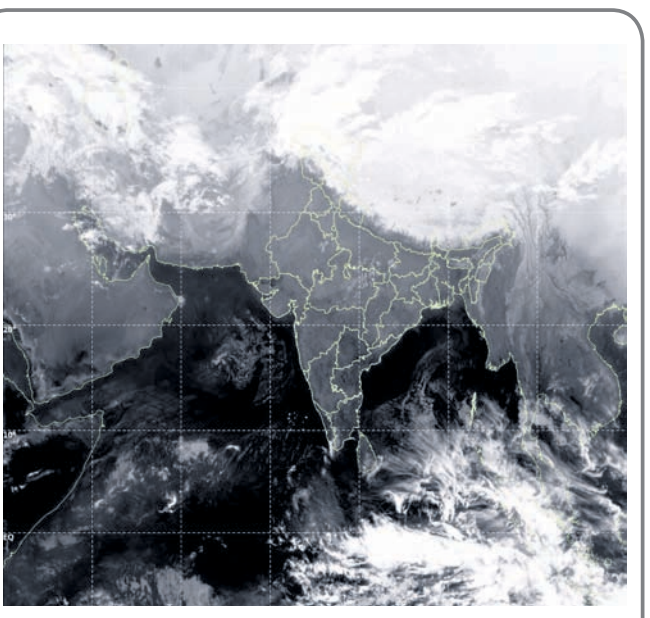
The Commissioner added that she would personally interact with the selected student and offer guidance on civil services preparation, leadership qualities, discipline and public service, with the aim of motivating young minds to develop civic responsibility and administrative curiosity.

Describing the initiative as a transformative learning experience, Sahota said "A Day with the Commissioner" is expected to encourage students to actively engage with governance and consider public service as a meaningful career option.

Further details regarding application dates and timelines will be announced on the official website and social media platforms of CMC, she added.

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY INDEX	VARIATION	BOURSES INDEX	VARIATION	COMMODITIES INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR 90.96	▲ 0.10	SENSEX 83246.18	▼ 324.17	GOLD ₹145,185	▲ ₹2,668
EURO 105.83	▲ 0.24	NIFTY 25585.50	▼ 108.85	SILVER ₹305,603	▲ ₹17,841



WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	31.0°	27.2°	Moderate fog
Min Temp	11.6°	11.4°	
Humidity	84%	78%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Newborn girl found dead at DHH toilet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, Jan 19: The body of a newborn girl child was found in the toilet of the female geriatric ward at the Bhadrak district headquarters hospital (DHH) Monday, triggering shock and concern.

As per hospital sources, the incident came to light after a patient's relative noticed the newborn lying inside the bathroom of the female geriatric ward and alerted hospital staff. The infant was found dead.

Authorities suspect that a woman who had recently given birth abandoned the newborn in the bathroom and fled the hospital. It is believed that the baby may have died shortly after birth, though the exact cause of death is yet to be confirmed.

Neither on-duty health workers and staff nurses, nor security personnel did notice the incident until it was brought to their attention, raising serious questions about hospital supervision.

Hospital authorities said they have launched an internal inquiry to ascertain how the incident occurred and identify the woman involved. Efforts are also underway to determine the circumstances under which the baby was delivered and abandoned.

Police have been informed and further action will be taken after completion of preliminary inquiries and medical examination, officials said.

DFO writes to YouTube for removal of wildlife videos

CONTENT CREATORS WARNED OF STRICT ACTION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, Jan 19: The Forest department has initiated action against posting of videos on social media that show harassment, capture or disturbance of wildlife for monetary gain ignoring existing restrictions. Keonjhar Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Dhanraj HD has written to YouTube January 15 seeking the removal of a video which allegedly shows illegal wildlife hunting activity. The move has drawn public attention.

According to officials, a video titled "King Cobra Egg Rescue and Release in Keonjhar" was uploaded August 7, 2019, from a YouTube account named "Mirza Md Arif". The video shows a king cobra laying eggs in a nest made of dry leaves inside a protected forest area under the Ghatgaon range of Keonjhar forest division.

Without informing the Forest department, the individual allegedly destroyed the nest and removed the eggs, only to dump those later in another forest area. Officials said destroying a nest and removing eggs from within a protected forest is illegal.

The king cobra, also known as Ophiophagus hannah, is listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, making any disturbance to the animal, its nest or eggs a punishable offense. Under Section 2(16) of the Act, destroying the nest of any bird or reptile and removing its eggs constitutes hunting.

Citing these provisions, the DFO has issued a notice to YouTube seeking immediate removal of the video. The department has warned that in the next stage it may invoke Section 52 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, related to abetment, against the platform if necessary, officials said.

The Forest department said it will issue a statutory summons to officials of YouTube, asking them to appear in Keonjhar to record statements in connection with an alleged wildlife law violation.

Officials said a file related to transactions carried out by a social media company on the account of snake handler Mirza was forwarded to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in 2023 for scrutiny. The Keonjhar DFO is expected to open the file, sources said.

Subhendu Mallik, general secretary of the Snake Helpline, said Section 58(c) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act bars any company from deriving illegal benefit from wildlife offenses. Since platforms such as YouTube are allegedly involved, he said a case should be registered under Section 58 of the Act.

Mallik added that several videos showing snakes being caught with Mirza's assistance are available on social media. He called for the arrest of those who illegally posted such videos along with Mirza, and demanded an ED probe into the financial aspects.

In March 2013, then Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) and Chief Wildlife Warden Sushant Nanda declared that capturing wildlife for photographs or videos is illegal. Bhadrak-based snake handler Mirza Mohammad Arif was later arrested for violating the order by posting snake-catching videos. Subsequently, Monalisa Bhadra and her husband, Badri Narayan Bhadra, were arrested in Jajpur for videos showing monkeys being captured and fed. Despite those cases, illegal videos and photographs of captured wildlife continue to circulate on social media, allegedly due to lax enforcement.

The Keonjhar DFO's move to initiate action against social media companies has been welcomed by various quarters.

Poppy plants worth ₹1.91 crore destroyed

Baripada: Opium plantation was detected inside Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district and poppy plants worth ₹1.91 crore were destroyed, police said Monday. A joint team of police, Excise and Forest departments detected two patches of illegal poppy plantation on a total of 1.09 acres of land under the jurisdiction of Jashipur police station and carried out the drive Sunday. The area had been devoid of human activities and is traversed by tigers and other wild animals, an official statement said. A total of 95,850 opium plants worth ₹1.91 crore were destroyed, it said. The illegal cultivation was carried out deep inside the national park in gross violation of forest and wildlife protection laws, the statement said. Two cases have been registered at Jashipur police station and further investigation is underway to identify those involved and ascertain how such large-scale cultivation was carried out inside the national park, it added.

Nuapada BDO assaulted; 1 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nuapada, Jan 19: In a shocking incident, the BDO of Nuapada Sadar block was assaulted by miscreants here, Monday.

Police have arrested a person - Hemnath Banjara, 35, of Mudhela village under Jonk police limits- and detained three others - Manoj Banjara, Prem Shankar Sahu and Johar Satnami - in the matter.

According to police, BDO Rohit Bhoi was allegedly assaulted while leaving his official residence to attend a government programme at Khairani panchayat. The incident followed a dispute over the construction of a panchayat office building under Bhainshatal panchayat.

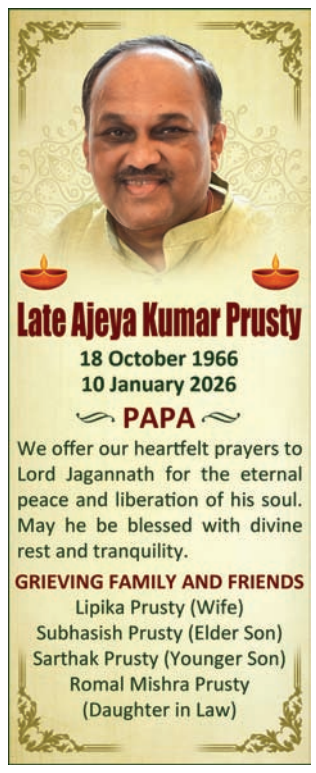
Police said the dispute centred on the construction of the panchayat office at Baloda village instead of Bhainshatal, the designated panchayat headquarters.

During discussions Monday, the BDO reportedly informed the group that construction had already been stopped following a court direction. However, the situation escalated and Hemnath allegedly slapped Bhoi and fled.

Following the incident, elected representatives staged a sit-in outside demanding immediate arrests of the accused.

Majhighariani hundis yield ₹1.05cr, 30 gm gold

Rayagada: All the nine hundis (donation boxes) of Maa Majhighariani temple, the presiding deity of this district, were opened Monday and counted in the presence of a magistrate and police officials, temple authorities said. During the counting, cash amounting to ₹1,05,52,845, along with 30 grams of gold and 2,150 grams of silver, was collected from the hundis. In addition, 23 foreign currency notes from five countries were found, including notes and coins from the United States, Sri Lanka and the UAE. Temple officials said the foreign currency was likely donated by devotees residing abroad who visited the temple. The hundis were opened at around 9 a.m., and the counting process continued for nearly eight hours. Bank staff and several volunteers assisted in the exercise, while elaborate security arrangements were made by police and temple security personnel. Earlier, July 7, the temple hundis had yielded ₹1,04,36,963 in cash, along with 83 grams of gold and 2,505 grams of silver, besides foreign currency notes from different countries.



SNIPPETS

Life term for accused in Subhasmita murder case

Chhatrapur: A local court Monday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for the murder of his girlfriend in the 2021 Subhasmita case. Additional District Judicial Magistrate (ADJM) Pradeep Kumar Samal convicted Krushna Chandra Sahu for burning his girlfriend, Subhasmita Khadanga, alive inside an abandoned house in Pratappur village under the Purushottampur police limits in July 2021. According to the prosecution, Sahu and Khadanga were in a romantic relationship for more than six years. Khadanga repeatedly urged Sahu to marry her, but he refused saying his marriage had been fixed elsewhere. Even after learning about his impending marriage, Khadanga continued to insist. Investigators said Sahu, enraged and seeking to end the relationship, planned the murder and called Khadanga to his native village. He allegedly poured spirit on her and set her on fire. Khadanga later gave a dying declaration to the police, naming Sahu as the assailant. Police registered a case (334/2021) and arrested Sahu based on her statement. During the investigation, Sahu denied the allegations and claimed he was not present in the village at the time of the incident. After a thorough investigation and examination of evidence, the court found Sahu guilty and sentenced him to rigorous life imprisonment. The court also imposed a fine of ₹10,000 on the accused.

Man sentenced to life for murder

Angul: Angul District and Sessions Court Monday sentenced Chaturbhuj Majhi to life imprisonment after convicting him in a murder case. The incident took place November 4, 2024, at Changudia village under the jurisdiction of Chhendipada PS in Angul district. The accused brutally murdered his relative, Chikun Majhi, following a family dispute. After receiving information about the crime, local police promptly reached the spot, arrested the accused, and produced him before the court. The conviction was based on strong evidence gathered during the investigation and the testimonies of witnesses. Sources at the Odisha Police Headquarters stated that since the implementation of the new criminal laws, investigations and trials have been expedited, resulting in a higher conviction rate across the state.

17 injured as auto falls into ghat in Gajapati

Berhampur: At least 17 people, including eight children and three women, were injured after an auto-rickshaw fell nearly 10 feet down a slope in Gajapati district Monday, police said. The accident occurred near Jarau ghat under the Mohana police station limits, when the vehicle hit a roadside electric pole and overturned before plunging down the slope at the Ganjam-Gajapati district border, they said. All the injured, including the driver, were rescued and admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here. The condition of five of them is stated to be serious, officials said. Police said the auto-rickshaw was travelling from Gobindapur to Badagada carrying 17 passengers at the time of the accident. Personnel from fire services units in Mohana and Badagada rushed to the spot and carried out rescue operations. The damaged vehicle has been seized and an inquiry initiated.

Marginal increase in saltwater croc count

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, Jan 19: The population of saltwater or estuarine crocodiles in Odisha's coastal river systems has marginally increased by 32 individuals, with the latest census recording 1,858 of the reptile species, according to the 2026 estimation conducted by the Rajnagar Mangrove Forest (Wildlife) Division.

The annual estimation of saltwater crocodiles (Crocodylus porosus) was carried out from January 8 to 10 across river systems in and around Bhitarkanika National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary, Gahirmatha Wildlife Sanctuary, the Mahanadi deltaic region, and the Devi river mouth area.

Forest officials said the increase reflects the success of sustained conservation and protection measures implemented in the region over the years.

A total of 24 census teams were deployed to survey 54 identified river and creek segments. The exercise followed a division-level training programme held January 7 at the Kanika wildlife range to standardise survey methods and data collection.

The census was conducted using a boat-based direct observation total count method, with both day and night surveys. Daytime counts focused on sub-adult and adult crocodiles basking along riverbanks, while nighttime surveys used powerful spotlights to record hatchlings, yearlings and juvenile crocodiles, which are more visible due to eye-shine.

According to the final data, the highest concentration of estuarine crocodiles was recorded in the Kanika wildlife range. This was followed by the Rajnagar, Mahakalapara and Gahirmatha wildlife ranges.

Officials said the distribution pattern remains consistent with previous years, with Bhitarkanika continuing to serve as a stronghold for the species due to its extensive mangrove cover, protected waterways and prey availability.

In addition to the traditional census, the Forest department conducted a pilot drone-based survey in December to evaluate the feasibility of using unmanned aerial vehicles for crocodile monitoring. The initiative aims to supplement conventional counting methods, reduce observer bias and improve long-term population assessments.

Drone and camera-based identification techniques are being explored as part of future monitoring strategies, particularly in difficult-to-access creeks and dense mangrove areas.

Forest officials said the steady rise in crocodile numbers underscores the effectiveness of habitat protection, anti-poaching measures and community awareness programmes in the coastal ecosystem.

SURYO FOODS & INDUSTRIES LIMITED

Regd. Office: A-54/1 & A-55/1,Dinalipi Bhawan,Baramunda,Bhubaneswar-751003
Email : suryofoods.industries@gmail.com, website: www.suryofoods.com, CIN - L05004OR1989PLC002264

Extract of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter and Nine months ended 31st December, 2025

(Rs. In 'Thousands', except EPS)

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quarter ended			Nine Month ended		Year ended
		31.12.2025 (UnAudited)	30.09.2025 (UnAudited)	31.12.2024 (UnAudited)	31.12.2025 (UnAudited)	31.12.2024 (UnAudited)	31.03.2025 (Audited)
1	Total Income	1,361	1,391	864	4,113	2,995	6,313
2	Net Profit / (Loss) (before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(587)	512	(79)	110	(66)	2,339
3	Net Profit / (Loss) before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	(587)	512	(79)	110	(66)	2,339
4	Net Profit / (Loss) after Tax (after Exceptional and/ or Extraordinary items)	(587)	512	(79)	110	(66)	2,487
5	Total Comprehensive Income [Comprising Profit / (Loss) after tax and Other Comprehensive Income after tax]	(587)	512	(79)	110	(66)	2,487
6	Equity Share Capital (Face Value of Rs. 10/- each)	39,600	39,600	39,600	39,600	39,600	39,600
7	Reserves (Excluding Revaluation Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of P. Y.	-	-	-	-	-	
8	"Earnings per share (of Rs 10/- each) Basic & Diluted (Rs.)"	(0.15)	0.13	(0.02)	0.03	(0.02)	0.63

Note:

a) The above Unaudited financial results of the Company for the Quarter and Nine months ended 31st December, 2025 have been reviewed and recommended by the audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the Company in their respective board meetings held on 19th January, 2026. These results are being published in accordance with Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.

b) The above is an extract of the detailed format of Statement of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter and Nine month ended 31st December, 2025 filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Statement of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter and Nine months ended 31st December, 2025, are available on the website of the Stock Exchanges - www.bseindia.com and on the website of the Company - www.suryofoods.com.

Place : Bhubaneswar
Date : 19th January, 2026

For Suryo Foods & Industries Limited
Sd./- Aditya Dash
(CEO, Director and Chairman of the Meetting)

Bank of India

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया Bank of India BOI

Zonal Office: Sambalpur Zone, Sarlakani Chowk
PO: Dhankauda, Dist.: Sambalpur, PIN-768006 (Odisha)

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with proviso to Rule 8(6) & 6(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described movable and immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of **Bank of India,** will be sold on **"AS IS WHERE IS BASIS"** and **"AS IS WHAT IS BASIS"** and **"WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS"** on **25.02.2026,** for recovery of the below mentioned amount due to the Bank of India, respective branch, from the below mentioned Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price, EMD amount and Property details are as mentioned here under:

Date & Time of E-auction: 25.02.2026 from 11.00 A.M. to 05.00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 5 (Five) Minutes if bidding continues till sale is concluded

Last date for submission of EMD & Documents: 25.02.2026 up to 04.30 P.M.

Date & Time of Inspection of Property: 24.02.2026 up to 04.00 A.M.
For inspection please contact Respective Branch Head or Recovery Department, Zonal Office, Sambalpur (Mrs. Lilima Panda, Mob.: 8144002101, Mr. Sujit Kumar Badhai, Mob.: 7004717984)

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower / Guarantor / Total Dues	Description of the Property	Reserve Price / EMD / Type of Possession / Property ID
1.	**MAIN ROAD BRANCH, ROURKELA /** **Branch Head: Mr. Gagan Raj Thapa, 9178221168(M)** **Borrower: Mr. Pratap Kishor Dash,** At: Gothanisahi, Kenaveta, PO: Bonai, Dist.: Sundargarh, Odisha / **Total Dues: ₹27,72,571.40** as on **08.08.2024** plus further interest, costs and incidental expenses.	All that part & parcel of the property situated at Plot No.: 243/1281, Khata No.: 172/452 at Mouza: Deogaon, PS/ Tahasil/SRO: Bonai, Dist.: Sundergarh, Area: Ac.0.05dec., standing in the name of **Mr. Pratap Kishor Dash.** Bounded by- North: Plot No.: 243/P (Vacant Land of Mr. Prusty), South: Plot No. 242 (House of Mr. Purnachandra Sahu), East: Road (Plotted road over vacant of Plot No. 243 is connected to public road), West: Plot No. 129 (Vacant Land).	**₹15,20,000/- / ₹1,52,000/- / SYMBOLIC / BKID0000146**
2.	**MAIN ROAD BRANCH, ROURKELA /** **Branch Head: Mr. Gagan Raj Thapa, 9178221168(M)** **Borrower-1: Mohammed Imran,** C/o- MD Akhlaque, LIG4/12, RDA Building, Mahatab Road, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundergarh, **Borrower-2 (Co-Borrower in Housing Loan): Nazia Parween,** Mahatab Road, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundergarh / **Total Dues: ₹61,45,242.41** as on **20.04.2024** plus further interest, costs and incidental expenses.	All that part & parcel of the Land & Building situated at Khata No.: 88/1387, Plot No.: 3/1409, Area: Ac.0.055 dec., Kissam: Gharabari, Mouza: Budeljore, PS/Tahasil: Bisra, Dist.: Sundergarh, Odisha, standing in the name of **Mohammed Imran.** Bounded by- North: 12ft. Road, South: Plot No. 4 (Vacant Land), East: Plot No. 3(P) (Vacant Land), West: Plot No. 3(P) (Vacant Land).	**₹34,18,000/- / ₹3,41,800/- / SYMBOLIC / BKID0000147**
3.	**MAIN ROAD BRANCH, ROURKELA /** **Branch Head: Mr. Gagan Raj Thapa, 9178221168(M)** **Borrower: Mr. Amit Kumar Agrawal / Guarantor: Mrs. Asha Agrawal,** Both are the resident of At: Janta Niwas Lane, Plant Site, Rourkela, Dist.: Sundargarh, PIN-769001 / **Total Dues: ₹63,57,000.00** as on **02.05.2025** plus further interest, costs and incidental expenses.	All that part & parcel of the property situated at Mouza: Raiboga, Tehsil/SRO: Birmitrapur, Dist.: Sundergarh, Odisha, bearing Khata No.: 341/451, Plot No.: 1984, Area: Ac.0.120 dec., Kissam: Gharabari, recorded in the name of **Mrs. Asha Agrawal (Guarantor).** Bounded by- North: Road, South: Plot No. 1983/P (House of Hariram Agarwal), East: Plot No. 1985 (Land of Dhulichand Marwari), West: Road.	**₹27,54,000/- / ₹2,75,400/- / SYMBOLIC / BKID0000148**

Terms and conditions of E-auction: To the best of knowledge and information of the Authorized Officer, there is no encumbrance on the property/ies. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of property/ies put on auction and claims/ rights/ dues/ affecting the property, prior to submitting their bid. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment or any representation of the bank. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the bank. The Authorized Officer/ Secured Creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/ rights/ dues. It shall be the responsibility of the interested bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the property before submission of the bid. Particulars specified in the schedule above have been stated to the best of information of the Authorized Officer / Bank. Authorized Officer and / or Bank will not be answerable for any error, mis-statement or omission in this public notice. The auction will be online E-Auction Sale/Bidding and shall be done only through "Online Electronic Bidding" process through the website **https://baanknet.com**
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in **https://www.bankofindia.co.in/tenders**

Place: Sambalpur, Date: 19.01.2026 **Authorised Officer, Bank of India**

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No. ST-SBP-TENDER-2026-01, Dt: 13.01.2026

Name of the Work: TELECOM ZONAL WORK IN THE CONTROL SECTION UNDER JURISDICTION OF SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER/TELE/TITLAGARH, JUNIOR ENGINEER/TELE/KANTABANJI, SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER/TELE/MAHASAMUND & JUNIOR ENGINEER/TELE/MUNIGUDA OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION OF EAST COAST RAILWAY FOR A PERIOD OF TWELVE MONTHS.

Tender Value: ₹ 69,83,611.40, Bid Security: ₹ 1,39,700/-.

Tender closing date & time: at 1100 hrs. of 04.02.2026.

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website **www.ireps.gov.in**

Note: The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.

Divisional Railway Manager (S&T)/ Sambalpur

PR-1026/Q/25-26

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

For and on behalf of President of India, the Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer (Carriage Works), Kharagpur Workshop, South Eastern Railway, Kharagpur-721301 invites e-Tender for the following work: **E-Tender Notice No.: LHB Upgradtoilets-1500-R-1. Name of the work:** Up-gradation of toilets of AC/Non-AC LHB coaches (Quantity: 1500 LHB Coaches). **Place of work:** Kharagpur Workshop, South Eastern Railway, Post: Kharagpur, Dist.: Paschim Midnapore, Pin-721301. **Quantity:** 1500 LHB Coaches. **Tender Value:** ₹150,75,16,701.34. **Earnest Money:** ₹76,87,600. **Contract Period:** 48 months from the date of issue of LOA. **Closing Date and Time of Tender:** 25.03.2026 at 15.00 hrs. **Cost of Tender Document:** Nil. **Bidding System:** Two Packet System. **Are JV Allowed to bid:** Yes. **Pre-Bid Conference required:** Yes. **Pre-Bid Conference Date & Time:** 05.02.2026 at 11.00 hrs. **Contract Type:** Normal open works tender. **Tender Type:** Open. Detail Tender Notice and Tender Document is available in the e-portal website **https://www.ireps.gov.in.** (PR-1077)

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. 60-SBP-TRD-OT-2025-26, Date: 12.01.2026

Name of the Work: TRD RELATED WORK IN CONNECTION WITH THE WORK OF "(1) REPLACEMENT OF 05 NOS. OF STEEL GIRDER BRIDGES OF SPAN 12.20 MTR. BY PSC SLAB IN LAKHOLI-TITLAGARH SECTION (2) PROVISION OF LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY IN LIU OF LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-105 AT KM. 142/14-15 IN HARISHANKER ROAD-LAKHNA SECTION, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-28 AT KM. 41/0-1 IN ANMD-BELSONDA SECTION, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-141 AT KM. 186/11-12 IN MURIBAHAL-RAHENBATA, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-108 AT KM. 147/07-08 IN HARISHANKER ROAD-TUREKELA ROAD, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-137 AT KM. 183/5-6 IN KANTABANJI-MURIBAHAL SECTION, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-102 AT KM. 140/14-15 IN HARISHANKER ROAD-LAKHNA SECTION, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-67 AT KM. 99/5-6 IN KOMAKHAN-KHARIAR ROAD SECTION, LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-63 AT KM. 95/4-5 IN KOMAKHAN-KHARIAR ROAD SECTION (3) CONSTRUCTION OF ROAD UNDER BRIDGE/LIMITED HEIGHT SUBWAY IN LIU OF TRESS PASSING LOCATION AT CLOSED LEVEL CROSSING NO. RV-99 AT KM. 138/16-18 BETWEEN LAKHNA-HARISHANKER ROAD STATION IN LAKHOLI-TITLAGARH SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION."

Approx cost: ₹ 17,08,281.98, EMD: ₹34,200/-, Completion period: 12 months.

Tender closing date & time: at 1530 hrs. of 03.02.2026.

No manual offers sent by Post/Courier/Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website **www.ireps.gov.in**

The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III digital signature certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must have to be uploaded at the time of participating on e-tendering as per instruction.

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes/corrigenda issued for this tender.

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Sambalpur

PR-1022/Q/25-26

Be fearless and resolute, all obstacles will melt away before you.

THE MOTHER

Ignoble Nobel

The world has been shocked by the way the medal of this year's Nobel Peace Prize – one of the most valued and respected prizes on earth - was transferred from its rightful owner to an unauthorized person. The awardee – Opposition leader of Venezuela Maria Corina Machado – and the usurper of the medal – US President Donald Trump - have not covered themselves with glory for their unprecedented action that has virtually devalued the coveted prize itself. The prize has often been a subject of controversy primarily for the political overtone that the choice of the awardees at times get. All the same it never lost its lustre as the winners are mostly hailed as tireless champions of peace. However, Trump relentlessly kept expressing his desire to get the prize ever since he first took office in 2017. In fact, he has been so obsessed with the prize that he did not hide his deep sense of insecurity that President Barack Obama had won it in 2009 soon after occupying the post for, as the Nobel committee put it, his "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples." Trump of course disputed it and recently said Obama "didn't even know why he got it." On the contrary, he has been touting that he deserves it fully as he has stopped "eight wars." Whatever the worth of the claims, his violent action in grabbing and arresting Venezuela's democratically elected President Nicolas Maduro and his wife from their presidential residence, in what some say an illegal raid, and his constant threat to possess Greenland rather disqualify him from getting the prize.

The show in the Oval Office of Machado transferring the Nobel medal to Trump was the least that was expected of the two political leaders. One can understand Trump's injured pride for being ignored for the prize, but the motives of Machado appear to be far more abhorrent. She seems to be using the honour as a quid pro quo, a bargaining chip for her political ambition to capture power in her country. Her party overwhelmingly won the 2024 presidential election in Venezuela, yet Trump did not even bother to install her as President in place of Maduro. Instead, he has begun working with his deputy Delcy Rodriguez, the interim President, and the entire political establishment owing allegiance to the former President.

Machado's gifting plan is, at least for the moment, not paying the calculated dividends. As she and Trump were meeting, the CIA director, John Ratcliffe, was in Caracas meeting with Rodríguez who was part of the forces that barred Machado from running in the election. In other words, Trump has chosen to operate Venezuela through the very people Machado fought. The prize, however, was mainly given to mark the bravery of those who stood up to the forces that Trump finds no difficulty in working with. Rodriguez seems to be too eager to do his bidding and grant US companies access to the world's largest oil reserve. Such an arrangement helps the US to run Venezuela's affairs by remote control without turning Trump's home constituency hostile.

This is not a conjecture. It was made amply clear after Machado handed over the medal to Trump who did not indicate any shift in his posture on Machado leading Venezuela, while the White House said his earlier assessment on Rodriguez had not changed.

Whether pressure was mounted on Machado or whether she offered the medal on her own is still in the realm of speculation. What is not difficult to understand is that both Trump and Machado made a mockery of a coveted prize for personal gains. The question remains whether the US President's personal whims and caprices should be allowed to influence the country's foreign policy as the Nobel medal is virtually being used as bait by Machado to fulfil her own personal desire to rule the country sooner or later with Trump's help. This is bribing.

However, the Director of the Norwegian Nobel Institute Kristian Berg Harpviken has bluntly told the truth that "receiving the symbols of the Peace Prize does not make anyone a Peace Prize laureate." The shameful incident should make the committee choosing the winner of the prize far more cautious when it selects future awardees. This is the lesson it can learn from the Trump-Machado medal swap deal scandal.

WISDOM CORNER

The doctor sees all the weakness of mankind; the lawyer all the wickedness, the theologian all the stupidity.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

CARL JUNG

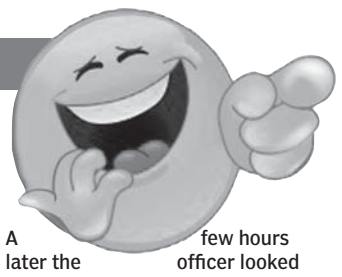
Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility.

SIGMUND FREUD

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- **1778:** During the reign of Kalani'ōpu'u, king of the island of Hawai'i, British explorer James Cook landed at Waimea, on Kauai island. Cook was the first European to visit what would become, in 1959, the U.S. state of Hawaii.
- **1934:** Fujifilm is founded. The Japanese photography and electronics company soon became a global player in its field.
- **1942:** Nazi officials meet to organize the extermination of Jews. During the Wannsee Conference in Berlin, the Nazis discussed what they called the "Final Solution to the Jewish question".
- **1945:** U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated for an unprecedented fourth term in office.
- **1961:** Inaugural address delivered by John F. Kennedy. On this day in 1961, U.S. Pres. John F. Kennedy delivered his inaugural address in front of nearly 1 million people. He was the youngest person to have been elected president, and his speech garnered praise from across the world. His address was also marked by the famous phrase, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."
- **1981:** The Iran hostage crisis ended when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini released 52 Americans who had been held hostage for 15 months.

LOL



GROOM IN LOCKUP

A police officer stopped a motorist who was speeding down Main Street.
"But officer," the man began, "I can explain."
"Just be quiet," snapped the officer. "I'm going to let you cool your heels in jail until the chief gets back."
"But, officer, I just wanted to say,"
"And I said to keep quiet! You're going to jail!"

A few hours later the officer looked in on his prisoner and said, "Lucky for you that the chief's at his daughter's wedding... He'll be in a good mood when he gets back."
"Don't count on it," answered the fellow in the cell. "I'm the groom."

FOCUS VENEZUELA

PETROSTATE DILEMMA

Terry Lynn Karl

GLOBAL OVERSUPPLY, LOW OIL PRICES, AND A SHORTAGE OF INVESTABLE CAPITAL MEAN THAT TRUMP'S APPROACH POSES AN EXISTENTIAL RISK TO ANY VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT

US President Donald Trump's ongoing efforts to control Venezuela's oil rest on the assumption that the US can successfully "run" a country twice the size of Iraq. Rather than projecting strength abroad, however, this military overreach reveals the growing vulnerability of a president whose once-firm grip on American politics is steadily weakening.

Against this backdrop, the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro signals the beginning of a shift toward a more militarized global energy market. It also lays bare the consequences of deliberately destabilizing an oil-dependent economy. Far from resolving Venezuela's ongoing crisis, Trump's actions threaten to make it far worse. Regime change in Venezuela is unlikely to end with a clear "Mission Accomplished" moment. Iraq alone required at least nine years of sustained US involvement that plunged the country into a civil war, claiming the lives of more than 100,000 Iraqi civilians and costing American taxpayers roughly $2 trillion – an expense the US can hardly afford today. This conflict would also unfold much closer to home, less than 965 km from Puerto Rico.

Trump's intervention raises two critical questions: Who will govern Venezuela? And who will benefit, at least in the short to medium term, from its oil wealth? In petrostates, these questions are inseparable, as the survival of their regimes – whether democratic or authoritarian – depends on their ability to capture profits generated by oil exports and distribute them to key constituencies. The current Venezuelan crisis sets several troubling foreign-policy precedents. Most notably, it is the first US military intervention to dispense entirely with humanitarian and security justifications in favor of an explicit resource grab.

It is also the first US military incursion into mainland South America. If past interventions in Central America and the Caribbean are any guide, it will likely result in the emergence of a criminal regime and new waves of mass migration. As with other resource-rich countries like Iraq, Libya, and Afghanistan, vast oil reserves will not protect Venezuela from a similar fate. Maduro's removal has left Venezuela with no good options. Its divided opposition may seek a power-sharing arrangement or elections, but a civilian government led by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate María Corina Machado is unlikely to survive for long.

Even during its earlier democratic period, Venezuela's oil sector was crippled by chronic inefficiencies

That is why the Trump administration may seek regime continuity through a negotiated settlement with the most powerful elements of the Chavismo coalition. Such an arrangement would leave the armed forces, security services, and civilian militias intact. Senior military officers, handsomely rewarded for preserving the status quo, would likely remain deeply embedded in key sectors such as construction, food distribution, and petroleum.

A second, more dangerous scenario is that Maduro's removal creates a power vacuum, fueling political and military fragmentation and triggering territorial struggles among competing armed groups and criminal organizations. A violent struggle over territory and illicit markets could transform Venezuela from a corruption-plagued but relatively stable country into a fractured battleground resembling contemporary Libya. With its jungles, mountains, dense urban centers, and porous borders, Venezuela is particularly well suited to guerrilla warfare.

Political fragmentation and prolonged fighting would turn the country into a center of regional instability, perhaps drawing the US into another "forever war" that air and naval forces would be unable to contain. And the allure of gaining control of Venezuela's oil reserves would probably keep more armed groups in the fight longer. These reserves – larger than Saudi Arabia's and more than five times those of the US – represent enormous potential, especially for a relatively small economy with a large and dispersed population. But the operative word is potential. Even during its earlier democratic period, Venezuela's oil sector was crippled by chronic inefficiencies. Since 1998, production has collapsed by 75%, owing to a toxic mix of low oil prices, US sanctions, corruption, and economic mismanagement.

Who, then, will benefit from what's left of Venezuela's oil industry? Trump has announced that Venezuela will transfer up to 50 million barrels of oil to the US, and that the revenues will remain under his personal control. He has also urged major US oil companies to enter – or re-enter – the country, promising to reimburse them for the billions of dollars required to repair its broken infrastructure. In his telling, these investments would allow Venezuela to return to major-exporter status within 18 months. But this timeline is pure fantasy, since rebuilding Venezuela's oil industry would require an estimated $100 billion in investment over a period of 7-10 years. As ExxonMobil CEO Darren Woods put it (much to Trump's chagrin), high levels of economic and legal uncertainty make the Venezuelan market effectively "uninvestable."

Herein lies the petrostate dilemma. Global oversupply, low oil prices, and a shortage of investable capital mean that Trump's approach poses an existential risk to any Venezuelan government. Even without Maduro, the Chavista coalition remains bound together by access to oil rents, criminal networks, patronage systems, the threat of repression, and the emigration of nearly eight million potential dissidents.

Given that Chavismo's ideological core is oil nationalism, Trump's rhetoric could unite Venezuelans against what is widely perceived as the plundering of their country's natural resources. That backlash is already evident, with Maduro's opponents and allies alike condemning the US. Venezuela's staggering social and economic collapse during Maduro's rule underscores the dangers of Trump's approach. Between 2013 and 2021, the country's economy shrank to one-quarter of its previous size; inflation is projected to exceed 680% in 2026; and 80% of the population lives in extreme poverty. Diverting Venezuelan oil revenues to the US would necessarily deprive any government of the funds needed to tackle this crisis.

Trump could, in theory, declare victory and abandon his quest to seize Venezuela's oil. Such an outcome is of course unlikely. Trump came for the oil, and he is determined to get it. But contrary to his expectations, Maduro's removal may push that goal further out of reach, destabilizing the region and accelerating Trump's own domestic decline.

The writer is Emeritus Professor of Latin American Studies & Political Science at Stanford University.

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SPECTRUM BANKING

Lower cost of capital to stimulate growth

Satish Singh

INCREASED BOND YIELDS HAVE RAISED BANKS' OPERATING COSTS, KEEPING INTEREST RATES HIGH ON HOME AND AUTO LOANS

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is buying government bonds to reduce banks' borrowing costs and encourage economic growth. State and Central governments issue government bonds to raise funds for various projects and welfare initiatives, offering investors a fixed interest rate over the bond's term. This approach helps the government finance essential programmes that promote development.

Since April 2025, the RBI has invested over Rs 5 lakh crore in bonds via Open Market Operations (OMO) to boost liquidity and lower lending rates. However, rising bond yields pose a challenge, as higher yields reduce the likelihood of rate cuts and hinder credit flows. Recent data reveal a 0.57% increase in 3-month government bond yields and a 0.80% rise in 10-year yields, with an average of only 6.7% in 2025, the lowest in three years. As yields climb, the expected reduction in borrowing costs remains unlikely.

Increased bond yields have raised banks' operating costs, keeping interest rates high on loans such as home and auto loans, which negatively affects consumer spending and economic growth. In response, the RBI is considering further bond purchases to improve financial conditions. Additionally, rising gold and silver prices, along with geopolitical uncertainties and policies from international leaders such as President Trump, have led to foreign investors withdrawing capital, increasing pressure on RBI to provide additional liquidity.

OMO plays a crucial role in liquidity management. When market strains arise, RBI injects liquidity by acquiring government bonds, providing banks with capital to extend credit to businesses and individuals. Given global uncertainties and declining foreign investments, experts predict RBI may need to purchase bonds worth over Rs 2 lakh crore by March 2026. Since April 2024, the RBI has infused Rs 7.7 lakh crore into the banking system through OMOs and lowered the repo rate by 1.25% to support liquidity.

On the other hand, state governments are persistently borrowing from the market, exerting additional pressure on overall liquidity. To tackle this escalating situation, the RBI has scaled back state borrowing plans by Rs 10,000 crore, even as states aim to borrow an ambitious Rs 5 lakh crore by March 2026. It is crucial to understand that a persistent influx of bonds can drain market liquidity. Excessive government borrowing reduces market liquidity, complicates banks' lending, and raises loan interest rates.

Banks are currently facing a capital availability crisis for several reasons. Low deposit interest rates have made them less appealing to investors, and recent tax changes on deposits have discouraged savers. Furthermore, attractive stock market and mutual fund opportunities are drawing investors away from traditional savings. Bank staff selling insurance products has also led customers to use deposits for payments, further reducing available funds.

There has been a noticeable gap between the growth rates of bank deposits and loan issuance, with deposits lagging loans, creating a shortage of affordable capital for banks. As of December 12, deposit growth has slowed to 9.7% year-on-year, while loan growth has increased to 11.7%, creating a 200 bps gap between them. According to RBI, total loans disbursed by banks reached Rs 196.5 lakh crore, up from Rs 175.86 lakh crore a year earlier, marking a rise of Rs 1.2 lakh crore in just two weeks. Total deposits rose to Rs 242.14 lakh crore from Rs 220.06 lakh crore a year prior, although they fell by Rs 45,344 crore in the same fortnight. For comparison, in the fortnight ending November 28, loans grew at 11.5% and deposits at 10.2%.

In light of these trends, to stimulate economic activity, raise growth rates, and realise India's aspiration to become a developed nation by 2047, both the government and the RBI must facilitate the provision of capital at more affordable interest rates. Additionally, banks must innovate and develop new strategies to attract deposits by offering lower interest rates, thus securing a more cost-effective source of capital.

The writer is a Mumbai-based senior banker and columnist.

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

OrissaPOST
B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Hope & resilience

Sir, It is great news that Australian cricketer Damien Martyn, who fell in an induced coma on Boxing Day in December last year due to meningitis, an inflammation of the protective membranes around the brain and spinal cord, has miraculously pulled through and is back home now. Martyn's hospitalisation highlighted the serious nature of Meningitis, a condition that can have severe health implications. His hospitalisation deeply resonated with fans and fellow players alike, sparking an outpouring of goodwill and support as he battled a life-threatening illness. His recovery serves as a powerful reminder of the fragility of health and the importance of community support during difficult times. It has drawn significant attention to meningitis, raising awareness about its risks and the urgent need for medical intervention. Martyn's story inspires hope and highlights the resilience of athletes facing adversity.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Lifestyle disease

Sir, The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies obesity as a major global public health challenge driven by lifestyle changes, industrialised food systems, and reduced physical activity. By 2022, one in eight people worldwide was living with obesity. Since 1990, obesity has doubled among adults and increased fourfold among children and adolescents. In 2022, about 2.5 billion adults were overweight, nearly 890 million of them obese, and by 2024 millions of children, including those under five, were also affected. WHO defines overweight as excess body fat and obesity as a chronic, relapsing disease caused by complex interactions of genetic, biological, behavioural, environmental, and market-related factors. Body Mass Index (BMI) is used to classify overweight (BMI ≥25) and obesity (BMI ≥30) in adults, while age- and sex-specific growth standards apply to children. Today, over one billion people live with obesity, with rapid increases in low- and middle-income countries, creating a double burden of undernutrition and obesity. Obesity greatly increases the risk of non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers, and childhood obesity raises the likelihood of early and severe health problems, including mental health impacts. Obesity, the WHO emphasises, is a shared societal challenge requiring collective action.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

RAHUL ACCUSES BJP OF CENTRALISING POWER

The Congress leader hails Cong-UDF civic poll performance in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kochi, Jan 19: Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Monday accused the RSS and the BJP of attempting to centralise power, while asserting that his party believes in decentralisation and strengthening grassroots democracy.

Speaking at a Mahapanchayat of newly elected Congress local body members here, he said the grand old party brought the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments to empower the three-tier Panchayati Raj system.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha also alleged that the NDA government was "attacking" the MGNREGA because it was implemented through local self-government institutions.

He stressed that protecting the Constitution also meant protecting decentralised governance at the grassroots level.

The basic principle of democracy was that votes are the voice of citizens and that this voice must be protected, he added.

Drawing a contrast, Gandhi said the BJP and RSS stood for centralisation, while the Congress stood for decentralisation. "They want compliance from people for India, not the voice of the people of India," he said.

Referring to his interaction with veteran Malayalam writer M Leelavathy at an award function, Gandhi said the 98-year-old author talked about "culture of silence".

Accusing the BJP and RSS, he alleged that their ideological attack was aimed at enforcing silence.

"They want India to be silent. They do not want India to express itself. They want to deliver the wealth of this country to a few business houses," he said, adding that silencing people was necessary to concentrate the nation's assets in the hands of a select few.

However, Gandhi asserted with certainty that the people of Kerala could not be silenced and would speak out through elections.

He also congratulated Congress workers and the United Democratic Front (UDF) for what he described as a strong performance in the local body elections in Kerala, especially at the panchayat level, the third tier of democracy.

He said the Congress and UDF delivered a superb performance at all levels of local self-government and expressed happiness over the results in panchayats.

Gandhi said that while there were differences of opinion among senior leaders during discussions in Delhi, he was confident that the Congress would win the local body and Assembly elections.

He added that the bigger question before the Congress and UDF leadership was what they would do after winning.

"There is a huge unemployment problem in the state, and the UDF and Congress have to provide answers to it," he said, expressing confidence that the leadership had the ability to understand people's needs and deliver.

Gandhi said that for any government to succeed, it must be close to the people and merge with them.

He said he was confident that the Congress and UDF leadership would remain humble and connected to the masses.

Calling the present phase an ideological and political battle, Gandhi said it was an honour for him to serve as a Member of Parliament from Kerala earlier.

He said he had learnt a great deal from the state, including its history, traditions, language and political depth, and above all, its ability to stand together despite diversity.

He said he felt pain at seeing thousands of Keralites go abroad due to unemployment, even as he felt pride at seeing professionals, including nurses, from the state working across the world.

"We need to free people so that what they do abroad can also be done here," he said.

Recalling his sister Priyanka Gandhi's decision to contest from Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, Gandhi said he had advised his sister that it was an emotional choice, adding that she has since learnt new things from Kerala's society and political culture.

Kerala Minister of Higher Education R. Bindu interacts with specially abled students during a film and arts festival, in Thiruvananthapuram, Monday PTI PHOTO

TN CM lays foundation stone for Mamallan reservoir project

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 19: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Monday laid the foundation stone for the Rs 342.60 crore Mamallan reservoir project near Nemeli aimed at augmenting the drinking water resources for Chennai.

This will be the sixth dam for the city, which depends on Poondi, Cholavaram, Puzhal (Red Hills), Chembarambakkam, and Kannankottai-Thervoy Kandigai.

In addition, the Veeranam lake and a few desalination plants, too, meet the requirement. "The reservoir is named after Narasimhavarman I, the Pallava emperor (who ruled from 630 - 668) as it is located in Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram). This project is part of the DMK's consistent efforts to improve the water resources for Chennai and other parts in Tamil Nadu," the CM said after flagging off the work to commence the construction.

The project has been planned taking into account the ever-expanding boundaries of Chennai and will be etched in history, he remarked. "Some criticise that we have not contributed much. Former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi has done a lot to improve the water resources in the state. Till 2011, the DMK built 43 dams across the state during its rule in the state," Stalin said.

Apart from opening the Mettur dam on time to facilitate agricultural activities, the DMK government has ensured the desilting of the water bodies in the Cauvery delta region to the tune of Rs 459 crore and built 121 check dams.

On the Mamallan reservoir, the Chief Minister said the surplus water from 69 lakes that would invariably drain into the sea will be impounded. The dam will meet the drinking water needs of 13 lakh people in areas such as Sholinganallur, Medavakkam, Pallikaranai, Siruseri, Kelambakkam, Thiruporur, and Mamallapuram that have become part of Chennai City.

It would provide 120 million litres of water per day and in addition, ensure potable water to the suburbs, he added.

The Mamallan reservoir, located in the Kovalam sub-basin between Kelambakkam and Mamallapuram in neighbouring Chengalpattu district, aims to store the surplus floodwater which currently empties into the sea, and addresses the shortfall for drinking water in Chennai, state Water Resources Department Secretary J Jayakathan said.

"This project will ensure 17 crore litres of water per day to Chennai and 6,605 crore litres per year and it is spread across 5,161 acres of land," he said.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
KHURDA IRRIGATION DIVISION, KHURDA
e mail- eekhurdairrigationdivision@gmail.com

NOTICE

No.A-1301 : It is notified that tender invited for the work "Improvement to Saradhapur gherry on Rajua right embankment near village Saradhapur (SL No-03) vide "e" procurement Notice No-04(KHD) 2025-26 dated 01.12.2025 is hereby cancelled as per DTCN clause No.26 due to administrative ground and unavoidable circumstances.

OIPR-
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Khurda Irrigation Division, Khurda

RENEWABLE PUSH

TN 'Green School Scheme' can offset 91% power demand: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 19: The Tamil Nadu government's 'Green School Scheme' could potentially offset nearly 91 per cent of the total electricity consumption of the state's government educational and hospital institutions if scaled to all 45,000 government schools, according to an official impact study released here Monday.

The state government launched the Climate Education and Cool Roof initiatives in 300 green schools in Tamil Nadu. Finance and Environment Minister Thangam Thennarasu and Minister for School Education Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi inaugurated the initiative Monday.

According to the impact study prepared in collaboration with the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), rooftop solar installations have already reduced grid electricity consumption by approximately 46 per cent per school. On average, each green school saves about 3,572 kWh annually, translating to fiscal savings of approximately Rs 26,000 per school per year.

"Extending the green school energy savings to all 45,000 government schools in Tamil Nadu will result in annual reduction in electricity use would be equivalent to roughly 91% of the current annual consumption of all government and aided educational institutions and hospitals in the state," the study found.

"While indicative, this comparison highlights the transformative potential of school-based rooftop solar and efficiency measures. At this scale, the aggregate monetary savings could reasonably be expected to offset, over time, a substantial share of the capital investment required for solar installations and associated infrastructure," report of the study said.

Green School Scheme prioritises student health by addressing extreme heat, which Tamil Nadu has formally recognised as a state-specific disaster. Officials noted that classrooms with concrete roofs often reach temperatures of 38°C, causing a significant "cognitive drop" where exam pass rates can fall by 10 per cent when thresholds exceed 32°C.

The "Cool Roof" initiative, piloted in Ambattur, uses high-reflective coatings to reduce indoor temperatures by 3°C and ceiling surface temperatures by 4°C. "Thermal comfort goes beyond cooling; it plays a critical role in supporting students' attention and learning outcomes," a government publication stated.

The scheme also proposes a holistic climate action with smart water management by installing rainwater harvesting structures (initiated in 79 per cent of evaluated schools) and drip irrigation (57per cent) and waste management by implementing source segregation and vermicomposting to process organic waste into manure for school gardens.

Climate literacy is also part of the scheme and so far 4,000 teachers across all 38 districts have been trained as volunteer "Climate Ambassadors" to lead student nature camps and environmental audits.

The initiative is supported by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under the BeCool Project, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). UNEP Country Head Balakrishna Pisupati described the effort as a national benchmark for sustainable educational spaces.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.A-1286
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES,
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, NUAPADA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NUAPADA
e-Procurement Notice No-(NID)04/2025-26
e-mail address : ee.npd.irr@gmail.com
PERCENTAGE RATE e-TENDER

1. The Superintending Engineer, Nuapada Irrigation Division, Nuapada, Dist-Nuapada, Pin-766105. Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites **"PERCENTAGE RATE BIDS" IN SINGLE COVER SYSTEM**, in electronic tendering system for the construction works detailed in the table below, which are eventually to be drawn on P1 agreement.

Package No	BID ID No. (NID) 25/2025-26 to BID ID NO. (NID) 29/2025-26
Nature of Work	05 (Five) No.s of Canal Works
Approximate value of work	Rs.12.62 lakhs to 20.01 lakhs (Excluding GST)
Period of Completion	02 (Two) Calendar Months
Classification of Bidder	'D', 'C' & 'B' class Contractor only
Bid documents available Date and Time	From 21.01.2026 10.00 A.M. to 30.01.2026 upto 5.30 P.M.
Bid clarification start date & Closing date	From 21.01.2026 10.00 A.M. to 30.01.2026 up to 5.30 P.M.
Date, Time and Venue of opening of Technical & Financial bid online	31.01.2026 at 10.00 A.M. in office of the Superintending Engineer, Nuapada Irrigation Division, Nuapada
If stipulation arises the Tender will be decided through Lottery System	04.02.2026 at 10.00 A.M. in office of the Superintending Engineer, Nuapada Irrigation Division, Nuapada

Further details can be seen, any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation to the above notice will be published in the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in only.

OIPR-
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Nuapada Irrigation Division, Nuapada

Kerala Assembly budget session set to be stormy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 19: The budget session of the Kerala Assembly, beginning Tuesday, is expected to be a stormy affair, with the ruling LDF and opposition UDF poised for intense confrontations over a host of politically sensitive issues ranging from the Sabarimala gold loss case to the arrest of expelled Congress MLA Rahul Mamkootathil.

The 32-day-long session, scheduled to conclude March 26, is the 16th session of the 15th Kerala Assembly and will begin with the governor's policy statement.

With the assembly polls just months away, the Congress-led UDF is expected to capitalise on its performance in the recent local body by-elections to target the Left government.

Another major flashpoint in the House could be the arrest of senior CPI (M) leaders, including former MLA and president of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), A Padmakumar, in the sensational Sabarimala gold loss case.

CISF cyclothon 2026 to halt overnight in villages to enhance public engagement

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 19: This year, CISF's 'Vande Mataram Coastal Cyclothon 2026' will halt overnight in select villages to deepen the interaction with the public about national security and blue economy, said officials.

The second edition of the flagship event of CISF, aimed at boosting coastal security awareness and national unity, will be flagged off virtually by Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai from Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi January 28.

Speaking to reporters here, S R Saravanan, Inspector General, CISF South Sector HQ Chennai, said the cyclists are expected to reach Chennai from Bakkhali in West Bengal February 12 -13.

"In Tamil Nadu, we are starting from Chennai, where we will stay overnight in two villages and then we move on to Puthucherry and Karaikal.

We will then go to one village each in Adirampattinam, Ramanathapuram, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari," added Saravanan.

Covering 6,553 km along India's mainland coastline over 25 days, the event themed 'Surakshit Tat, Samriddh Bharat' (Secure Coast, Prosperous India) involves two teams of 130 CISF personnel, including 65 women, starting simultaneously from Lakhpat Fort in Gujarat's Kutch and Bakkhali in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas.

The teams will converge in Kochi, Kerala February 22 after passing key ports like Haldia, Paradip, Visakhapatnam, Chennai, and Kanyakumari, with nightly halts at over 50 coastal villages to engage fisherfolk on threats like narcotics, arms smuggling and human trafficking.

Saravanan told PTI the initiative builds on last year's success, when a similar ride from Thakkolam to Kanyakumari covered 52 villages across Tamil Nadu and neighbouring areas, reaching 9 crore people digitally and 30 lakh personally.

Of the 130 CISF personnel participating, which include seven from Tamil Nadu, 50-60 per cent cyclists are women to motivate female recruitment, added Saravanan.

According to him, the cyclothon seeks to position coastal communities as "Tat Pari Praharis" (sentinels), first responders to incidents ahead of marine police or Coast Guard, informing nearest stations about suspicious activities to protect future generations.

CISF guards 12 major ports including Chennai, Ennore, Tuticorin under ISPS code, expanding to all 72 EXIM ports handling 95 per cent trade amid threats like smuggling and infiltration.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.A-1287
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER NIMAPARA IRRIGATION DIVISION, NIMAPARA
Notice Invitation of Tenders
e-Procurement Notice No.-08/2025-26 on dated 16.01.2026
E-mail Id : eenidnimapara@gmail.com

1. Type of Work : Canal, Bridge & River Embankment & Building Works.
2. Total No. of Work : 21 (Twenty One) Nos.
3. Bid Security (EMD) in Rupees : Refer to DTCN
4. Cost of Bids in Rupees : Rs.4,000/- to Rs.6,000/-
5. Class of Contractors : "B", "C" & "D" Class
6. Period of Completion : Refer to DTCN

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount in Lakh Rs.	Availability & Submission of Bids online
Superintending Engineer, Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara	NID-204/2025-26 to NID-224/2025-26	Rs.8.53 to Rs.49.66	From 22.01.2026 11.00 A.M. to 05.02.2026 5.30 P.M.

Date of opening of the Bid : **06.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.**
Further details can be seen from the Govt. Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

OIPR-
Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Nimapara Irrigation Division, Nimapara

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER KHORDHA (R&B) CIRCLE, KHORDHA
No.126 Dt : 16.01.2026
2nd Corrigendum EOI Identification No. CCE-Khordha (R&B) Circle-01/2025-26
Expression of Interest

No.B-1006 : The following changes are made to EOI identification No.CCEKC-01/2025-26 vide No.2937 dt 12.12.2025.

1) Letter of Invitation of the Authority along with all other relevant details of Expression of Interest (EOI) will be available in the website: www.tendersodisha.gov.in from 10:30 A.M of 22.01.2026 to 4:00 P.M of 19.02.2026. Further details with any addendum, corrigendum and cancellation can be seen from www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
2) Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be received only "On-line" latest by 4:00 P.M. on 19.02.2026.
3) Proposals received "On-line" shall be opened at 11:00 A.M. on 20.02.2026 in the Office of the Chief Construction Engineer, Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha in the presence of bidders who wish to attend. Bidders who participated in the bid can witness the opening of bids after logging on the site through their DSC
4) If the office happens to be closed on the stipulated date of opening of Bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

All other terms & conditions remained unchanged

OIPR-
Sd./- Chief Construction Engineer
Khordha (R&B) Circle, Khordha

national

I am happy that the Chalukya Utsava, reflecting Badami's glorious past, is being organised in line with the Budget announcement

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

OMAR CALLS ON SHAH

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah called on Union Home Minister Amit Shah Monday and the two leaders discussed various issues related to the Union territory. No details of the meeting were available

Quote of the day

I did not speak against anyone anywhere, nor can I speak against anyone. I have always respected all religions

CHARANJIT SINGH CHANNI | FORMER PUNJAB CM

At the outset, I state with utmost clarity and sincerity that I have never made any derogatory remark against Sikh Gurus, either in the House 6th January 2026, or at any other point of time in my life. I categorically deny the allegation in its entirety

ATISHI | THE LEADER OF OPPN IN THE DELHI ASSEMBLY

The Congress is incapable of doing anything because the party's people get government contracts

ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP CHIEF

SHORT TAKES

Rahul on two-day visit to Raebareli

Lucknow/Raebareli (UP): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi arrived in Raebareli, his parliamentary constituency, on a two-day visit Monday, a party official said. The leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha landed at Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport in Lucknow, where he was welcomed by Congress workers. Carrying Congress flags, the workers ran after Gandhi's vehicle and raised slogans as he left for Raebareli, over 80 km from the state capital. Gandhi will spend the night at the Bhuyemau guest house. He will meet party officials and public representatives Tuesday morning.

Four killed as pick-up vehicle collides with bus

Nashik: Four people were killed, and two suffered injuries after a pick-up vehicle collided with a luxury bus in Maharashtra's Nashik district in the wee hours of Monday, police said. The accident occurred near Varhane village on the Manmad-Malegaon Road in Malegaon taluka around 1.30 am when the bus was heading towards Malegaon, an official said. A pick-up vehicle coming from the opposite direction collided with the bus, he said. The official said that the impact killed three people in the pick-up vehicle and a man who was travelling in the driver's cabin of the bus.

Minor 'raped', murdered

Latehar: An 11-year-old girl was allegedly raped and murdered by her neighbour in Jharkhand's Latehar district, police said Monday. The minor's body was found on a road in Chipadohar police station area in the morning, they said. "The father of the girl and locals informed police, following which a team rushed to the spot and recovered the body," Chipadohar police station officer-in-charge Yakin Ansari said.

Six arrested over firing during clash

Ranchi: Six people were arrested in connection with firing during a clash over a land-related dispute in Jharkhand's Ranchi, police said Monday. Three persons, including two brothers, suffered bullet injuries during the violent clash near Piska More Saturday night over the division of ₹55 lakh in a land deal.

Unnao rape: Delhi HC jolt for Sengar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

- Sengar's sentence was suspended by the high court December 23, 2025, till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case
- The suspension was stayed by the Supreme Court December 29, 2025

New Delhi, Jan 19: The Delhi High Court Monday refused to suspend the 10-year jail term of expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar in the custodial death case of the Unnao rape survivor's father on the grounds of delay in trial, saying it was partly caused by the multiple applications he had filed in the matter.

"The application seeking suspension of sentence is dismissed," said Justice Ravinder Dudeja. The judge observed that while Sengar has undergone prolonged incarceration of about seven-and-a-half years, relief could not be granted on the ground of delay alone, as the appellant had repeatedly moved applications for interim suspension, extension of bail and regular suspension of sentence.

Noting that Sengar was awarded the maximum sentence of 10 years in the case, Justice Dudeja remarked that the offence committed was of "grave magnitude", having a "deep societal impact".

"Purpose would be served if the appeal were heard on merit in an expeditious manner," Justice Dudeja said.

"In the facts and circumstances and after considering the statutory framework, the judicial principles governing suspension, the antecedents of the appellant and the absence of any new circumstance that has emerged, the court finds no ground to grant relief," the court opined. The court listed the appeal for hearing February 3.

Talking to PTI over the phone from Delhi, the rape survivor expressed satisfaction with the court's verdict, saying the decision had brought her a sense of solace.

"I am very happy with the court's decision. Today, my father's soul has found some peace. I have not even performed my father's thirteenth-day rituals yet. Until his killers are sentenced to death, his soul will not find true peace," she said.

Reiterating her resolve to fight for justice, she said those responsible for her sexual assault and her father's death must face the strictest punishment.

"Kuldeep Singh Sengar, his brother Atul Singh Sengar, and everyone involved in this conspiracy must be awarded the death penalty," she said.

"This is not just my battle... it is a fight for justice and truth, and I will continue it till my last breath," she added. On March 13, 2020, Sengar was sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment by a trial court, besides imposition of a fine of ₹10 lakh, in the case.

Seeking suspension of the sentence, Sengar's counsel submitted before the high court that he had been in custody since April 13, 2018, and spent more than half of his sentence in jail.

A seagull perches on a woman's hand near the causeway of the Tapi river, in Surat, Gujarat

PTI PHOTO

J&K: Paratrooper succumbs to injuries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 19: A paratrooper, who was critically injured in gunfight with terrorists, succumbed to his injuries Monday, while the ongoing search operation uncovered a suspected terror hideout packed with rations for winter in Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, officials said. The operation was launched in Sonnar village near Mandral-Singhpora in the Chatroo belt Sunday, where an encounter broke out between the forces and terrorists in which eight soldiers sustained injured, primarily due to splinter from a sudden grenade attack.

The operation was suspended late Sunday night and resumed early Monday in the challenging terrain with thick vegetation and steep slopes, limiting visibility and movement, officials said.

In a post on X, the White Knight Corps said 'Operation Trashi-I' continues in Chatroo.

TECHIE'S DEATH

CM orders SIT probe, Noida Authority CEO removed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow/Noida, Jan 19: The Uttar Pradesh government Monday removed the Noida Authority CEO and ordered an SIT probe into the death of the software engineer whose car plunged into a water-filled pit at an under-construction site in Noida's Sector 150, triggering widespread outrage, protests and allegations of official and developer negligence.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took cognisance of the incident and directed the constitution of a high-level Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate the circumstances leading to the fatal accident and submit a report within five days. Adityanath has also ordered the immediate identification and rectification of accident-prone spots across Uttar Pradesh, officials said Monday. Shortly after, the state government shunted out Lokesh M, a 2005-batch senior IAS officer, from the post of Noida Authority CEO and placed him on a waitlist, according to an official order.

Lokesh M, who had assumed charge as Noida Authority CEO in July 2023 after replacing Ritu Maheshwari, also served as the de facto managing director of the Noida Metro Rail Corporation (NMRC). A qualified dentist from Karnataka, he had earlier served as divisional commissioner in Kanpur and Saharanpur.

Only a day earlier amid mounting criticism, Lokesh M ordered the termination of a junior engineer and issued show-cause notices to other officials responsible for traffic-related works in Sector 150. In an official statement, the Authority removed junior engineer Naveen Kumar of the Noida Traffic Cell from service and sought detailed reports on the allotment and construction activities of the developer, Lotus Greens. The now-removed CEO also directed all departments to re-inspect safety measures at ongoing construction sites to prevent recurrence of such incidents. A UP Irrigation Department letter to the Noida Authority in 2023 that flagged the need to construct head regulators to flush out accumulated rain and drain water in Sector 150 has been accessed by PTI. A Noida Authority official said he was not aware of the letter. On the chief minister's directions, a three-member SIT headed by Additional Director General (ADG), Meerut Zone, Bhanu Bhasker, has been constituted. Meerut Divisional Commissioner Hrishikesh Bhaskar and Public Works Department Chief Engineer Ajay Verma are members of the panel.

- The post-mortem examination conducted Monday revealed that Mehta died due to asphyxia followed by cardiac arrest, police said
- The report noted that his nose was blocked with mud and water, indicating drowning
- The incident has sparked allegations of negligence, inadequate safety arrangements and delays in rescue efforts

SC: Exorbitant airfares during fests exploitation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: The Supreme Court Monday termed the exorbitant rise in airfares by airlines during festivals as 'exploitation' and said it would interfere with these 'unpredictable fluctuations'.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta asked the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to file their replies to a PIL seeking binding regulatory guidelines to control the unpredictable fluctuations in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

"We will definitely interfere. Just see the exploitation of passengers done during the 'Kumbh' and other festivals. Just look at the fares to Prayagraj and Jodhpur from Delhi," the bench told Additional Solicitor General Anil Kaushik appearing for the Centre.

Justice Mehta, in a lighter vein, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was in the courtroom, that maybe airfares for Ahmedabad may not have increased but they have shot up for other destinations like Jodhpur.

The SC listed the matter for further hearing February 23 after Kaushik sought time to file a reply on behalf of the Centre. On November 17 last year, the SC sought responses from the Centre and others on a plea by social activist S Laxminarayanan, who has sought to establish a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

It has issued notices to the Centre, the DGCA and the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India seeking their responses on the plea.

KARUR STAMPEDE CASE

CBI questions Vijay for over six hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: The CBI questioned TVK chief and actor Vijay for over six hours at its headquarters here for the second time in connection with the Karur stampede case, officials said.

A visibly relaxed Vijay came out of the CBI headquarters in his luxury SUV after questioning was completed at around 5 PM, got down and waved at his supporters and media, before leaving for the five-star hotel where he was staying. The actor-turned politician was earlier quizzed by the CBI January 12. He was asked to come again January 13, but the actor sought another date due to Pongal, after which the agency summoned him Monday, they said. Dressed in a casual shirt, the actor arrived at the heavily barricaded agency headquarters on Lodhi Road with a fleet of luxury SUVs at around 10:20 am, they said.

"Lots of rumours are being spread around which are not true. We all know what happened in Karur...When last time the Home Minister was in Tamil Nadu, the state president of the BJP, Nainar Nagenthran, had openly mentioned that Senthil Balaji who is sitting MLA from Karur was responsible for the death of 41 people and you who needs to be summoned and enquired," TVK Joint General Secretary C T Nirmal Kumar told reporters outside the CBI headquarters after Vijay's questioning ended.

Indore leprosy-afflicted beggar owns houses, vehicles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Indore, Jan 19: Three houses, three autorickshaws and a chauffeur-driven car. One would think these belonged to a jeweller from Indore's Sarafa Bazaar, not a leprosy-afflicted man, who moves around inconspicuously on a wheeled board, seeking alms, but silently lending lakhs in the famed bullion market.

Officials in Indore were left stunned recently when an anti-beggary drive led them to a 50-year-old man who has reportedly amassed property worth several lakh rupees by seeking alms.

The man has lent money in the famous bullion market here and earns handsome daily interest from this business, an official said.

A leprosy patient, rescued from the Sarafa area based on information from the public, has become the talk of the city, said Dinesh Mishra, an official from the Women and Child Development Department, who is the nodal officer for the campaign to eradicate begging.

"We have learned that this man owns three concrete houses, including a three-story building. Besides this, he also owns three autorickshaws that he rents out. He also owns a car in which he goes begging. He has even hired a driver for this purpose. He begs while moving about on a wheeled board," Mishra said.

Elaborating further on the 'riches in rags' story, the official said that the man, who has been begging since 2021, had lent ₹4-5 lakh to people in the bullion market here and charges interest that nets him between ₹1,000-1,200 per day.

In addition, he receives ₹400 to ₹500 daily in alms, the official said, adding the man was presently lodged in a shelter home. District Magistrate Shivam Verma said that Indore is a "beggar-free city" and such campaigns to rehabilitate those seeking alms in public are undertaken after information of such activities is received from the public. The administration has received preliminary information about the man's assets, and appropriate legal action will be taken after all facts are verified, Verma added.

However, Rupali Jain, president of Pravesh, an NGO working to eradicate beggary, said the case of this leprosy-afflicted man should be viewed from a humanitarian perspective, claiming he did not amass his alleged wealth of millions of rupees by begging.

She explained that the man used to work as a mason a few years ago, but was unable to continue after suffering severe damage to his fingers and feet due to leprosy.

Facing social and family discrimination, he began begging at night near the famous Chaat Chowpatty in the Sarafa area, she said.

The Indore administration has imposed a legal ban on begging, giving alms, and even purchasing goods from them to make the city, already feted as the country's cleanest for the past decade, beggar-free.

RICHES IN RAGS

Officials in Indore were left stunned recently when an anti-beggary drive led them to a 50-year-old man who has reportedly amassed property worth several lakh rupees by seeking alms

The man has lent money in the famous bullion market here and earns handsome daily interest from this business

national

We come from different political parties and ideologies, but when we are elected, people expect us to raise in the House their aspirations, challenges and difficulties

OM BIRLA | LS SPEAKER

'CENTRE TO SOON LAUNCH COASTAL VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME'

The Union government is expected to soon roll out a "coastal vibrant villages" programme to engage with the local communities living along India's nearly 6,500-km long coastline, a senior officer said Monday

Quote of the day

During the upcoming parliament session too, we will raise the issue. The fight against this (repealing of MGNREGA) is underway everywhere in every district. In Karnataka, protests are also planned. The fight on this issue is a continuous programme

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | AICC PRESIDENT

It is requested to trace him in Iran and arrange to send him back to India at the earliest as a special case

N RANGASAMY | PONDICHERRY CM

On NDRF Raising Day, we honour the brave men and women who stand as the nation's first responders during disasters. Their dedication, discipline, and compassion inspire confidence and hope

PEMA KHANDU | ARUNACHAL CM

X POST OF THE DAY

AQI is 1000+, Water is contaminated with sewage, Fake medicines, Fake food, Potholes..

In such a country, government has no right to collect taxes.
There should be ZERO income tax for salaried class.
This should be the only demand from taxpayers.
Nothing less. Nothing more.

@talk2anuradha

SHORT TAKES

YSRCP stages protest at Andhra DGP office

Amaravati: The YSRCP leaders Monday staged a protest in front of the Andhra Pradesh DGP office after police allegedly denied them permission to submit a complaint over the alleged murder of a Dalit activist. YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had accused the TDP leaders of hitting party cadre Manda Salman with iron rods and killing him when he went to visit his ailing wife recently.

Man held in ₹13K-cr drug trafficking case

New Delhi: The Special Cell of the Delhi Police has arrested a key accused from Sikkim in connection with a massive Rs 13,000 crore international narcotics smuggling case linked to the seizure of a massive consignment of cocaine, mephedrone and Thai marijuana, an official said Monday. The accused, Tilak Prasad Sharma (35), a resident of East Pendam in Sikkim, was apprehended after a sustained inter-state operation following the execution of a non-bailable warrant issued against him by a Delhi court, police said.

9 Maoists surrender

Gariaband (Chhattisgarh): Nine Naxalites carrying a cumulative reward of Rs 45 lakh surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district Monday, a police official said, in continuous trend of rebels laying down arms ahead of the Centre's deadline to eradicate Left-wing extremism. The surrendered cadres, including six women, belonged to Sinapali and SDK (Sonabeda-Dharambandha-Kholibatar area committees of Naxals and they turned themselves in before senior police officials here citing disillusionment with the "hollow" Maoist ideology and hardships of forest life, Inspector General of Police, Raipur Range, Amresh Mishra said.

INDIA, UAE DEEPEN TIES

Under the defence partnership, India and the UAE are eyeing defence industrial collaboration and cooperation in advanced technologies, cyberspace training, special operations, interoperability of their militaries and counter terrorism

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: India and the United Arab Emirates Monday unveiled plans to have a strategic defence partnership and sealed an LNG deal as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan set a $200 billion annual trade target by 2032 while laying out a broad agenda to shore up the ties.

Modi welcomed Al Nahyan at the Delhi airport with a hug and then they travelled together in the same vehicle to the prime minister's residence, where they held talks in the restricted as well as delegation-level formats.

Out of the five documents inked by the two sides, the most striking one was the letter of intent to establish a strategic defence partnership, a move that came four months after Pakistan and Saudi Arabia sealed a defence pact to strengthen their decades-long defence ties.

Under the defence partnership, India and the UAE are eyeing defence industrial collaboration and cooperation in advanced technologies, cyberspace training, special operations, interoperability of their militaries and counter terrorism. Another pact was inked to provide for the purchase of 0.5 million metric tonnes of LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) by Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) from Abu Dhabi National Oil Company Gas over a period of 10 years starting 2028. The UAE is India's second-largest supplier of LNG to India after Qatar.

The two sides also decided to explore collaboration in advanced nuclear technologies, including the development of large nuclear reactors and small modular reactors, as well as cooperation in advanced reactor systems, nuclear power plant operations and maintenance and nuclear safety.

"This has been a short, but extremely substantive visit," Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a media briefing after the UAE leader concluded his nearly three-and-a-half-hour visit that came amid increasing tensions in the Middle East and trade disruptions caused by Washington's policy on tariffs.

Artificial Intelligence was identified as another priority area of cooperation and it was decided to collaborate on setting up a supercomputing cluster in India with the UAE partnership, Misri said, adding the Gulf nation will also look at investments for expanding data centre capacities in India.

The foreign secretary said the two sides also set a target of USD 200 billion in annual trade by 2032. In 2024-25, the volume of two-way trade between the two sides was USD 100 billion.

To boost trade ties, Modi and Al Nahyan directed their teams to work towards interlinking the national payment platforms to enable efficient, fast and cost-effective cross-border payments. They also called for the expeditious implementation of key initiatives, such as the 'Bharat Mart', the 'Virtual Trade Corridor' and the 'Bharat-Africa Setu' to promote MSME products across the Middle East, West Asia, Africa and the Eurasia region, according to a joint statement. The joint statement said the two leaders highlighted deep respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the importance of strategic autonomy.

It said Modi and Al Nahyan acknowledged steady and strong bilateral defence and security cooperation as a core pillar of the comprehensive strategic partnership.

Another letter of intent was also signed for joint work in developing space infrastructure.

Under this initiative, both sides will look to set up new launch complexes, satellite fabrication facilities, joint missions, space academy and training centres, the foreign secretary said.

A separate document was inked to provide for the UAE's participation in the development of a special investment region in Gujarat's Dholera.

This initiative will look at the establishment of an international airport, a pilot training school, an MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) facility, a greenfield port, a smart urban township, as well as projects related to railway connectivity and energy infrastructure, Misri added.

India ranks 16th in Responsible Nations' Index

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Singapore ranked first and India 16th in the Responsible Nations' Index (RNI) launched by former president Ram Nath Kovind here Monday. Switzerland was second, Denmark third and the Central African Republic stood last on the 154-nation index.

India's neighbour Pakistan was in the 90th place. China was ranked 68th and the US 66th, according to the RNI. Kovind launched the RNI, a first-of-its-kind global index that evaluates countries based on how responsibly they exercise power towards their citizens, global community and the planet.

The RNI is a global evaluative framework developed by the think tank World Intellectual Foundation (WIF) in academic collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and methodological validation by the Indian Institute of Management (IIM), Mumbai. Kovind underlined the importance of ethical governance, inclusive development, and moral responsibility in shaping sustainable national and global futures. "The index is not a scoreboard which increases competition, but a mirror of morality and responsibility which reflects if countries are doing justice to their citizens," he said. Sudhanshu Mittal, Founder and Secretary, WIF, said the RNI represents a shift from power-centric assessments to responsibility-centric evaluation of nations.

"The Responsible Nations Index asks a fundamental question - how responsibly does a nation exercise its power? Prosperity without responsibility is unsustainable. The RNI seeks to encourage ethical governance, humane development and global stewardship," he said.

SC orders EC to display discrepancy list in WB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SIR

New Delhi, Jan 19: Observing that the Special Intensive Revision process in West Bengal should be transparent and not cause inconvenience, the Supreme Court directed the Election Commission (EC) Monday to display the names of those on the "logical discrepancies" list at gram panchayat bhavans and block offices, where documents and objections will also be submitted.

LOGICAL DISCREPANCIES IN PROGENY LINKING WITH THE 2002 VOTER LIST INCLUDE INSTANCES OF A MISMATCH IN THE PARENT'S NAME AND THE AGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A VOTER AND THEIR PARENT BEING LESS THAN 15 YEARS OR MORE THAN 50 YEARS

Logical discrepancies in progeny linking with the 2002 voter list include instances of a mismatch in the parent's name and the age difference between a voter and their parent being less than 15 years or more than 50 years. Noting that 1.25 crore voters in the state figure on the "logical discrepancies" list, a three-judge bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Dipankar Datta and Joymalya Bagchi directed that the offices for submitting documents and objections be set up within the panchayat bhavans or block offices and asked the West Bengal government to provide adequate manpower to the election authorities. The court directed that the director general of police (DGP) of West Bengal shall be obligated to ensure that there is no law-and-order problem and that all the activities shall be completed smoothly. The apex court was hearing pleas alleging arbitrariness and procedural irregularities in the ongoing SIR exercise in West Bengal, including those related to the "logical discrepancies" category. The bench noted that notices have been issued that are broadly classified in three categories - mapped, unmapped and logical discrepancy.

The top court added that under the 'logical discrepancy' category, mismatches in father's name or parents' age, and a difference in the age of the grandparents were noticed by the authorities. The apex court said those likely to be affected by the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in West Bengal must be allowed to submit their documents or objections.

The top court directed that the office for submitting the documents and objections shall be set up within the panchayat bhavans or block offices.

SNIPPETS

Man found dead after his misbehavior video on bus goes viral

KOZHIKODE: Police here Monday registered a case against a woman in connection with the suicide of a 42-year-old man after she allegedly posted a video on social media accusing him of sexual harassment during a bus journey, officials said. Kozhikode Medical College police registered the case against Shimjitha Musthafa (35) of Vadakara under charges of abetment to suicide, an officer said. On Sunday, Deepak U, a native of Puthiyara who was residing at Govindhapuram here, was found hanging in his room. Deepak, who worked at a textile firm, had travelled to Kannur on a transport bus Friday in connection with his work. Musthafa, who was also travelling on the same bus, allegedly recorded a video accusing him of misbehaving with her. The video was widely circulated on social media and reportedly came to Deepak's notice, following which he allegedly ended his life, his relatives said.

HC quashes 2016 income tax notices to Prannoy Roy, Radhika Roy

NEW DELHI: Terming the reassessment proceedings "arbitrary" and against fundamental and constitutional rights, the Delhi High Court Monday quashed the 2016 income tax notices to NDTV founders Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy and asked the department to pay Rs 1 lakh to each of them as token cost. A bench of Justices Dinesh Mehta and Vinod Kumar observed that authorities subjecting Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy to reassessment proceedings for the second time for the same transaction and "practically for the same issue" was without jurisdiction.

Mulayam's son to divorce wife Aparna

LUCKNOW: Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav's son Prateek Yadav Monday alleged that his wife Aparna Bisht Yadav, a BJP leader, had ruined his family ties and he would seek a divorce from her at the earliest. In a lengthy post on his verified Instagram handle (iamprateekyadav), the late politician's son described Aparna Yadav as a "family destroyer" and accused her of being self-centred and driven by fame and influence.

People offer a red saree to the River Ganga during the 'Magh Mela 2026' festival, at the Sangam in Prayagraj PTI PHOTO

Mentally-ill homeless people destitute to extreme: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: The Supreme Court Monday described homeless people suffering from mental illnesses as "destitute to the extreme" and "most vulnerable", and gave the Centre a last opportunity to come up with standard operating procedures for rehabilitating them.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta made the remarks while posting a public interest litigation (PIL) matter for hearing February 9, after the Centre's counsel sought some time to file a reply to the plea.

"We are giving you a last opportunity to frame the SOPs and file the reply. It is a sensitive issue and all depends on the effective implementation of the SOPs. These are people who are destitute to the extreme and most vulnerable. Please file the draft SOPs on the next date of hearing," the bench told senior advocate Nachiket Joshi, who appeared in the court on behalf of the Centre.

The lawyer informed the bench that Additional Solicitor General Brijender Chahar was appearing in the matter but he was indisposed and could not file the reply.

Advocate Gaurav Bansal, who is the petitioner in-person, submitted that this is the third time that the Centre has failed to file a reply to the PIL that has sought directions for the formulation and implementation of a policy for the homeless suffering from psychosocial disabilities. "The issue pertains to homeless people who are mentally ill and roam around the streets and public places for food. They need to be rehabilitated," Bansal said.

The court was informed by the Centre on December 19 last year that two sets of draft SOPs are being prepared for the rehabilitation of these people.

THE TOP COURT HAD EARLIER ASKED THE CENTRE TO TAKE THE ISSUE "VERY SERIOUSLY", AFTER THE GOVERNMENT SAID AUTHORITIES ARE ALREADY DELIBERATING ON THE MATTER AND MEETINGS ARE BEING HELD.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES REFER TO CHALLENGES PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES FACE DUE TO DISCRIMINATION AND A LACK OF SUPPORT, AMONG OTHER REASONS

The top court had earlier asked the Centre to take the issue "very seriously", after the government said authorities are already deliberating on the matter and meetings are being held.

Psychosocial disabilities refer to challenges people with mental health issues face due to discrimination and a lack of support, among other reasons.

The plea has sought directions for the framing and implementation of SOPs for key stakeholders, including the departments of law enforcement (police) and medical health, to ensure humane and effective handling of homeless persons with psychosocial disabilities.

It has highlighted the issues faced by such people, who, instead of being provided with appropriate care, are often subjected to neglect, social isolation and physical and sexual abuses.

"Despite existing legal and policy frameworks, including the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, and the National Mental Health Policy, 2014, respondents have failed to operationalise the provisions intended to protect and assist homeless individuals suffering from mental illnesses," the plea has said.

The petitioner has said the lack of a structured national policy on homelessness and mental illnesses has resulted in a "complete breakdown of the system, leaving thousands of individuals to fend for themselves", without access to medical care, shelter or social entitlements.

Bengaluru civic body polls will be held after May 25, says State EC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bengaluru, Jan 19: Elections to the five city corporations under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) will be held after May 25 with ballot papers instead of EVMs, Karnataka State Election Commissioner G S Sangreshi said Monday.

He also said that zilla and taluk Panchayat polls, which are expected later this year, will also be held using ballot papers.

"Elections will be held tentatively after May 25, after SSLC (class 10) and PUC (class 11 and 12) examinations are over, and before June 30," Sangreshi added.

The Supreme Court had last week asked the Karnataka government and the state election body to hold Bengaluru local body polls by June 30.

Speaking to reporters here, the Commissioner said, this time the GBA election will be held using ballot papers.

"There are two best practices to hold elections, ballot papers were being used since the beginning, but since 20-30 years ago EVMs are being used.

Use of ballot papers is not barred by law or by the judgements of the Supreme Court," he said, defending the decision to use ballot papers.

The Congress government in Karnataka in September last year had decided to recommend to the State Election Commission (SEC) to hold all the future panchayat and urban local body polls in the state using ballot paper instead of Electronic Voting Machines, claiming there is an erosion of confidence and credibility, among the people towards EVMs.

Noting that developed countries like America too use ballot papers, the state election commissioner said, most elections like Gram Panchayat, Cooperative polls are held using ballot papers, except Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. "However, last time the Bengaluru corporation polls in 2015 were held using EVMs," he noted.

international

A trade war is in no one's interest and my job is to act always in the UK's national interest

KEIR STARMER | PRIME MINISTER, UK

LOUVRE HOLDS EXHIBITION

French museum Louvre, along with the Museum of Art (MAP) of Shanghai, held a curated exhibition with 300 works on India, Iran and the Ottoman World. The exhibition, jointly presented by MAP and the Louvre, marks the French museum's first-ever showcase in Shanghai, and is its largest exhibition ever organised in China, the Indian mission in Shanghai said in a post on X Monday

Quote of the day

Issues of electoral law are very complicated in peacetime in Ukraine: they were not resolved quickly or easily. So now these issues are even more complicated because there are significantly more challenges

OLEH DIDENKO | ELECTION CHIEF, UKRAINE

If a candidate who has to submit the nomination papers cannot reach the nomination venue, the law has already provided for filing of nominations through his/her legal representative. We have informed about this through various guidelines

RAM PRASAD BHANDARI | CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER, NEPAL

The U.S. is also more than the U.S. president. I've just been there. There are also checks and balances in American society

LARS LOKKE RASMUSSEN | FOREIGN MINISTER, DENMARK

SHORT TAKES

B'desh court opens Hindu monk's trial

Dhaka: A court in Bangladesh Monday indicted Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das and 38 others in connection with the death of a lawyer in southeastern port city of Chattogram in November 2024. Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport November 25, 2024 for alleged sedition. Das, a former ISKCON leader, was denied bail and jailed by a Chattogram court. His arrest sparked protests, with his followers demonstrating in Dhaka and other places the next day. The protest turned violent in Chattogram, where the lawyer was killed November 26. On Monday, "the court framed charges against Chinmoy under Sections 302 and 109 of the Penal Code and brought charges against 22 others under different sections," a prosecution lawyer told reporters after the indictment by the Chattogram Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal.

At least 7 killed in Kabul hotel blast

Kabul: An explosion tore through a hotel in a heavily guarded part of central Kabul Monday, killing seven people and injuring several others, authorities in the Afghan capital said. Kabul police spokesperson Khalid Zadran said the hotel was in the commercial Shahr-e-Naw neighbourhood that includes large office buildings, shopping complexes and embassies. The district is considered one of the safest in Kabul. Videos shared on social media showed debris scattered on the street outside and smoke spewing from a large hole torn into the front of the hotel building.

Chile wildfires leave 19 dead

Concepcion: Wildfires in Chile have left at least 19 people dead, authorities said Monday, as the government carried out mass evacuations and fought nearly two dozen blazes exacerbated by intense heat and high winds. While weather conditions overnight helped control some fires, the largest were still active, with adverse conditions expected throughout the day, security minister, Luis Cordero, said at a news briefing Monday. "The projection we have today is of high temperatures," Cordero said, and the main worry was that new fires would be triggered throughout the region.

EU EYES TRADE RETALIATION

Trump links Greenland threat to Nobel snub

REUTERS

Paris/Oslo, Jan 19: US President Donald Trump linked his drive to take control of Greenland to his failure to win the Nobel Peace Prize, saying he no longer thought "purely of Peace" as the row over the island Monday threatened to reignite a trade war with Europe.

Trump has intensified his push to wrest sovereignty over Greenland from fellow NATO member Denmark, threatening punitive tariffs on countries which stand in his way and prompting the European Union to weigh hitting back with its own measures.

The dispute is threatening to upend the NATO alliance that has underpinned Western security for decades and which was already under strain over the war in Ukraine and Trump's refusal to protect allies which do not spend enough on defence.

It has also plunged trade relations between the EU and the US, the bloc's biggest export market, into renewed uncertainty after the two sides painstakingly reached a trade deal last year in response to Trump's swingeing tariffs.

In a written message to Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere that was seen by Reuters, Trump said, "Considering your Country decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize for having stopped 8 Wars PLUS, I no longer feel an obligation to think purely of Peace, although it will always be predominant, but can now think about what is good and proper for the United States of America."

- EU considers tariffs on $108 billion of US imports
- Trump's Greenland push strains NATO and EU-U.S. trade relations
- European leaders vow united response to U.S. tariff threats
- European stocks, dollar weaken
- Trump due in Davos this week

NOBEL COMMITTEE GAVE 2025 PEACE PRIZE TO MACHADO, NOT TRUMP

The Norwegian Nobel Committee annoyed Trump by awarding the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize not to him but to Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado. She gave her medal last week to Trump during a White House meeting, though the Nobel Committee said the prize cannot be transferred, shared or revoked.

In his message, Trump also repeated his accusation that Denmark cannot protect Greenland from Russia or China.

"... and why do they have a 'right of ownership' anyway?" he wrote, adding, "The World is not secure unless we have Complete and Total Control of Greenland." Trump vowed Saturday to implement a wave of increasing tariffs from February 1 on EU members Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, along with Britain and Norway, until the US is allowed to buy Greenland, home to only 57,000 people.

TALKS WITH TRUMP IN DAVOS?

Norway's Stoere amended his schedule, announcing that he would attend the World Economic Forum in Davos Wednesday and Thursday, overlapping with Trump's planned appearance at the annual gathering of the global political and business elite.

Stoere had not been scheduled to attend this year's conference at the Swiss Alpine resort, where Trump is expected to deliver a keynote address Wednesday in his first appearance at the event in six years.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said he too would try to meet Trump Wednesday, adding that a trade dispute was not wanted.

Trump invites Putin to Join Gaza Peace Board: Kremlin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Jan 19: Russian President Vladimir Putin has received an invitation to join US President Donald Trump's Gaza Peace Board, and the invitation is under consideration, the Kremlin said Monday.

"Indeed, President Putin also received an offer through diplomatic channels to join this Peace Board," the Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"We are currently studying all the details of this proposal, and we hope to contact the American side to clarify all the details," he said.

Several other countries have received offers from the US to join this body. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif have also received invitations to join the Peace Board.

The US president unveiled the board as part of the second phase of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In October, Israel and militant group Hamas agreed to Trump's peace plan.

The board is being projected by Washington as a new international body to usher in peace and stability in Gaza and beyond, triggering speculations that it may respond to other global conflicts as well.

"Russia sees the Gaza Peace Board as the US attempt to create a rival of the United Nations Organisation with a broader mandate," Russia's Channel- 1 TV said Monday in its 'Pryamoi Efir' (Live Broadcast) political show.

Most minority incidents non-communal: B'desh

The statement came days after India, January 9, pressed Dhaka to 'swiftly and firmly' deal with attacks on minorities in Bangladesh and described as 'troubling' the attempts to attribute the incidents to extraneous reasons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, Jan 19: The majority of incidents involving members of minority communities in Bangladesh during 2025 were "criminal in nature" and not driven by communal motives, the interim government said Monday.

The statement came days after India, January 9, pressed Dhaka to "swiftly and firmly" deal with attacks on minorities in Bangladesh and described as "troubling" the attempts to attribute the incidents to extraneous reasons.

New Delhi's reaction had come against the backdrop of the killing of several Hindu individuals in Bangladesh in the last few weeks.

Citing a yearlong review of official police records, the statement issued by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus' office said a total of 645 incidents involving minority communities were recorded between January and December 2025 across Bangladesh.

"While every incident is a matter of concern, the data presents a clear and evidence-based picture: the overwhelming majority of cases were criminal in nature rather than communal," it said.

According to the statement, of the 645 incidents, 71 were identified as having communal elements.

These included 38 cases of temple vandalism, eight of arson, one of theft, one murder and 23 other incidents such as threats to break idols, provocative social media posts and damage to worship pavilions.

Police cases were filed in 50 of these incidents, and arrests were made in an equal number, while other preventive or investigative measures were taken in 21 cases, the statement said.

The remaining 574 incidents were linked to criminal or social disputes unrelated to religion, including neighbourhood disputes (51), land-related conflicts (23), theft (106), prior personal enmity (26), rape (58) and 172 cases of unnatural death.

Police registered 390 cases in this category, filed 154 unnatural death reports and made 498 arrests, with additional measures taken in 30 incidents.

The interim government said the report "does not deny challenges, nor does it claim perfection; rather, it seeks to provide a factual, evidence-based picture of crime trends affecting minority communities within the broader national context".

"While all crimes are serious and demand accountability, the data demonstrates that most incidents involving minority victims were not driven by communal hostility, but by broader criminal and social factors that affect citizens across religious and ethnic lines," it said.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council (BHBCUC) leader Kajal Debnath questioned the government's classification of incidents involving minorities as "non-communal".

Japan PM to call Feb 8 snap election

REUTERS

Tokyo, Jan 19: Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi will call a national election February 8 to seek voter backing for increased spending, tax cuts and a new security strategy that is expected to accelerate a defence build-up.

Takaichi plans to dissolve parliament Friday ahead of the snap vote for all 465 seats in the lower house of parliament, in her first electoral test since becoming Japan's first female premier in October.

"I am staking my own political future as prime minister on this election," Takaichi told a press conference Monday. "I want the public to judge directly whether they will entrust me with the management of the nation."

She promised a two-year halt to a consumption tax of 8% on food, adding that her spending plans would create jobs, boost household spending and increase other tax revenues.

The prospect of such a tax cut, which the government estimates would reduce its revenue by 5 trillion yen ($32 billion) a year, sent the yield on Japan's 10-year government bonds to a 27-year high earlier Monday.

Calling an early election allows Takaichi to capitalise on strong public support to tighten her grip on the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and shore up her coalition's fragile majority.

The election will test voter appetite for higher spending at a time when the rising cost of living is the public's top concern. Prices were the main worry of 45% of the respondents in a poll released by public broadcaster NHK last week, followed by diplomacy and national security at 16%.

Takaichi has not set a new spending target beyond that level, but rising tension with China over Taiwan.

Russia experiences its heaviest snowfall in 130 years, which has paralysed transportation systems in the Kamchatka peninsula AGENCIES

KARACHI MALL FIRE

21 killed, dozens missing

REUTERS

Karachi, Jan 19: Pakistani firefighters began pulling bodies from the smouldering remains of a sprawling Karachi shopping mall Monday where more than 60 people were still missing after a massive fire that killed at least 21.

The city's biggest fire in over a decade started late Saturday at Gul Plaza, which houses 1,200 shops in a multi-storey complex spread across an area larger than a football field. The blaze in Karachi's historic centre raged for more than 24 hours before it was mostly extinguished.

Videos showed flames ripping through the building as firefighters laboured through the night to put out the blaze. They began cooling the structure and clearing twisted metal and debris strewn across the street Monday, along with fallen air-conditioning units and shop signboards.

China's wedding dress sellers pin hopes on rise in marriages

REUTERS

Suzhou, China, Jan 19: Wedding vendors at Huqiu Bridal City in Suzhou, one of China's largest wedding dress markets, are hopeful the country's positive marriage trends will continue this year.

The rise in marriages in the first nine months of 2025 is a bright spot in China's otherwise grim population landscape. Official data Monday showed the country's birth rate hit a record low last year and its total population fell for the fourth straight year.

Marriage rates rose 8.5% for the first nine months of 2025, according to Ministry of Civil Affairs data earlier this month, buoyed by policy changes and favourable cultural factors.

That increases the likelihood that overall marriage numbers in 2025 will halt a downtrend in annual nuptials that has gone almost uninterrupted for more than a decade.

Chen Juan, the co-owner of Luoyi Bridal, where dresses are priced from 1,000 yuan ($143.51) to around 4,000 yuan for more ornate styles, said marriage rates dropped significantly in 2024 as it was considered an inauspicious year to tie the knot, with many couples delaying weddings to 2025.

The sprawling Huqiu Bridal City is home to more than 800 stores filled with frothy white taffeta, silk and lace dresses.

A nationwide policy change in May 2025, allowing couples to marry anywhere in China rather than in their place of residence, also contributed to the rebound, Chen and other vendors said.

In response, local governments scrambled to attract a new wave of marriage tourists, setting up registration offices around scenic spots, at music festivals - and even in subway stations, shopping malls and parks.

Chen expects growth to continue due to this year's favourable zodiac, Year of the Horse, which is considered a time of success. However, Chen emphasised the need for further government incentives to make even more of a difference.

- Marriage rates buoyed by policy changes and auspicious timing
- Economic improvement seen key to continuing marriage boost
- Nationwide marriage registration policy increases convenience for couples
- Cash vouchers offered to encourage marriage amid cost concerns

"If the government can introduce some relevant incentive policies, this would be very good, because young people's attitudes (to marriage) have changed," she said.

She wants voter support for higher spending, tax cuts and a new security strategy expected to accelerate Japan's defence build-up. A declining interest in marriage and family among young Chinese is widely blamed on the high cost of childcare and education. Some cities and regions have introduced cash vouchers for newlyweds to help convince citizens to tie the knot.

Zhu Jiaomei, 31, who sells made-to-measure gowns at the market, said the overall economy plays an even more important role than specific wedding-related policies in people's willingness to marry, and the price they are willing to spend when they say 'Yes' to the dress.

business

India stands at the cusp of transformative growth in its reinsurance sector

M NAGARAJU | FINANCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

PSBs SANCTION ₹52,300CR MSME LOANS

Public sector banks under the digital credit underwriting programmes sanctioned over 3.96 lakh MSME loan applications amounting to over ₹52,300 crore between April 1 and December 31, 2025, the finance ministry said Monday

Quote of the day

Tariff liberalisation alone will not deliver proportional export gains unless accompanied by regulatory cooperation, faster approvals and mutual recognition in any trade deal with the EU

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

Faster closure of related-party valuation approvals for importers with maybe post-clearance risk-based audits instead of the current tedious process is seen as a practical step towards improving ease of doing business and supply-chain efficiency

ABHISHEK JAIN | PARTNER AND NATIONAL HEAD, INDIRECT TAX, KPMG

Predictable subsidy frameworks, rational taxation, and timely policy interventions are essential to ensuring uninterrupted nutrient availability while supporting efficient and sustainable fertiliser use

SURESH KUMAR CHAUDHARI | DIRECTOR GENERAL, FAI

Q3 RESULTS

PNB profit rises 13%

New Delhi: State-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) Monday reported a 13 per cent improvement in net profit to ₹5,100 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025. The bank had earned a net profit of ₹4,508 crore in the same quarter a year ago. Its total income rose to ₹37,253 crore from ₹34,752 crore in the year-ago period, PNB said in a regulatory filing. Interest income during the quarter also rose to ₹32,231 crore from ₹31,340 crore.

HZL profit zooms 46%

New Delhi: Vedanta group firm Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL) Monday reported a 46.2 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to ₹3,916 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2025, on the back of higher commodity prices, increased production, and a stronger dollar. The company had reported a consolidated net profit of ₹2,678 crore in the year-ago period. The company had reported a consolidated net profit of ₹2,678 crore in the year-ago period.

BHEL registers 3X jump

New Delhi: Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) Monday posted a three-fold jump in consolidated net profit to ₹390.40 crore for the December quarter, mainly due to increased revenues from key sectors. The company had clocked a net profit of ₹134.70 crore in the October-December period of the preceding 2024-25 fiscal, as per an exchange filing. BHEL's total income rose 18 per cent to ₹8,691.85 crore during the third quarter from ₹7,385 crore in the year-ago period.

IRFC profit rises 10%

New Delhi: Indian Railway Finance Corporation Ltd (IRFC) Monday reported a 10.51 per cent increase in net profit to ₹1,802 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025. The NBFC, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Railways, had earned a net profit of ₹1,631 crore in the year-ago period. The total income of the company declined marginally to ₹6,719 crore in the October-December period from ₹6,766.39 crore a year ago, IRFC said in a regulatory filing.

IMF PREDICTS BIG DROP IN INDIA'S GDP GROWTH

IMF raises India FY26 growth forecast to 7.3%, sees slower pace in next two years

REUTERS

New Delhi, Jan 19: The International Monetary Fund raised its forecast for India's economic growth in fiscal 2026 by 0.7 percentage points to 7.3%, citing strong momentum, but said growth is likely to slow to 6.4% in the following two fiscal years as cyclical factors fade.

The upgrade follows a revision earlier this month by India's National Statistics Office, which raised its estimate for growth to 7.4% in the year ending March 31, above the government's initial projection of 6.3% to 6.8%. In its World Economic Outlook report released Monday, the IMF said the upward revision for fiscal 2026 reflected "better-than-expected outturn in the third quarter of the year and strong momentum in the fourth quarter."

"India is a key growth engine for the world," Julie Kozack, Director of the IMF's Communications Department said last week in a separate briefing, noting that the Fund had previously estimated growth for fiscal 2026 at 6.6% in its Article IV staff report.

For calendar years 2026 and 2027, the IMF forecast growth of 6.3% and 6.5%, respectively.

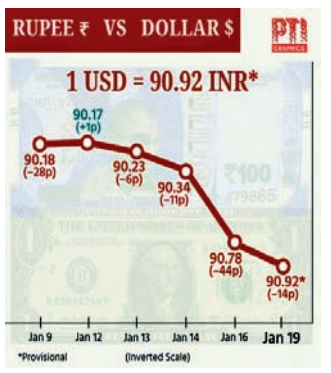
Global growth is expected to remain steady, with momentum in high-tech sectors set to slow but still partly offsetting the weakness in other sectors, the IMF said.

Risks remain tilted to the downside, it added, as US tariffs and global uncertainty are expected to weigh on activity, though the drag on growth should fade in 2026 and 2027.

The Fund projected global growth at 3.3% in 2026 and at 3.2% in 2027, broadly in line with an estimated 3.3% outturn in 2025. It also said oil prices remained low and are expected to fall further on account of tepid demand growth and strong supplies.

In India, inflation is expected to move back to near target levels after a sharp decline in 2025 driven by subdued food prices, the IMF said, referring to the Reserve Bank of India's 2%-6% inflation target band.

₹ falls 12 paise to close tad above new low at 90.90



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 19: The rupee depreciated 12 paise to close at 90.90 against the greenback Monday, a tad above its record low closing level, weighed down by robust greenback demand from metal importers and persistent foreign fund outflows.

Forex traders said rising geopolitical uncertainty, including renewed US expansionary signals, has increased risk aversion and kept emerging market currencies under pressure.

Selling pressure in domestic equities further dented investor sentiment. Moreover, investors were also concerned after US President Donald Trump announced tariffs on European countries if they resisted his plan to control Greenland.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.68 and slid past the crucial 91.01 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled 12 paise lower at 90.90 against the dollar, just 3 paise above its record low closing level. On December 16, 2025, the rupee reached its lowest intra-day level of 91.14 and its lowest closing level of 90.93 against the American currency.

On Friday, the rupee crashed 44 paise to settle near its lowest level at 90.78 against the US dollar, after losing 17 paise in the preceding two sessions.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.29 per cent lower at 99.10.

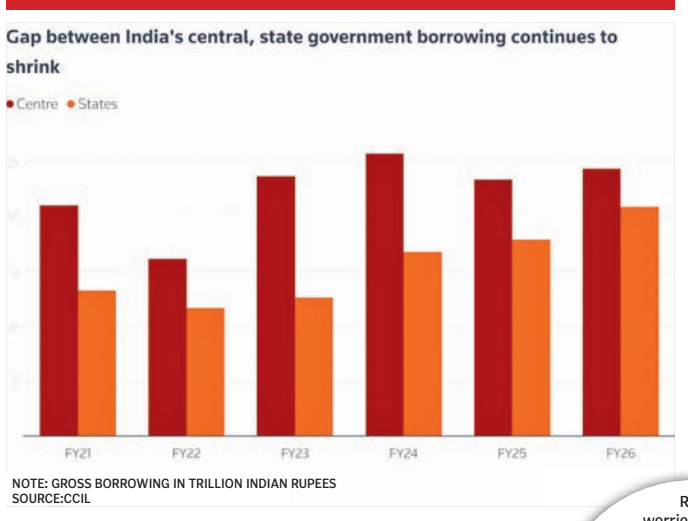
Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.37 per cent lower at USD 63.88 per barrel in futures trade.

According to Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset ShareKhan, the rupee is expected to trade on a negative bias amid risk aversion in global markets and brewing geopolitical tensions between the US and European nations over control of Greenland.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth ₹3,262.82 crore Monday, according to exchange data.

Rising state borrowings embroil RBI's playbook

REPO RATE CUT



REUTERS

Mumbai, Jan 19: A surge in borrowing by Indian states is complicating the central bank's efforts to lower interest rates as officials worry the increased supply of state bonds could affect the yield curve, according to people familiar with the central bank's thinking and analysts.

State governments are issuing debt at a pace that increasingly rivals sovereign borrowing, significantly boosting bond supply for a shared pool of investors.

Amid the increased supply of state debt, which typically offers a modest yield premium over federal bonds, investors are now demanding higher returns on central government securities, making it more difficult for the Reserve Bank of India to bring down borrowing costs despite recent interest rate cuts.

Sub-sovereign borrowing overtaking central government issuance is a mounting concern since it risks distorting the yield curve and weakening the transmission of monetary policy and liquidity measures, one of the sources familiar with the central bank's thinking said, requesting anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly.

RBI worried heavy state debt supply may distort bond yield curve

Gap between debt issued by states, centre is shrinking

Sub-sovereign borrowing could overtake centre in future

Central government bond yields elevated despite rate cuts

STATE BORROWINGS MAY RISE FURTHER

State borrowings could rise further following the recent revamp of the rural jobs scheme, which shifts more of the financial burden onto state governments, the person said, adding that states may overtake the federal government in borrowings over the next few years.

In the current fiscal year, which runs from April to March, Indian states are set to borrow nearly as much as the central government, with gross issuance of about ₹12.5 trillion ($137.66 billion) versus ₹14.6 trillion at the sovereign level.

Elevated state debt supply has led to renewed pressure on bond yields, especially at the longer end of the curve, leading to further steepening of the yield curve

PUNEET PAL | HEAD OF FIXED INCOME, PGIM INDIA MUTUAL FUND

Net borrowing by states, at roughly ₹9 trillion, is approaching the central government's ₹10.3 trillion. Investors generally view debt issued by Indian states as equivalent to federal government debt, since a reserve pool of funds held by the central bank is used for payouts during periods of financial stress. This means that while state debt offers investors a spread of 80 to 100 basis points over federal debt, the risk of default remains negligible.

Higher state borrowings have eroded benefits from the 100 basis points in interest rate cuts this fiscal year and pushed up costs for corporate borrowers, four analysts and traders said.

The yield on the 10-year central government bond has risen by 10 basis points in the current fiscal year, while benchmark yields for top-rated corporates have increased by 30 basis points.

To keep yields in check, the RBI is expected to purchase about ₹5.7 trillion of central government bonds this year, an amount equivalent to more than half of the government's net borrowing, effectively easing the supply burden.

Shares fall on downbeat earnings from blue-chips

Nifty heavyweights - Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank - were the biggest drags

REUTERS

Mumbai, Jan 19: Indian shares fell Monday after downbeat quarterly earnings from blue-chip companies weighed on sentiment, while renewed fears of a global trade war kept investors cautious.

The Nifty 50 and the Sensex shed 0.4% each to their 10-week closing lows of 25,585.5 and 83,246.18, respectively.

Nifty heavyweights - Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank - were the biggest drags, falling 3% and 2.1%, respectively, after missing quarterly earnings expectations. Conglomerate Reliance missed December-quarter profit estimates on weakness in its retail business and higher expenses, while ICICI Bank reported a lower-than-expected profit due to elevated provisions.

IT firm Wipro slid 8%, its biggest one-day percentage drop since July 2024. It projected weaker-than-expected revenue growth for the ongoing March quarter after deal booking fell to a six-quarter low in the December period.

Gains in fast-moving consumer goods, which rose 0.7%, helped limit losses on the benchmarks.

Global sentiment remained shaky after US President Donald Trump vowed Saturday to implement a wave of increasing tariffs from February 1 on eight European Union members until Washington is allowed to buy Greenland.

Thirteen of the 16 major sectors logged losses on the day. The small- and mid-caps fell 1% and 0.4%. Among other stocks, RBL Bank and Yes Bank dropped 6.7% and 3%, while Federal Bank jumped 3.5% to a fresh record high after reporting its quarterly earnings.

Tech Mahindra rose 2.9% after surpassing third-quarter revenue expectations.

IndiGo jumped 4.2% after Jefferies said the $2.45 million fine imposed by India's aviation regulator for last month's mass flight cancellations appeared lower than feared.

The three major indexes posted losses for the week as fourth-quarter earnings season kicked off. Bharat Coking Coal, India's largest coking coal miner, soared 76.4% in its market debut.

AIBPARC demands immediate pension updation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 19: The demand for immediate updation of bank pension echoed strongly at the 4th Triennial Conference of the Odisha State Unit of the All India Bank Pensioners' & Retirees' Confederation (AIBPARC), held at the Institution of Engineers (India) auditorium here recently.

Nearly 400 delegates and observers representing AIBPARC affiliates from 11 banks across Odisha participated in the conference, expressing collective concern over the long-pending issue of pension updation, which they said has been unjustly denied for nearly three decades.

Welcoming the gathering, State Secretary Niranjan Jogania stressed the need for greater unity and state-level consolidation to secure pension updation and ensure a dignified life for retired bankers.

The conference was inaugurated by former Executive Director of Bank of India and former Canara Bank Board Director Bimal Prasad Sharma, who highlighted possible resistance from the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) and called for well-planned organisational strategies to counter it. He expressed confidence that the movement would achieve success.

AIBPARC General Secretary Suprita Sarkar, delivering the keynote address, outlined the organisation's journey since its formation in 2012 and detailed sustained representations made before the legislature, bureaucracy, judiciary and media. He also presented the future roadmap of action. The conference, presided over by State President Amit K Motayed, concluded with the unanimous election of new office-bearers for the 2026–2029 term.

India set to transition to upper-middle income country by 2030: SBI report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: India is set to transition to 'upper-middle income' country in next four years in 2030, joining the ranks of China and Indonesia, and become the third largest economy even earlier in 2028, an SBI Research report said Monday.

The World Bank classifies nations as low income, lower-middle income, upper-middle income and high-income countries based on their per capita GNI (Gross National Income) in US dollar.

In 1990, of the total 218 countries classified by the World Bank, 51 belonged to low income, 56 to lower-middle income, 29 to upper-middle income and 39 to high-income categories.

India took 60 years to transition to lower-middle income in 2007 from low-income country. Its per capita GNI increased from $90 in 1962 to $910 in 2007, an annual growth rate of 5.3 per cent, said the report.

Billionaires' wealth hits new peak as their clout grows

Fortunes of global billionaires jumped 16% in 2025 to $18.3tn, extending an 81% rise since 2020

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 19: Billionaire wealth surged at three times its recent pace last year to reach its highest level on record, deepening economic and political divides that threaten democratic stability, anti-poverty group Oxfam said Monday.

In a report timed for the opening of the World Economic Forum in Davos, the charity said the fortunes of global billionaires jumped 16% in 2025 to $18.3 trillion, extending an 81% rise since 2020.

The gains happened even as one in four people worldwide struggle to eat regularly and nearly half the global population live in poverty.

Oxfam's study, which draws on academic research and data sources ranging from the World Inequality Database to Forbes' rich list, argues that the wealth boom is being matched by a dramatic concentration of political clout, with billionaires 4,000 times more likely than ordinary citizens to hold political office.

The group links the latest wealth surge to policies under US President Donald Trump, whose second administration has cut taxes, shielded multinational corporations from international pressure and eased scrutiny of monopolies.

Soaring valuations of artificial intelligence companies have added further windfall gains for already wealthy investors.

Oxfam urged governments to adopt national inequality reduction plans, impose higher taxes on extreme wealth and strengthen firewalls between money and politics, including curbs on lobbying and campaign financing.

Wealth taxes are levied in just a few countries such as Norway at present but others, from Britain to France and Italy, have debated similar moves.

The widening gap between the rich and the rest is at the same time creating a political deficit that is highly dangerous and unsustainable

AMITABH BEHAR | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OXFAM

The Nairobi-based charity calculates that the $2.5 trillion added to billionaires' fortunes last year is roughly equal to the stock of wealth held by the poorest 4.1 billion people.

The world's billionaire population surpassed 3,000 for the first time last year, with Tesla and SpaceX chief Elon Musk becoming the first individual to exceed $500 billion in net worth.

Analysts warned that governments are "making wrong choices to pander to the elite," pointing to aid cuts and the rollback of civil liberties.

The report highlights what it calls the expanding grip of ultra-wealthy business figures over traditional and digital media.

Billionaires now own more than half of the world's major media firms, Oxfam said, citing holdings by Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Patrick Soon-Shiong and France's Vincent Bolloré.

FARCICAL FINAL

Senegal kings of Africa

Controversial penalty, disallowed goal, Senegal's walk-off, then extra-time drama crowned a chaotic AFCON final for the ages

REUTERS

Rabat, Jan 19: African football would have been hoping for a thrilling end to a slick and competitive Cup of Nations tournament but will wake up Monday with a major headache after the final between Senegal and hosts Morocco descended into farce.

Senegal, who won 1-0 after extra time, staged a walk-out after they had a penalty awarded against them deep in stoppage time at the end of the match.

They were ordered off the field by their coach Pape Bouna Thiaw, with some players going back to the dressing room, and it was only after Sadio Mane cajoled them back that the game continued.

"What did we say to each other? That's between us. We did it together and we came back together, that's all that matters," said goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, one of those involved in ugly scenes of jostling and arguing between the players.

A 14-minute delay between the awarding of the penalty, after a lengthy VAR review, and the taking of the kick was followed by a tame effort from Morocco's Brahim Diaz, who had been their star performer as they reached the final for the first time in 22 years.

His Panenka-style chipped effort floated into Mendy's arms, leaving the game goalless and having to go into extra time.

"He attempted the Panenka, but I stayed on my feet. We kept the team in the game, and I helped my team at that moment," Mendy added.

The penalty was awarded following a VAR check by Congolese referee Jean-Jacques Ndala after Brahim Diaz had been tugged to the ground by Senegal full back El Hadji Malick Diouf while defending a corner five minutes into stoppage time.

Morocco coach Walid Regragui said the delay did not help Diaz.

"But that doesn't excuse Brahim for the way he hit the penalty. He hit it like that and we have to accept it. We were one minute from being African champions. That's football. It's often cruel. We missed what for some was the opportunity of a lifetime," he said.

Senegal's team and fans were angered by being denied what shaped as a title-winning goal early in stoppage time of a 0-0 draw when the referee called a foul to rule out the goal

Morocco's Brahim Diaz, left, holds the trophy for the top scorer, Senegal's Sadio Mane, center, holds trophy for the best player and Morocco's goalkeeper Yassine Bounou the trophy for the best goalkeeper of the tournament PTI PHOTO

SUPERB WINNING GOAL

Pape Gueye won the trophy for Senegal with a superb strike four minutes into extra time, handing his country their second trophy in the last three editions and extending Morocco's poor record in the tournament which they have won once previously 50 years ago.

But Senegal's success will be overshadowed by the controversy of the walk-off, blemishing the image of the African game which only days earlier had boasted of record worldwide revenue for its showpiece tournaments as interest spread worldwide.

"The image we've given of Africa is shameful," added Regragui.

"A coach who asks his players to leave the field … What Pape did does not honour Africa. He wasn't classy. But he is a champion, so he can say whatever he wants"

His Senegal counterpart, Thiaw, could face sanctions for his actions.

However, he missed the chance to discuss the controversy when his post-match press conference was called off after he was jeered by Moroccan journalists when he entered the room while their Senegalese counterparts applauded him.

The ugly scenes witnessed (Sunday) must be condemned and never repeated. I expect that the relevant disciplinary bodies at CAF will take the appropriate measures

FIFA PRESIDENT GIANNI INFANTINO

Bhagat, Kadam bag double golds

The Indian duo shared glory in both singles and doubles in Para Badminton International event in Egypt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: India's Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam clinched a gold medal each in the singles events of their respective categories and then combined together to stand on top of podium in doubles at the SPIRO SPATHIS Egypt Para Badminton International 2026 in Cairo.

Bhagat showcased grit and experience in the SL3 men's singles final, defeating compatriot Umesh Vikram Kumar in a thrilling three-set contest.

After conceding a closely-fought opening game 19-21, Bhagat raised his intensity and tactical sharpness to take the next two sets 21-15 and 21-13, sealing victory in a match lasting over an hour.

In the SL4 men's singles category, Sukant Kadam underlined his consistency and mental toughness, overcoming India's Surya Kant Yadav in straight sets. Both games went down to the wire, with Kadam prevailing 27-25, 21-18 in a high-quality final.

In SL3 class, a player must play standing and can have an impairment in one or both lower limbs, and poor movement balance.

SL4 class players have a lesser impairment than those in SL 3. SL 4 players can have impairment in one or both lower limbs and minimal impairment in walking/running balance.

The Indian duo then combined forces in the SL3-SL4 men's doubles event, where Bhagat and Kadam were awarded the gold medal following a walkover in the final against fellow Indians Umesh Vikram Kumar and Surya Kant Yadav, completing a memorable double-gold outing for both.

India enjoyed a highly successful campaign in the tournament, with gold medals also coming from Nitesh Kumar, Thulasimathi Murugesan, Alphia James, and the women's doubles pair of Manasi Joshi and Thulasimathi Murugesan.

An elated Bhagat said, "This tournament was extremely important for me, especially with the World Championships coming up next month. The singles final tested my patience and fitness, and I'm really happy with the way I responded after losing the first set. Winning double gold with Sukant makes it even more special. It's a great confidence booster."

Kadam, on his part, said, "The singles final was mentally demanding, and I had to stay composed till the very end. Partnering with Pramod in doubles and winning gold together is always special. This is exactly the kind of start we were aiming for this season."

T20 WORLD CUP

ICC gives final deadline to BCB

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: The ICC has asked the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to decide on its participation in the T20 World Cup in India by January 21 or "risk being replaced by another team" in the tournament beginning February 7.

Despite the back and forth between ICC and BCB, no solution has been found to the crisis that was triggered by the removal of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the 2026 Indian Premier League on BCCI's instructions for unspecified "developments all around." "The BCB officials have been told to decide on the participation by January 21. If they refuse to travel to India, then they should be replaced by another team as per rankings," said an ICC source.

In case Bangladesh continue to be unyielding, the replacement team would most likely be Scotland based on current rankings. Bangladesh are scheduled to play three leagues games in Kolkata and one in Mumbai. The BCB has remained adamant on either a change of venue or a change of groups to facilitate its games in Sri Lanka.

Pak halt preparations in solidarity with B'desh

Acting on its threat to withdraw from the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup in support of Bangladesh's demand to move its matches out of India, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has halted its team's preparations for the event, to be organised by India and Sri Lanka next month, according to a news report. A day after Pakistan threatened to pull out of the T20 World Cup if Bangladesh's demand to relocate its matches out of India was not accepted, the PCB has acted and asked the team to ease up on its preparations for the event, Telecom Asia Sport reported Monday. "The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has put on hold all preparations for the national team ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup 2026, with the team management briefed about the plans," top PCB sources told www.telecomasia.net.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Djoko equals all-time records

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Melbourne, Jan 19: Novak Djokovic equaled two all-time tennis records by starting his 21st Australian Open, and he added another milestone Monday night with his 100th win at Melbourne Park.

He liked the sound of it. "I mean, what can I say? I like the sound of it — centurion is pretty nice," the 24-time major winner said after his 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 first-round win over Pedro Martinez of Spain. "Nice feeling."

The 38-year-old Djokovic is now 100-10 at the Australian Open, where he's won 10 titles. He also has won 102 at Wimbledon and 101 at Roland Garros. What he really wants more than anything is six more in the next two weeks, enough to win a 25th major and become the most decorated tennis player of all time.

By starting his 21st Australian Open campaign, he equaled the tournament record held by Roger Federer. By starting his 81st Grand Slam tournament, he equaled another record that Federer shared with Feliciano Lopez.

Djokovic showed signs of vintage form, with a running crosscourt forehand winner in the first set taking the adoring crowd at Rod Laver Arena back to his prime.

He didn't face a breakpoint in a clean serving performance, had a 1st serve points won percentage of 93 and he fired 14 aces, including one on match point.

Djokovic reached the semifinals at all four majors in 2025 but couldn't break the stranglehold that Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner have had on the biggest trophies in the sport for the last two years.

Swiatek overcomes rust

Iga Swiatek knows she has plenty to work on in her bid for a first Australian Open title and a career Grand Slam. The No 2-ranked Swiatek never got comfortable in a 7-6 (5), 6-3 win over No 130-ranked Chinese qualifier Yuan Yue in the first-round Monday night. After winning Wimbledon last year to go with her four French Open titles and her victory at the 2022 US Open, the Australian Open is the only major missing from her collection. She has twice reached the semifinals. Yuan was swinging freely and rifling winners as she took a 5-3 lead, and Swiatek had to switch things up. "I was a bit rusty at the beginning," she said. "Many ups and downs, but overall I have some stuff to work on. I'll just focus on that."

I can't push it anymore: Saina hangs racket

I had stopped playing two years back. I actually felt that I entered the sport on my own terms and left on my own terms, so there was no need to announce it

SAINA NEHWAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 19: Trailblazer Indian shuttler Saina Nehwal, who has been out of action for the last two years due to a chronic knee condition, has confirmed her retirement from competitive badminton, saying her body could no longer cope with the physical demands of elite sport.

The 2012 London Olympic bronze medallist last played a competitive match at the Singapore Open in 2023 but did not formally announce her retirement at the time.

"I had stopped playing two years back. I actually felt that I entered the sport on my own terms and left on my own terms, so there was no need to announce it," Saina said on a podcast. "If you are not capable of playing anymore, that's it. It's fine."

The former world No 1 said the decision was forced by a severe degeneration of her knee, which made sustained high-intensity training impossible.

"Your cartiledge has totally degenerated, you have arthritis, that's what my parents needed to know that, my coaches needed to know that, and I just told them, 'Now probably I can't do it anymore, it is difficult'," she said.

Saina reiterated that she did not see the need for a formal retirement announcement, believing her absence from competition would make the situation clear.

"Slowly people will also realise that Saina is not playing," she said.

Saina's career was significantly impacted by a career-threatening knee injury sustained at the Rio 2016 Olympics. Although she made a strong comeback to win a World Championships bronze in 2017 and the Commonwealth Games gold in 2018, recurring knee issues continued to disrupt her progress.

STAR SHUTTLER

OLYMPIC BRONZE MEDAL: First Indian badminton player to win an Olympic medal (London 2012)

WORLD NO 1: First Indian woman to achieve the World No 1 ranking in badminton (April 2015)

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP: Secured a silver (2015) and a bronze (2017) at BWF World C'hips

COMMONWEALTH GOLD: Won gold medals in women's singles at the 2010 (Delhi) and 2018 (Gold Coast) Games

INTERNATIONAL TITLES: Won over 24 international titles, making her the only Indian to medal at every BWF major

SNIPPETS

Women's National Cricket Tournament for the Blind: Odisha reach quarters

Bhubaneswar: Defending champions Madhya Pradesh, hosts Odisha, Karnataka, West Bengal, Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh made it to the quarterfinal stage of the Women's National Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2026 as teams wrapped up the league stage and confirmed their places in the last-eight stage. With the league stage now concluded, the tournament moves into the quarterfinal phase Tuesday. At the Hi-Tech Medical College Ground in Bhubaneswar, Madhya Pradesh will face Maharashtra, while Odisha will take on Rajasthan. Action on the third day of the Women's National Cricket Tournament for the Blind 2026 saw commanding performances across venues in Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, and Khordha.

Bhubaneswar to host nat'l-level bodybuilding championship

Bhubaneswar: Odisha is set to host a major national-level bodybuilding competition for the first time, further strengthening its growing reputation in the field of bodybuilding. The All-India Bodybuilding Championship, organised by Transformium Classics, will be held February 7 and 8 at Utkal Mandap. The announcement was made during a press conference held at the Press Club of Odisha where chief organiser Jeevan Jyoti shared detailed information about the event. He said the championship will be organised on a grand scale with an overall budget of around Rs 20 lakh, while prize money worth Rs 7 lakh will be distributed among winners in various categories. According to the organisers, nearly 150 bodybuilders from Odisha and several other states across India are expected to take part in the competition.

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