

Shriya's observation

Actor Shriya Saran says the emotional impact of pregnancy often affects the husband first

LEISURE | P2

First female Archbishop

Sarah Mullally was confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury, becoming the first woman to lead the Church of England

INTERNATIONAL | P10

Factory output rockets

India's industrial production grew at an over 2-year high pace of 7.8% in December 2025 on the back of robust output in manufacturing

BUSINESS | P11

Djoko vs Sinner

10-time Australian Open winner Novak Djokovic will meet two-time defending champion Jannik Sinner in the semifinals

SPORTS | P12

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Ease of business should match ease of living: CM

PNN & AGENCIES

Rourkela, Jan 28: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Wednesday launched 20 industrial projects worth ₹8,884 crore in Rourkela.

These include the inauguration of 11 projects at an investment of ₹5,708 crore and foundation stones for nine projects worth ₹3,176 crore.

Attending the silver jubilee celebration of Enterprise Odisha 2026 here, Majhi said, "The event represents a new way of thinking for us; a mindset where we aspire to be the best in every sector. We will be the best, and we will compete with the best. With this confidence, we are moving forward."

"Industrial development must create employment opportunities, enhance living standards, and ensure that ease of doing business is matched with ease of living. Industrial growth should bring better opportunities into the lives of every citizen," he said.

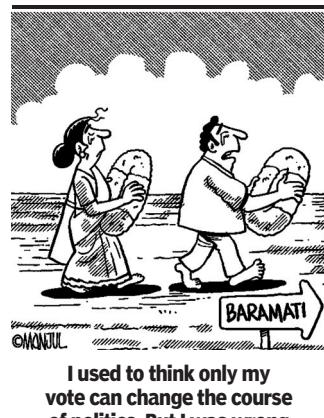
Highlighting the state government's industrial strategy, the CM said, "Our strategy is clear- establish a few anchor industries in every region and develop hundreds of MSMEs around them as suppliers, vendors, logistics partners, fabricators, maintenance providers, packaging units, and technology partners. This will ensure that our youth no longer need to migrate for jobs; opportunities will come to their doorstep."

Officials said 22 MoUs worth ₹43,349 crore were signed during the event, which are expected to generate 18,985 jobs. The state also received five investment proposals worth ₹8,677 crore, they added.

On the occasion, the Chief Minister also handed over the letter offering 1,447.927 acres at Kamakhyangan in Dhenkanal district to Vedanta Aluminium Ltd for its proposed 3 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) aluminium smelter and 4,900 MW Captive Power Plant (CPP) project.

P3

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



DEADLY CRASH: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's plane in flames after it crashed during landing, at Baramati, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Ajit Pawar, 4 others killed in plane crash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baramati, Jan 28: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four other persons on board an aircraft were killed after it crashed near the Baramati airport in Maharashtra's Pune district Wednesday.

Pawar had taken off from Mumbai in the morning to address four rallies in the day in Pune district for the February 5 zilla parishad elections.

The others killed in the tragedy were Captain Sumit Kapoor, who had a flying experience of 15,000 hours, co-pilot Capt. Shambhavi Pathak with 1,500 hours of flying, Personal Security Officer (PSO) Vidip Jadhav and flight attendant Pinky Mali.

The aircraft, a Learjet, was cleared for landing in Baramati Wednesday morning after a go-around due to poor visibility, but having finally received a clearance it did not give any read-back to the ATC, and moments later burst into flames on the edge of the runway.

The aircraft was trying to



land amid poor visibility, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu told reporters in Pune. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several other leaders expressed grief over Pawar's demise.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who reached Baramati, described Ajit Pawar's tragic death as unbelievable, and said he had lost a good friend. According to an eyewitness, the ill-fated aircraft appeared "a bit unstable in the air" and exploded the moment it crashed on the ground. Maharashtra government declared a three-day state mourning till January 30.

MORE P9

SC slams states over lax stray dog control

The Supreme Court delivered a scathing rebuke to states for systemic failures in controlling the growing stray dog menace, with rising dog-bite cases underscoring ineffective implementation of animal birth control rules. Flagging inadequate sterilisation, poor shelter infrastructure, and lax removal of stray dogs from sensitive areas such as hospitals and schools, the top court warned that authorities must act or face consequences. The court urged states to safeguard public health while balancing animal welfare

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



over the progress and said they were engaged in "storytelling."

Senior advocate Gaurav Agarwal, who has been appointed amicus curiae in the matter, summarised the initiatives taken by different states, while flagging the deficiencies. He pointed out that some states have taken steps in consonance with the top court's direction, but there was still a long way to go for total compliance.

The governments will have to step up animal birth control (ABC) facilities, ramp up sterilisation of stray dogs, set up dog pounds (animal shelters), fence up institutional areas and remove stray animals from roads and highways, the advocate said.

The bench said, "They are all

building castles in the air. None of the states have given data on how many stray dog bites happened, except for Assam."

The top court also expressed surprise over the data on dog bites in Assam. "Look at the statistics of bites. It is astonishing. In 2024, there were 1.66 lakh bites. And in 2025, only in January, there were 20,900. This is shocking," it observed.

The bench said that states cannot make vague statements, and all vague averments are made on affidavits. "We are going to pass strong strictures against states that make vague averments," Justice Nath said.

The apex court, which also heard the submissions of Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Gujarat, observed non-compliance of directions for fencing of institutional areas to prevent ingress of stray animals into schools and hospitals.

"Every public building should be fenced, not only because of stray dogs or other animals but also to protect the property from theft," the bench observed.

The bench said, "They are all

12 Kotia villages belong to Andhra: Jana Sena Party



POST NEWS NETWORK

Pottangi, Jan 28: Leaders of Andhra Pradesh-based Jana Sena Party (JSP) allegedly entered a border village under Kotia gram panchayat (GP) in Koraput district and claimed that 12 villages presently under Odisha's jurisdiction belonged to Andhra Pradesh, raising fresh questions over border security and administrative vigilance.

The incident reportedly took place at Upper Sembhi under Pottangi block Tuesday, where JSP representatives convened a meeting of villagers and local heads.

During the meeting, the party leaders asserted that the disputed villages had historically been part of Andhra and promised to raise the issue with Andhra CM N Chandrababu Naidu for resolution.

The development has raised concern over the role of Pottangi block administration, as Odisha-Andhra border dispute involving Kotia GP remains sub-justice before the High Court.

According to sources, JSP representatives entered Odisha territory and addressed residents in Telugu, claiming that the 12 villages had remained under Odisha "for the past 60 years" despite belonging to Andhra.

Kotia sarpanch Liu Gemel criticised the administration, alleging a lack of visible effort to prevent the entry of Andhra officials and political workers.

Pottangi tehsildar Debendra Bahadur Singh Dharua confirmed that he is aware of the Jana Sena delegation's visit to the village and the meeting held there.

Half-hearted response to Odisha bandh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The eight-hour Odisha bandh called given by Navnirman Krushak Sangathan (NNKS) over the alleged plight of farmers due to mismanagement in paddy procurement in the state Wednesday evoked a mixed response, an official said.

Railway services were not affected due to the bandh, while road transport was partially disrupted as protesters blocked roads in various districts. Protesters were seen burning motor tyres on the road at several places. Many passengers were stranded at bus terminals in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack.

Shops and business establishments remained closed in several places in the state due to the bandh. The strike, which began at 6 am and continued till 2 pm, was supported by the Opposition Congress and CPI(M), while BJD complemented the NNKS for observing the shutdown to safeguard the interests of farmers.

"The bandh was observed peacefully across the state. The protesters requested the people to cooperate. The essential services were kept out of the purview of bandh," NNKS convener Akshay Kumar said. P5

'Doomsday Clock' closer to midnight than ever

Atomic scientists set their 'Doomsday Clock' Tuesday closer than ever to midnight, citing aggressive behaviour by nuclear powers Russia, China and the United States, fraying nuclear arms control, conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East and AI worries among factors driving risks for global disaster.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, founded in 1945 by scientists including Albert Einstein and J. Robert Oppenheimer, has now set the clock to 85 seconds before midnight, the theoretical point of annihilation. That is four seconds closer than it was set last year. The Chicago-based nonprofit created the clock in 1947 during the Cold War tensions that followed World War II to warn the public about how close humankind was to destroying the world.

The scientists voiced concern about threats of unregulated integration of AI into military systems and its potential misuse in aiding the creation of biological threats, as well as AI's role in spreading disinformation globally. They also noted continuing challenges posed by climate change.

"Of course, the Doomsday Clock is about global risks, and what we have seen is a global failure in leadership," nuclear policy expert Alexandra Bell, the Bulletin's president and CEO, told Reuters. "No matter the government, a shift towards neo-imperialism and an Orwellian approach to governance will only serve to push the clock toward midnight." It was the third time in the past four years that the scientists moved the clock closer to midnight.

Bell pointed to Russia's con-



Donald Trump returned to office 12 months ago.

The last remaining nuclear arms pact between the US and Russia, the New START treaty, expires February 5. Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed in September that the two countries agree to observe for another year the limits set

under the pact, which caps each side's number of deployed nuclear warheads at 1,550. Trump has not formally responded. Western security analysts are divided about the wisdom of accepting Putin's offer.

Trump in October ordered the US military to restart the process for testing nuclear weapons after a halt of more than three decades. No nuclear power, other than North Korea most recently in 2017, has conducted explosive nuclear testing in more than a quarter century.

No country would benefit more from a full-scale return to such testing than China, given its continued push to expand its nuclear arsenal, according to Bell, a former senior official at the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence and Stability.

REUTERS

Next attack will be far worse: Trump to Iran

REUTERS

Washington, Jan 28: US President Donald Trump urged Iran Wednesday to come to the table and make a deal on nuclear weapons or the next US attack would be far worse, but Tehran said that if that happened it would fight back as never before.

"Hopefully Iran will quickly 'Come to the Table' and negotiate fair and equitable deal - NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS - one that is good for all parties. Time is running out, it is truly of the essence!" Trump wrote in a social media post.

"The next attack will be far worse! Don't make that happen again," Trump wrote. He

also repeated that a US "armada" was heading toward the Islamic Republic.

Iran's mission to the United Nations responded in kind.

"Last time the US blundered into wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it squandered over \$7 trillion and lost more than 7,000 American lives," it said in an X post quoting Trump's statement.

Trump said a US naval force headed by the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln was approaching Iran. The warships started moving from the Asia-Pacific region last week as US-Iranian tensions soared following a bloody crackdown on protests across Iran by its clerical authorities in recent weeks.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST



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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES

Your progress will be abundant, enabling you to save quite a lot for a rainy day. More agreements are on the cards, and these may prove milestones in your business. Ganesha says that you have worked hard and its fruits lie in the future.

TAURUS

You are likely to show a strong streak of selfishness today, says Ganesha. He urges you not to be too possessive about people or acquisitive about things and objects. Be very particular about this as your self centred tendencies could cause you a lot of grief. Your judgments plans and decisions may not be too reliable. Your arguments, too, could fall flat.

GEMINI

You may or may not be too open about it, but you love those around you. You can easily sacrifice your ego to ensure that the sentiments of the ones you love are not hurt. But this can take its toll. You are probably planning a trip today – business or pleasure, whatever the excuse may be, the idea is to take a break.

CANCER

In order to protect the feelings and sentiments of those dear to you, you may tend to hide your emotions under the garb of a calm demeanour, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may set out on a short trip out of town. In the evening, you may spend a handsome sum of money to make yourself look better.

LEO

Lady Luck and the goddess of wealth both seem to favour you on this very unique and dynamic day, says Ganesha. So, it should come as no surprise when you gain both – money and power – on the business front. The latter half of the day might find you splurging a bit on jewellery for your sweetheart. Remember, diamonds are a girl's best friend.

VIRGO

There are chances that today, you will turn to your family for happiness, predicts Ganesha. Of course, you may have to spend a small fortune to please them. Later in the day, you may pen the first chapter of a long-term platonic relationship.

LIBRA

Today promises to be a joy ride for your hidden corpulent side. Relish what you eat, as today you shall take a keen interest in the same. Career wise, you may find yourself standing at crossroads. But the good part about that is there are many paths to choose from. The latter half of the day promises to bring some monetary gain.

SCORPIO

It is highly likely that you will be on the move today, predicts Ganesha. You will be actively shuttling from one location to the other for work or social purposes. Business meetings and conversations will be the basis of all your thoughts. Business proposals may take shape later in the day, feels Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS

Mysteries that have perplexed and plagued you for the past few days will unravel as the curtain draws from the clandestine, laying bare the aspects you needed an insight into. Any associations you make today will be beneficial in the long run. Your day will end with a feeling of gratitude and emotional attachment to loved ones, beyond the sweet veneer of material love.

CAPRICORN

You may get bogged down with work, and experience enormous stress today, says Ganesha. But, an adept professional, you will not give up easily. Your opponents will take a beating and will start to acknowledge your potential and abilities.

AQUARIUS

Straighten your tie and pull in your tummy, it's time to make an impression! And that's not all; you need to be sharp as important decisions await you. Haste will not do, as these decisions may have a long-term impact, cautions Ganesha.

PISCES

You will be full of energy and enthusiasm today, a fact which owes nothing to the revitalising pills you have added to your diet. You will have a great time making new acquaintances and splurging on someone you think is special, and this too should probably not have anything to do with aforementioned pills. If it does, however, you ought to be wary of starting new projects', says Ganesha.



STONE TALKS TO SPIRITS TO INSPIRE HER PAINTINGS

Sharon Stone has opened up about how she uses 'universal consciousness' to inspire her artwork. She told *Extra*: "So many members of my family died in three and a half years. I genuinely hear this higher consciousness speak to me. When these portraits started coming through, they really talked to me."

CHLOE ZHAO TRAINS TO BE A DEATH DOULA

Chinese filmmaker Chloé Zhao is training to be a death doula to help her overcome her fear of the end of life. The 43-year-old is undertaking a specialist course to learn how to provide physical and emotional support to people with terminal illnesses and their families before and after their deaths.



Curtains down on a vibrant celebration of cinema

IFFB 2026:
DAY 7

Biswaprakash director Susant Mishra during post-screening conversation

Biswaprakash—a film that has multi-layered plot with complex characters—claimed the Grand Prix prize at the Sochi International Film Festival in Russia and was screened at the coveted Cannes Film Festival.

2025's box office hit and one of the most successful films that has released in theatres recently, *Bou Buttu Bhuta* follows supernatural events in the life of a fish farmer.

Both of the directors of the films joined for a post screening discussion and QnA with the audience, briefed their working principles and shared a different perspective from the makers' point of view.

The day also witnessed Suman Mukhopadhyay's *Putulnacheri Itikatha*, an adaptation from Manik Bandopadhyay's 1936 eponymous novel—a landmark work of 20th century Bengali literature.

The film is a period drama about a sensitive individual, caught between the pull of ambition and the weight of his social circumstances.

Orissa POST and *Dharitri* were the print media partners for the event.

I'm an old soul:
Bhagyashree

Hyderabad: Living fully in the present is at the top of Bhagyashree Borse's bucket list for 2026. In a conversation with a news portal, the actress, who received praise for her performance in *Kaantha*, shares, "I want to live in the present because it soon becomes the yesterday we look back at and miss."

After *Kaantha*, critics and audiences alike have pointed out that Bhagyashree possesses an old-world charm that's rare in artistes nowadays. Reacting to the sentiment, she states, "I think that's such a beautiful compliment. I am unabashedly in love with cinema. And that makes me want to be very sincere in my work. Not sure about oldworld charm, but I do believe I'm an old soul. As I grew up watching all the classic actors, I may have imbibed the good qualities I liked in each one of them."

She admits that it isn't easy when her film underperforms at the box office. "It does sting, honestly. When you put so much of yourself into a film and it's appreciated critically but doesn't do well commercially, there's a moment of disappointment. But it's important to look at the positives, mainly to take what you've learnt from the experience and keep going," said the actress.

AGENCIES



Shriya on men, fatherhood

Mumbai: Actress Shriya Saran, in an exclusive conversation with this agency, has spoken candidly about how pregnancy and parenthood bring emotional turmoil not just for women, but also for husbands.

She highlighted how to-be and new fathers often struggle to understand and cope with the changes their partners go through during pregnancy.

Shriya reflected on how the emotional impact of pregnancy often affects the husband first, even though he may not completely understand what the woman is experiencing.

"Unfortunately, the first person who bears the impact is usually the husband, and most of the time, he doesn't fully understand it. Not because he doesn't want to, but because he isn't emotionally trained or informed," she said.

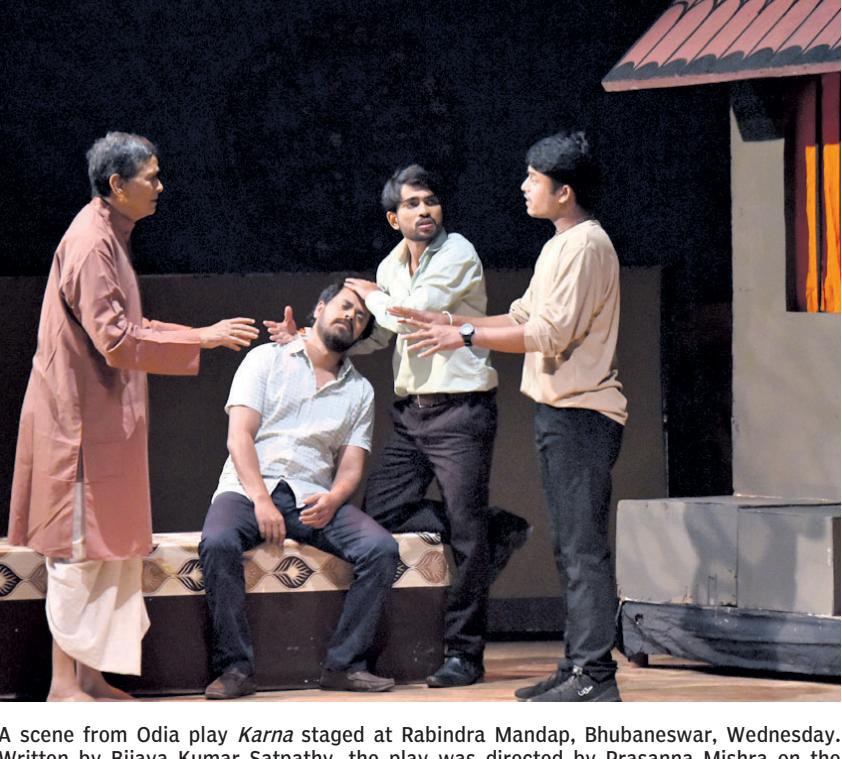
Shriya said that men are deeply affected, and are rarely prepared for what lies ahead.

She added how at times, for a pregnant woman, not having her husband around during vulnerable times is extremely difficult to cope with. "When you want someone to pass you a pillow or just call you silly for no reason, and they are not there, it really hurts. The husband not being there feels terrible," Shriya said.

On the professional front, Shriya has been receiving great reviews for her performance in her recently released web series *Space Gen*. She is also geared up for her movie *Drishyam 3*.

IANS

UTTAR PURUSH'S 3-DAY THEATRE FESTIVAL



A scene from Odia play *Karna* staged at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Wednesday. Written by Bijaya Kumar Satpathy, the play was directed by Prasanna Mishra on the second day of the event. The members of Uttar Purush performed the drama under Nataka Parikrama-2026

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

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.

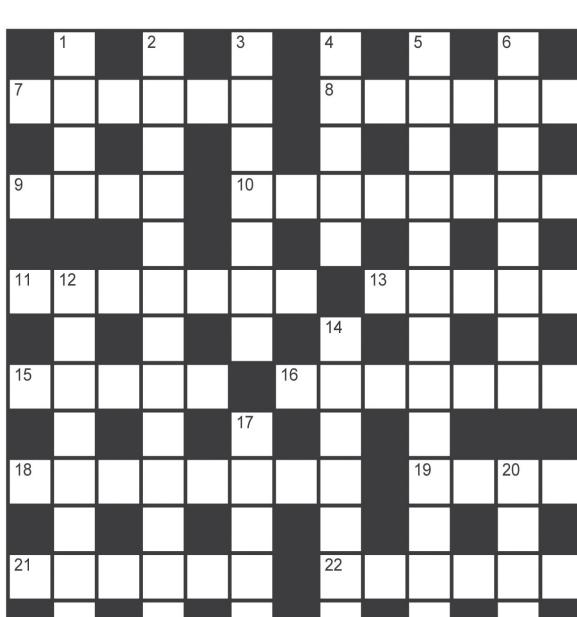
3	4	5		7	9
7	9		3		4
5		7	8		
8	3	5	9		
5					1
9	3	1	8		
3	6	5			
5	1				
2	1	4	3	5	

SOLUTIONS

R	A	M	B	L	E	S	P	A	R	S	E
A	A	A	E	A	O	N					
S	Y	M	P	T	S	T	O				
C	B	V	B	T	S	I					
A	I	O	L	E	A	L	A				
L	A	R	E								
A	R	E	N	A	S	T	A				
O	S	U	C	C	P	E	S				
S	U	C	C	P	E	S	E				
P	L	A	H	M	E	O					
R	O	T	S	E	M	P					
E	S	S	E	V	K						
Y	E	L	D	S	A	T	H	E	N	S	

FUN POST

CROSSWORD



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Across

- 7 Rough texture
- 19 Cut of meat
- 21 Pen name
- 22 Overwhelm
- 9 Oil grip.
- 10 Washes clothes
- 11 Scram
- 13 Suspect's excuse
- 15 Arm part
- 18 Worked up
- 20 Sporting dog

Down

- 1 Progresso product
- 2 Diamond or emerald (8,5)
- 3 Pablo Casals was one
- 4 Smell
- 5 Common insect that doesn't bite (5,8)
- 6 Dreadful
- 12 Overly self-important
- 14 Young child
- 17 Logger's leftover
- 20 Like some chatter or hands

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

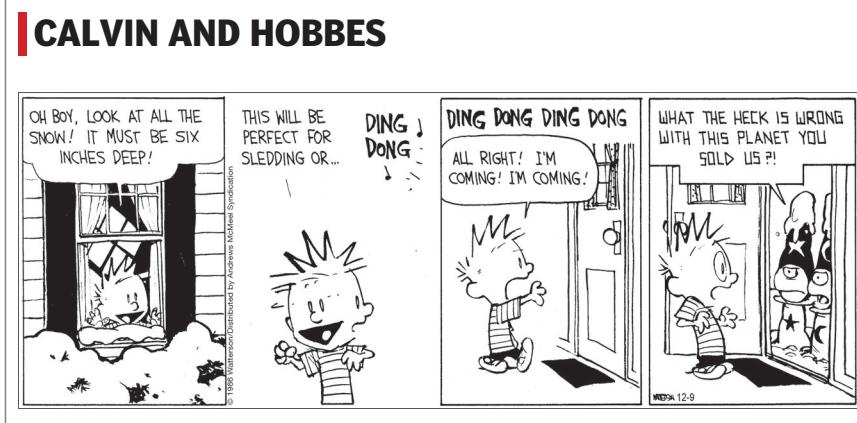
ICROSSWORD

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

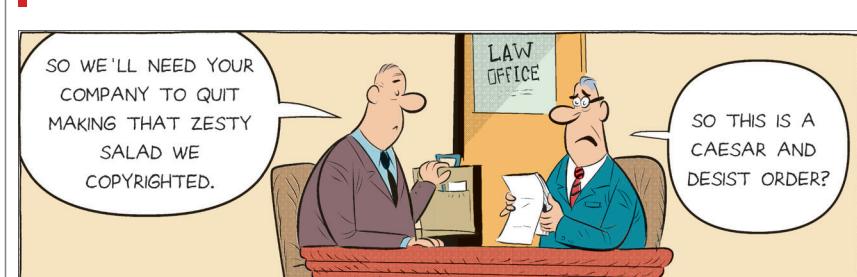
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



downtown

W Odisha core engine of industrial devpt: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Western Odisha is a core engine of the state's industrial development. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said while addressing the 25th edition of Enterprise Odisha 2026 at Rourkela Wednesday.

Majhi said, "The silver jubilee edition of Enterprise Odisha represents a new way of thinking for us—a mindset where we aspire to be the best in every sector. We will be the best, and we will compete with the best. With this confidence, we are moving forward."

"The theme of this year's event—'Odisha: Best Place to Live, Work and Do Business'—reflects our renewed vision that economic growth must go hand in hand with an improved quality of life. Industrial growth should bring better opportunities into the lives of every citizen," he said.

Highlighting the state government's industrial strategy, the CM said, "Our strategy is clear—to establish a few anchor industries in every region and develop hundreds of MSMEs around them as suppliers, vendors, logistics partners, fabricators, maintenance providers, packaging units and technology partners. This will ensure that our youth no longer need to migrate for jobs; opportunities



“The silver jubilee edition of Enterprise Odisha represents a new way of thinking for us—a mindset where we aspire to be the best in every sector. We will be the best, and we will compete with the best. With this confidence, we are moving forward

MOHAN CHARAN MAJHI | CM

will come to their doorstep."

The event marked the inauguration of 11 industrial projects with an investment of Rs 5,708 crore, generating employment for 4,183 people. This was followed by the grounding of nine projects worth Rs 3,176 crore, creating employment for 2,649 people.

During the event, Majhi said, "Western Odisha is a core engine of the state's industrial development."

The CM also participated in three key roundtable discussions with the Rourkela Chamber of Commerce, the Orissa Sponge Iron Manufacturing Association (OSIMA), and held a special interaction with delegations from Ranchi and Raipur. These engagements highlighted the growing RRR (Raipur-Ranchi-Rourkela) corridor reflecting enhanced regional collaboration

and shared growth prospects.

Through these roundtables, 22 MoUs worth Rs 43,349 crore were signed, generating employment for 18,985 people, while five investment intents worth Rs 8,677 crore, with an employment potential of 1,442, were received.

Industries and Skill Development & Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain said, "Enterprise Odisha 2026 is focused on delivery. Investor interest has already translated into MoUs and project intents, and our priority is to move swiftly from land allocation to grounding and production, particularly in downstream manufacturing and metal ancillaries across Western Odisha."

He also said that industrial expansion must be supported by skilled manpower.

Parking ban on key Cuttack road

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Jan 28: In a bid to ensure smooth traffic movement and enhance commuter safety, the twin city Commissionerate Police Wednesday prohibited parking of vehicles on the box drain road from Daitari Sahoo Allu Godown to Barapatra via Bajarakabati Traffic Chhak, a key road in the Silver City, under Sections 28 and 29 of the Odisha Urban Police (OUP) Act.

Commissioner of Police Suresh Dev Datta Singh promulgated the order citing frequent traffic congestion caused by indiscriminate parking on important city roads, which obstructs free vehicular movement and poses safety risks to the public.

As per the latest directive, parking of all vehicles has been strictly prohibited on the box drain road from Daitari Sahoo Allu Godown to Barapatra via Bajarakabati Traffic Chhak. The decision comes in view of rising vehicular density due to the presence of growing business hubs, educational institutions and hospitals in the area.

Police authorities warned that violation of the order will be treated as a punishable offence under Section 177 of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019, along with Section 223(b) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, both compoundable with fines.

Guv, CM, Naveen, OPCC chief condole death of Ajit Pawar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Ajit Pawar and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed in Maharashtra's Pune Wednesday morning

stow strength upon the grieving family to bear this sorrow. Om Shanti," Majhi said.

Patnaik, the former chief minister, said, "I'm shocked and saddened to learn about the passing away of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and co-passengers in the aircraft crash near Baramati."

"Heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and supporters. Om Shanti," he said in a social media post.

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo said, "Deeply shocked and saddened by the untimely demise

of Ajit Pawar ji, Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra. His sudden passing in the tragic plane crash is an irreparable loss to the state and to Indian politics. Ajit ji was a seasoned leader whose dedication to public service and commitment to Maharashtra's progress will always be remembered. As a colleague in governance, I deeply valued his vision and his ability to connect with people across all walks of life."

Singh Deo also said, "On behalf of Odisha, I join the nation in mourning this profound loss. My thoughts and prayers are with his family, colleagues, and the people of Maharashtra in this hour of grief."

OPCC president Bhakta Charan Das also condoled the tragic death of Pawar.

Taking to X, Das wrote: "Deeply shocked by the tragic passing of Maharashtra Deputy CM Shri Ajit Pawar in a plane crash. His demise is a great loss to public life and Maharashtra politics."

"My heartfelt condolences to his family and supporters. Om Shanti," the OPCC president stated. Pawar and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed in Maharashtra's Pune district Wednesday morning, officials said.

The report submitted by the commission places emphasis on strengthening the fiscal foundations of local bodies through a predictable and formula-based system. Special attention has been given to equity considerations, regional disparities, and the differentiated needs of rural and urban local governments," a CMO statement said.

The panel has also made both financial and non-financial recommendations for the overall development of local bodies.

The commission was mandated to recommend the principles that would govern the distribution between the state

Bhubaneswar: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Wednesday forecast dense fog at four places in Odisha till January 30 morning. Warning has been issued for isolated pockets in districts of Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Kendrapada and Bhadrak. The weather agency has also predicted a gradual rise in the minimum temperature by 2-3 degrees Celsius during the next two days, with no large change thereafter. The state has been witnessing a rise in day and night temperatures over the last few days after a prolonged cold spell. The minimum temperature in Bhubaneswar rose to 16.6 degrees Celsius Wednesday morning. The City had recorded below normal temperatures of 14.6 degrees Celsius January 27 and 14.5 degrees Celsius January 26. Similarly, Cuttack recorded a minimum temperature of 14.6 degrees Celsius Wednesday morning, compared to 13.6 degrees Celsius the previous day.

DENSE FOG TILL JAN 30 MORNING



8-HR BANDH: Otherwise busy Badambadi area in Cuttack wears a deserted look during the bandh by Navnirman Krushak Sangathan over alleged plight of farmers, Wednesday

PIC: RAJKISHORE MOHANTY

NIA starts probe into Sundarpada explosion

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: A day after a bomb explosion in Sundarpada area under Airfield police station here rendered four persons critically injured, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Wednesday began a probe into the matter, suspecting larger conspiracy.

According to sources, the NIA team has questioned the house owner as part of the

ongoing investigation. The team will also interrogate Shahnawaz Malik and others who sustained grievous injuries, once they recover. Besides, the NIA team has also visited the blast site to gather intelligence as part of their preliminary investigation.

"After the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that they were preparing the bomb to undertake some criminal activity. Shahnawaz and

his associate Amaya Malik, who were involved in making the bomb, are history-sheets. After they recover, we will take legal action against them. During investigation, we have also seized some incriminating articles from the location," said Bhubaneswar Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Jagmohan Meena.

Significantly, the explosion took place at a building in Azad Nagar area of Sundarpada

da when Shahnawaz, Amaya and two others were binding a crud bomb and it accidentally exploded causing injuries to four persons. Following the blast, fire and local police teams reached the spot to extinguish the blaze. The injured persons were rushed to a local hospital and a scientific team reached the post to conduct a thorough probe.

Further investigation into the incident is underway.

In record 299 days, ECoR crosses ₹2K-cr passenger revenue

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: East Coast Railway (ECoR) has achieved a major milestone by surpassing Rs 2,000 crore in passenger revenue within a record 299 days during the current financial year 2025-26, reflecting steady growth in passenger traffic and continuous improvement in rail services across the zone.

The achievement highlights a consistent year-on-year acceleration in revenue generation. ECoR had crossed the Rs 2,000 crore passenger revenue mark in 308 days in 2024-25, 331 days in 2023-24, and 365 days in 2022-23, underlining growing passenger confidence and the zone's sustained focus on safety, punctuality, and customer convenience.



The surge in passenger revenue has been driven by a series of passenger-centric initiatives, including expanded digital ticketing platforms, improved station accessibility, and continuous upgradation of passenger amenities to enhance the overall travel experience. To cater to peak-season demand, 1,523 special trains were operated during festivals and holidays, ECoR sources said.

Capacity augmentation further strengthened services, with 200 mail/express trains enhanced through the addition of 4,050 extra coaches, along with the permanent addition of 19 coaches for long-term service improvement. As part of efforts to improve safety and comfort, two trains were introduced with modern LHB rakes during the current financial year. Network expansion and connectivity received a boost with the launch of three new express services like Boudh-Bhubaneswar-Boudh Express and Sambalpur-Boudh-Sambalpur Express.

Passenger accessibility was further enhanced through additional stoppages for 21 trains, extension of three train pairs, and increased frequency of one train pair.

CUO-OUAT pact for agri research, outreach

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: In a major step towards strengthening research, innovation and outreach in agriculture and allied sectors, Central University of Odisha (CUO), Koraipat and the Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), Bhubaneswar recently signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU was formally exchanged in presence of OUAT VC Pravat Kumar Roul and CUO VC (I/C) N C Panda, in presence of senior officials and faculty members from both universities.

Speaking on the occasion, Panda said the MoU would open new avenues for academic and scientific collaboration between the two premier institutions.

"The agreement will facilitate the exchange of students, scientists and faculty members, along with sharing of methodologies, technologies, scientific literature and information," he said.

Panda added that such exchange programmes would significantly enhance scientific knowledge and practical skills in agriculture and allied disciplines. "In the long run, these initiatives will contribute to the economic development of farmers and the overall growth of the state," he noted.

As per the agreement, both universities will share laboratory facilities—subject to availability, and undertake collaborative research, extension and outreach activities in agriculture and other areas of mutual interest. Joint research projects, training

programmes and outreach initiatives aimed at addressing regional and national agricultural challenges will form key components of the collaboration.

The cooperation will be implemented through jointly developed work plans, outlining specific activities and clearly defining the respective contributions of both institutions, ensuring effective execution and measurable outcomes.

The MoU will remain valid for a period of three years, with provision for extension based on mutual consent and performance.

Officials from CUO present on the occasion included Manjushree Singh, Sanjay Kumar Pradhan and Anupam Dakua. From OUAT, Niranjan Panda and Susanta Kumar Swain were present.



BUDGING TALENT: Children perform during a cultural event organised by Sai Oneness Art & Dance School at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

CDMS 3.0 to transform contractor management

Department aims to curb corruption, improve construction quality and boost sector productivity using AI, ML, data analytics and the 'One PAN-One Licence' system



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: In a major push for transparency, efficiency and technology-driven governance, the Works Department Wednesday launched Contractor Database Management System (CDMS) 3.0, marking a key milestone in contractor management reforms in the state.

The upgraded digital platform was launched by Law, Works and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan to simplify contractor registration, strengthen accountability and improve delivery in the state's infrastructure sector.

The Department first introduced the CDMS application in 2018 as part of its e-governance initiative to streamline contractor registration and overcome limitations of the manual system. Building on this foundation and factoring in future needs, the platform has now been upgraded to CDMS 3.0, featuring a modern technological architecture and an enhanced operational framework.

"CDMS 3.0 will serve as a centralised digital repository, housing comprehensive contractor data, including personal and firm details, licences, certificates and performance records. The platform features

workflow management tools, analytical dashboards, Management Information System (MIS) reports and seamless integration with other government systems," officials said.

According to the Department, the adoption of cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and data analytics—along with the 'One PAN-One Licence' system—will help curb corruption, improve construction quality and enhance overall productivity in the sector.

Officials said the upgraded system is expected to benefit

CDMS 3.0 to store comprehensive information, including personal and firm details, licences, certificates and performance records

The platform offers workflow management, analytical dashboards, MIS reports and integration with other government systems

both contractors and government departments. Contractors can update profiles online, track application status and receive timely notifications, while departments will be able to efficiently manage contractor data, monitor performance and make faster, informed decisions.

With the launch of CDMS 3.0, the Department has taken a decisive step towards creating a more transparent, efficient and technology-enabled infrastructure ecosystem in Odisha.

e-IB portal to accept PWD IB bookings

Bhubaneswar: Marking a significant step towards digitising the booking process of Public Works department (PWD) Inspection Bungalows (IBs) located at Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konark, Law, Works and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan launched e-IB portal here Wednesday. The newly introduced platform has been developed to simplify and streamline the procedure for room booking and allotment in PWD IBs, under the Works department through a seamless digital interface. The initiative is expected to benefit both government officers and the general public by ensuring ease of access and faster service delivery. Key features of the portal includes online room booking and cancellation facilities, availability of all booking-related information at a single point, easy access from any location through the internet, ability to track booking and allotment status in real time. Officials said the digital initiative would make the booking system more transparent and accountable compared to the existing manual process. By eliminating delays and reducing paperwork, the e-IB portal is expected to play a crucial role in improving efficiency and convenience for users.

57-year-old sage pedals across Char Dham Yatra

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP



Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Carrying profound devotion in his heart, Sanjay Janardan Kharat, a 57-year-old sage from Maharashtra's Ahilya Nagar, pedals his bicycle through harsh weather and risky roads to complete the Char Dham Yatra and visit 12 Jyotirlingas.

Kharat began his spiritual journey November 1, 2024, carrying only a bedsheet, food and basic essentials on his old bicycle. Since then, he has covered 11 Jyotirlingas and three dhams, undeterred by the challenges along the way.

"I have now reached the final phase of my journey. I am on my way to visit the Puri Jagannath Temple, and after that, I will head to Kedarnath," said Kharat.

Despite harsh weather, his devotion has kept his spirit unbroken. He cycles as far as his body allows each day and rests at petrol stations or bus depots. "I cycle as much as possible daily and then rest to recover. In this journey, I have traveled fourteen thousand kilometers on cycle so far. I eat very little, and I never face difficulty finding food, as offerings from people and devotees are enough to

satisfy my hunger," he added.

As Sanjay's journey nears its conclusion in a couple of months, it has been fraught with challenges. At one point in Dholpur, Rajasthan, his bicycle was stolen, causing a significant setback, but it did not dampen his spirit.

"When I was in Rajasthan, my bicycle was stolen in Dholpur. I hit rock bottom, but I had some money with me, and with offerings from people, I bought a new cycle and continued my journey," said Kharat.

Kharat emphasised the importance of cycling, saying, "Cycling keeps us healthy, and people should not abandon it just because other comfortable transport options are available. We should choose health and embrace cycling, as it has a positive impact on our well-being."

WINGS INDIA 2026

Odisha showcases future-ready aviation vision

POST NEWS NETWORK



she participated as a panelist in the "Women in Aviation" Round Table Session, reinforcing Odisha's commitment to gender-inclusive growth and leadership across the aviation value chain.

Speaking on the occasion, Padhee said that the state is focused on encouraging girls to explore aviation early in their careers and, through convergence of departments and partners, creating an enabling ecosystem that allows women to enter, grow and lead in the aviation sector.

As part of its skilling-led development approach, the Commerce & Transport department Principal Secretary Usha Pad-

signed two Memoranda of Understanding Wednesday to strengthen aviation training infrastructure in Odisha.

A MoU with M/s Alchemist Aviation will facilitate the establishment of a Flying Training Organisation (FTO) at Dandbose Airport, Mayurbhanj, with an annual training capacity of around 50 pilots.

Another MoU with M/s BonV Aero will enable the setting up of a UAV (Drone) Training and Testing Centre at Rangeilunda Airstrip, Berhampur, training over 100 UAV pilots annually.

Odisha's aviation develop-

BMC presents ₹1,050cr Draft Budget for 2026-27



Mayurbhanj Utsav 2026 from Jan 30

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The Mayurbhanj Cultural Association, Bhubaneswar, will organise the historic Mayurbhanj Utsav 2026 from January 30 to February 1 at the Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya Campus, the organisers said at a press meet here Wednesday.

The three-day festival will bring together people from Mayurbhanj living in and around the Capital, promoting cultural bonding and vibrant interaction on a shared platform.

A key highlight of the Utsav will be its focus on nurturing young and emerging talent from remote areas of Mayurbhanj, giving them a prestigious platform to showcase their artistic skills. The festival will also feature performances by renowned dancers, musicians, singers, actors and literary figures of Odisha, adding grandeur and diversity to the celebrations.

The audience will enjoy spellbinding performances of the world-famous Mayurbhanj Chau Dance, along with Jhumar, folk and tribal dances, and modern contemporary presentations. These cultural extravaganzas will unfold on a grandly decorated stage over three vibrant evenings, promising a visual and artistic treat.

Beyond performances, visitors can savour the authentic flavours of Mayurbhanj, including delicacies like Mudhi-Mansa, Dala Khechudi, Ram Ruchuka Curry, and other traditional dishes. A craft mela featuring exquisite works in stone, bamboo and sabaigrass will further enhance the festive experience.

Mayurbhanj Utsav 2026 promises a vibrant celebration of tradition, talent, taste and togetherness, giving Bhubaneswar a unique window into the rich cultural heritage of Mayurbhanj.

In a major public health decision, the general council resolved to strictly enforce the state government's ban on gutkha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday presented its draft budget of ₹1,050 crore for the financial year 2026-27 during the 38th General Council and Special Budget Meeting at BMC headquarters here.

Out of the total proposed outlay, ₹300 crore is expected from BMC's own revenue, while ₹750 crore will come as government grant.

Addressing the council, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das stressed the importance of enhancing BMC's own revenue collection, stating that increased revenue would directly impact the quan-

turn of grants received from the 15th and 16th Finance Commissions. She advised all officials to work strictly within rules and regulations to strengthen the corporation's financial position.

Delivering the welcome address, BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana sought the coordination of corporators to make the upcoming Patha Utsav at In-

The council discussed the future of Urban Health and Wellness Centres (UHWC) operating from rented premises. As per government directions, rent payments will no longer be made, and these centres will be shifted to government or own buildings. However, the council unanimously decided that no UHWC under BMC will be shut down.

Work on a state-of-the-art fish market near Pandara has already begun, the council was informed. Directions were issued to complete the ISCKON and Rasulgarh drainage projects before the onset of the monsoon. Desilting of major drains as well as drains in inner lanes is also to be completed before the rainy season.

The council further decided to immediately start the renovation of the Chandrasekharpur Kalyan Mandap and to rehabilitate the affected families of Hatapodi No 1 within 30 days. The mayor also proposed the construction of ward offices in all wards by the end of the next financial year.

3 arrested for smuggling 360 litres of illicit liquor

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: The Bhubaneswar Excise Department Wednesday conducted a raid at Vani Vihar Square, under Saheed Nagar police station, and arrested three youths with 360 litres of illegally distilled (ID) liquor.

Acting on a reliable tip-off, the excise team intercepted the trio in front of the Sani Temple and seized the contraband.

The accused have been identified as Biswanath Laguri (46), Gorachand Beshra (21) and Chandan Mahali (21), all residents of Mayurbhanj district, officials said.

A case has been registered in this connection, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the source of the liquor and any links to a larger smuggling network.

All the accused have been forwarded to court and the probe into the matter is underway.



Saveful app launched to cut food waste, grocery costs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 28: Australian food-tech platform Saveful was launched here Wednesday, marking its entry into the Indian market with an AI-driven app aimed at reducing household food waste and rising grocery costs.

Launched in collaboration with Centurion University of Technology and Management (CUTM)—the national hub for Saveful's India rollout—the app helps households plan meals using existing kitchen ingredients while tracking financial and environmental savings.

Speaking on the occasion, university Vice Chancellor Supriya Pattanayak said the initiative aligns with the university's commitment to sustainability and the circular economy. She described Saveful as more than a digital tool,

calling it a practical extension of the university's Zero Waste Campus philosophy that empowers students and communities to practise responsible consumption in daily life.

Co-Founder and CEO of Saveful Kim McDonnell said India is a key market in the platform's global expansion. She noted that launching Saveful in Bhubaneswar with Centurion University would help drive community-led change while delivering tangible economic and environmental benefits to households.

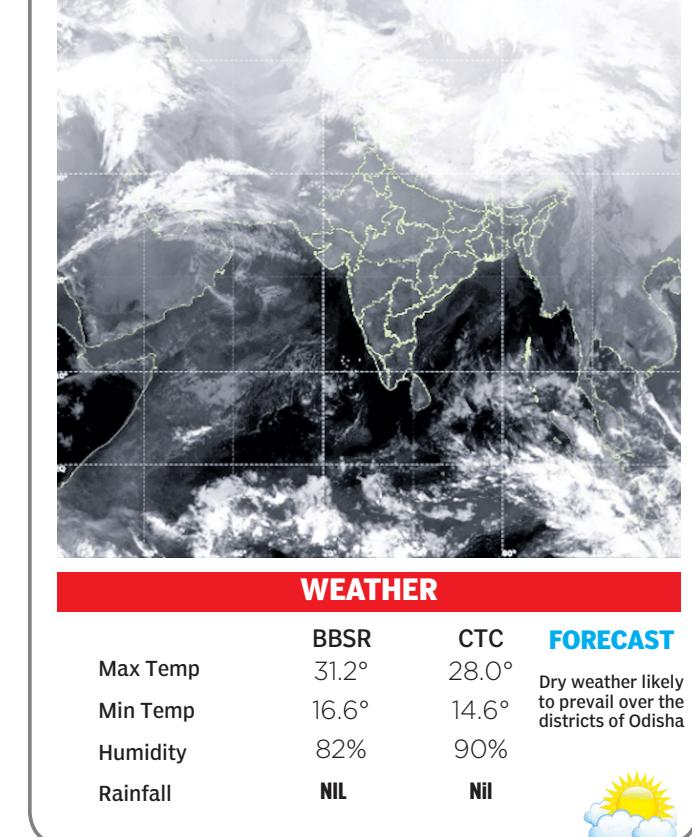
Under the partnership, Saveful will be rolled out across Centurion University campuses and integrated into community outreach programmes in and around Bhubaneswar. Users will be able to track food savings, cost reductions and environmental impact through a personalised dashboard.



MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	92.08 ▲ 0.62	SENSEX	82344.68 ▲ 487.20	GOLD	₹163,892 ▲ ₹6193
EURO	110.07 ▲ 0.05	NIFTY	25342.75 ▲ 167.35	SILVER	₹382,000 ▲ ₹25721

WEATHER



BARGARH BANDH SPONTANEOUS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Jan 28: The Odisha bandh call given by Navnirman Krushak Sangathan (NNKS) received spontaneous support across this district as business establishments and markets remained closed and vehicular movement came to a standstill from 6am to 2pm Wednesday.

All government and private establishments remained shut as agitators prevented officials from attending their offices while all the educational institutions were also closed during the period.

No untoward incidents were reported from any part of the district, said reports. As a precautionary measure, police were deployed in sensitive areas to maintain law and order, an official said.

The bandh call by NNKS assumes significance as problems regarding the sale of Kharif paddy remain unresolved, even if Rabi cultivation has begun. This has triggered growing resentment among farmers in Bargarh district, known as the rice bowl of Odisha.

Against this backdrop, Sanjukta Krushak Sangathan also called for an eight-hour bandh in the district, pressing for a four-point charter of demands. The demands included the resignation of Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo over allegations of mocking farmers instead of



A deserted road in Bargarh

All government and private establishments remained shut as agitators prevented officials from attending their offices while all the educational institutions were also closed during the period

addressing their grievances, immediate resolution of paddy procurement issues, withdrawal of fines imposed in the name of pollution, a halt to smart meter connections, and provision of 300 units of free electricity to farmers.

In Bargarh town, bandh supporters staged a sit-in by parking vehicles on the main road at Gandhi Chhak. Representatives from several political parties and organisations, including the Congress, Aam

Aadmi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Koshal Sena, Bargarh Nagarik Manch, Samvidhan Suraksha Manch, Bhim Army and various voluntary organisations, participated in the protest.

Addressing a protest meeting, leaders including Sanjukta Krushak Sangathan adviser Ramesh Mohapatra, Utpanna Bhoi, Niranjan Pradhan, Rabishankar Pradhan, Ishant Bhoi, Sudam Patra, Abhimanyu Pradhan, Koshal

Sena leader Birbal Mahakud, district Congress president Hardeep Singh, Pandab Karna, Pradeep Debata, AAP leader Bhavani Sahu, former Bargarh MLA Sadhu Nepak, Bargarh Nagarik Manch president Bhishmadev Saraf, Shayan Panda, Samvidhan Suraksha Manch's Pabitra Deheri, Purandar Bhosagar, farmer Sudam Sahu, Jugunu Jagadala and Purna Pradhan strongly criticized the state government.

During the protest, an effigy of the Deputy Chief Minister was burnt at Gandhi Chhak. The bandh was led by farmer leader Arabind Panda at Gaisilet. The bandh call was also total in Atabira block with normal life coming to a standstill.

Man gets 20-yr jail for raping minor

Angul: A special POCSO court Wednesday sentenced a man to 20 years in prison for the 2020 kidnapping and rape of a minor girl. Additional District and Sessions Judge-cum-Judge, special POCSO court Biranchi Narayan Mishra found Harishankar Behera, a resident of Mahanga in Cuttack district, guilty after reviewing testimony from 15 witnesses. Special Public Prosecutor Ranjan Kumar Patra and advocate Prashant Kumar Rath represented the state during the proceedings. According to court records, Behera contacted the victim through a "wrong number" phone call, which led to a relationship. Later, Behera lured the girl from her home with a promise of marriage September 2, 2020. He reportedly took her first to Cuttack and later to a rented house in Patia area of Bhubaneswar. Following a complaint filed by the victim's family, Angul police registered a case and eventually tracked the pair to Patia. Police rescued the girl and arrested Behera. In addition to the prison term, the court ordered the district legal services authority (DLSA) to provide ₹3 lakh in compensation to the victim.

Gupchup vendor found murdered

POST NEWS NETWORK

and brought Rohit, who was lying unconscious near the body, to the police station for interrogation. Locals alleged that Rohit may be involved in the killing, though police have not confirmed this.

Police sources said the victim and Rohit were friends but had developed differences over an issue a few days ago. Injury marks found on Rohit's body suggest a possible scuffle between the two prior to the killing, the sources said.

A sniffer dog and a scientific team collected blood samples as part of the investigation. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination, while a further investigation is underway, said SDPO Pradeep Kumar Das.

Police recovered the body

Cylinder blast, no bomb: Cops

Chhatarpur: Police Wednesday cleared the air over a suspected bomb explosion that occurred in the wee hours of Tuesday at the backyard of the house of G Kamraju Reddy of Chikalkhandi under Chhatarpur police limits. Chhatarpur SDPO Chandan Kumar Ghadei, along with IIC Sabayasachi Malla, told the media that Reddy had lit an 'akhand deepa' near a gas cylinder. The flames of the lamp caused fire to the already leaking gas cylinder. This resulted in explosion of the cylinder causing severe damage to the house.

Chorus grows louder for whale skeleton museum in Balikuda



POST NEWS NETWORK

Balikuda, Jan 28: Residents of Balikuda block in Jagatsinghpur district have urged the state government to preserve the skeleton of a whale recently found dead near the Devi River mouth, and establish a museum in Bandar village area to house it.

The carcass of the massive whale was discovered four days ago at Nadiakhia under the Marine Police Station limits. Forest officials conducted a postmortem and destroyed the flesh using chemicals, while deciding to send the skeleton to Nandankanan Zoological Park or Bhitarkanika National Park, according to Bandar forest ranger Priyabrata Choudhury.

As soon as the news of the plan to shift the skeleton spread, strong reactions started pouring in from locals, who argued that the whale's remains should be preserved in Bandar village itself.

They maintained that the area, home to Maa Bandarei shrine, already attracts thousands of visitors during the tourist season. The tourists pay visit to the temples, organise feasts in the nearby forests, enjoy boat rides and make trips to the sea. A museum showcasing the whale skeleton, they contend, would further boost tourism and compel the government to recognise Bandar village as a tourist destination.

Community organisations including Mal

Marichpur Development Council, Talamal Bikash Mancha, Voice of Balikuda, Maa Bandarei Youth Union, Kinaram Biswal Foundation, Pragati Patha Ama Sangathan, Lotus Club and the Coastal Action Committee have warned that the skeleton should not be moved elsewhere.

Many have echoed the demand, saying the museum would enhance the region's cultural and ecological significance. A signature campaign is underway, with petitions being submitted to the District Collector, legislators, ministers and MPs.

Several social media groups are also pressing the state government to act in favour of the community's interest.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
GANJAM IR&BI DIVISION NO.1, BERHAMPUR**
Phone/Fax (0680) 2233683, e-mail: cernb1_bam@yahoo.com
'e' Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. SE R&B Divn. No.1 Bam 56/2025-26
No.B-1009
Name of Work : Building & Road Works
No.of Works : 5 (Five) Nos.
Estimated Cost : Approximately Rs.5.29 Lakh to Rs.43.19 Lakh
Period of Completion : 2 (Two), 3 (Three) & 4 (Four) Calendar Months
Date and Time of availability of bid document in the Portal : From 10.00 Hours of 30.01.2026 to 16.00 hours of 05.02.2026
Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : Upto 16.00 hours of 05.02.2026
Name & Address of the Officer : Superintending Engineer Ganjam (R&B) Division No.1 Berhampur
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal [https://tendersodisha.gov.in](http://tendersodisha.gov.in)
Sd/- Superintending Engineer Ganjam (R&B) Division No.1, Berhampur
OIPR-

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
ADDITIONAL SPILLWAY DIVISION, BURLA**
PHONE NO.:0663-2430080
No.A-1324
'e' Procurement Notice No. ASA-06/2025-26 (Online)
1. Name of Work : Supply, Installation and commissioning of 25 KVA transformer and overhead 11 KV lines near the Lunch Station site for the office building of the Additional Spillway Project of Hirakud Dam for the year 2024-25
2. Nos of Work : 01 (One) No.
3. Amount Put to tender : Rs.16.75 Lakh approximately
4. Period of Completion : As per D.T.C.N. 60 days
5. E.M.D. : Rs.17,00/-
6. Date and Time of availability of Bid document in the portal : Date:29.01.2026 at 11:00 AM to Date: 10.02.2026, upto 01:00 PM
7. Last date/ time of receipt of Bids in the Portal : Date:10.02.2026, upto 01:00 PM
8. Last date & time of seeking tender clarification : Dt.10.02.2026 upto 12:00 PM
9. Date of Opening of Bid : Dt.10.02.2026 at 04:00 PM
10. Name and Address of the Officer Inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Additional Spillway Division, Burla At/Po-Burla - 768017 Dist.-Sambalpur Email:eaasdshirakud@gmail.com/seadditionalspillway@gmail.com
Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Additional Spillway Division, Burla
OIPR-

Blackbuck census in Ganjam starts today

DWARKA PRASAD PATNAIK, OP

Chhatarpur/Bhanjanagar, Jan 28: The annual blackbuck census in Ghumusar South, Ghumusar North and Berhampur Forest Ranges will begin Thursday.

According to reports, altogether 18 units have been formed comprising forest officials and students who have been imparted training on the procedure of the census at a special camp organised inside Lalsingh nursery of North Ghumusar Wednesday.

During the training session, divisional forest officer (DFO) Himanshu Sekhar Mohanty explained to the officials about the necessary steps to be taken to ensure smooth conduct of the census.

Assistant conservator of forests (ACF) Bibek Das held a detailed session on the rules and

regulations of the survey. He said that no one is allowed to take selfies with the endangered species.

He further mentioned to strictly maintain the integrity of the census reports. The exercise will be conducted in two phases during the day – one phase will be conducted from 6am to 9am and the other between 4pm and 6pm. The ACF said they anticipate an increase in the blackbuck population from the count of 404 last year.

"Conservation of these animals has been satisfactory so far, as there are chances of a rise in their count," Das added.

Among other trainers were ACF Bimal Pradhan, Mujagarh ranger Bimbadhar Sahu, Tarasagar ranger Prasant Behera, central range forest officer Prithviraj Pradhan and forest animal expert Uma Biswal.

20-yr RI for rape

Baripada: A fast-track special court (FTSC) here in Mayurbhanj district Wednesday sentenced man to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for raping a woman, finding her alone in 2022. The Ad-Hoc Additional District and Sessions Judge, FTSC, Santosh Kumar Nayak convicted the accused and imposed a fine of ₹10,000. The court ordered that the convict would undergo an additional six months in jail in case of default in payment of the fine. The court further directed the Mayurbhanj district legal services authority (DLSA) to provide compensation of ₹2 lakh to the survivor. The convict has been identified as Jishunath Hembra, 38, a resident of Tilaposi village under Morada police limits in the district. According to the prosecution, the incident took place around 7pm September 2, 2022, when the victim was returning home after attending a funeral. Hembra allegedly took advantage of her being alone, dragged her to a secluded place and raped her. Following the incident, a complaint was lodged with Morada police who registered a case (235/22), conducted an investigation and produced the accused before the court, said Public Prosecutor Manoranjan Pattnaik.

Stir over Utkal Alumina's unmet promises continues

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada/Tikiri, Jan 28: Displaced and project-affected people in Kashipur block of Rayagada district have launched an agitation, demanding basic civic amenities and a 0.01 per cent equity share in Utkal Alumina International Ltd.

Despite more than 18 years of bauxite mining operations at Baphimali, residents allege that promises of development have remained unfulfilled. They claim that access to education, healthcare, drinking water, housing and road connectivity is still lacking in the affected villages.

Under the banner of Utkal Alumina Land Losers and Project-Affected Association, the project-affected villagers



Tuesday began a dharna near the company's RMP gate, warning of an intensified agitation if their demands are ignored.

Association president Natha Majhi alleged that the company has failed to provide permanent jobs to eligible displaced families and has discontinued allowances promised earlier. Protesters also raised concerns over pollution from red mud ponds, ash ponds and conveyor belts, claiming it has led to

health problems and agricultural losses.

Among their key demands are - permanent employment with family benefits, financial assistance for higher education of children, pollution control measures, compensation for crop damage, reopening of night schools and establishment of a 50-bed hospital in the area.

Company authorities had not responded till Wednesday as the protest continued.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RWSS DIVISION, BERHAMPUR

Near Jarada Bunglow, Pin - 760004, Ph - 0680-2296344, erwss_bam@nic.in, rwssbam@gmail.com

Government of Odisha "e" Procurement Notice

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Bid Identification No. EERWSSBAM-25/2025-26

No.25001/6/25/26 : The Superintending Engineer, RWSS& Division, Berhampur, Ganjam on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids in Single Cover system according to the norm of "e" Procurement system in online mode for Supplying all labour, material and T&P for Construction of Meeting Hall for Additional Chief Engineer, RWSS& Circle, Berhampur inside premises of RWSS& Division, Berhampur in Ganjam District from the eligible contractor as per DTCT.

1	Name of the work	Supplying all labour, material and T&P for Construction of Meeting Hall for Additional Chief Engineer, RWSS& Circle, Berhampur inside premises of RWSS& Division, Berhampur in Ganjam District from the eligible contractor as per DTCT.
2	No. of Work (Tender)	01 No.
3	Estimated cost (Approximate)	Rs.11.81 Lakhs
4	Period of completion	180 days
5	Date & Time of availability of bid document in the Portal	From 02.02.2026 at 11.00 hrs to 16.02.2026 up to 17.00 hrs
6	Last date & time for seeking clarification	13.02.2026 up to 17.00 hrs
7	Dt. of opening of Bid	17.02.2026 at 11.00 hrs
8	Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the Portal	16.02.2026 up to 17.00 hrs
9	Name & address of the Officer Inviting Bids	Superintending Engineer, RWSS Division, Near Jarada Bunglow, Berhampur-760004 Dist. Ganjam, Odisha
10	Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in	Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal https://tendersodisha.gov.in

OIPR-25001/25035/1/25-26/0006

Sd/- Superintending Engineer RWSS& Division, Berhampur

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA

PANCHAYAT SAMITI : NARAYANPATNA

PR & DW DEPARTMENT, ODISHA

E-Mail ID : ori-narayanpatna@nic.in

Letter No.247/2026/TCN.09/2025-26

Dated : 28.01.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Bid Identification No. 09 of 2025-26 of B.D.O., Narayanpatna

1. Bid documents consisting of specification, the Bill of Quality and the Tender Call Notice can be seen in the Govt. website <http://tendersorissa.gov.in/nicgep/app>.

Sl.	Name of the Work	Amount put to Tender (Approx. In Lakhs)	Class of Contractor	Cost of Tender Paper	E.M.D. (Bid Security) in Rs	Period of completion (Calendar Month)

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J&K fire, emergency services dept reels under 41% staff shortage

103 posts fell vacant after termination of employees December 15 last year, following findings of irregularities in their recruitment five years ago



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Jan 28: The Jammu and Kashmir Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services is grappling with nearly 41 per cent manpower shortage with 1,490 posts vacant against a sanctioned strength of 3,639, an RTI reply has revealed.

Of this, 103 posts fell vacant after termination of employees December 15 last year, following findings of irregularities in their recruitment five years ago.

"The department currently has 2,149 personnel in position, with vacancies across gazetted and non-gazetted cadres under both direct recruitment and promotional quotas. The issue has been taken up with the administrative department," the fire and emergency services department informed Jammu-based RTI activist Raman Kumar Sharma in a written response Tuesday.

Sharing the information with PTI, Sharma said the Directorate of Fire and Emergency Services in Jammu and Kashmir is operating with about 59 per cent of its sanctioned staff strength.

"The shortfall is significant for an emergency response department, especially as more than 50,000 major and minor fire incidents were reported across the Union Territory in the past decade," Sharma said.

According to the data, the

operational cadres remain the worst affected. Of the 1,619 sanctioned posts of firemen and firemen drivers, only 804 are occupied, while 815 posts – more than half – are vacant, raising concerns over the department's emergency response capabilities.

Senior and supervisory ranks are also facing acute shortages with both posts of joint directors, all six posts of deputy directors, and eight assistant directors out of the 16 sanctioned posts are vacant. The department is also without a prosecution officer, while all 12 telephone operator posts, five radio mechanics, and three RTM operators remain unfilled, it said.

Other vacant posts include 23 divisional fire officers, 44 station officers, 32 leading firemen, 72 firemen and one administrative officer, the data said.

The second highest number of vacancies has been reported among drivers (314) besides sub officers (90). Several essential support positions, including medical and accounting staff, also remain vacant.

Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha dismissed 103 employees in the department December 15, 2025 after they were found to have been illegally appointed through a manipulated recruitment process five years ago.

The action followed the find-

ings of an inquiry committee and subsequent investigation by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) into alleged irregularities in the 2020 recruitment of firemen and drivers in the department.

In response to another query, the department said 3,490 major and 48,869 minor fire incidents took place across Jammu and Kashmir between 2015 and 2025.

Jammu accounted for the highest number of 637 major fire incidents, followed by Srinagar (581), Budgam (482), Ganderbal (468), Ramban (310), Baramulla (212), Kupwara (127), Anantnag (123), Bandipora (111), Kulgam (99), Pulwama (93), Kathua (75), Shopian (36), Doda (30), Samba (32), Kishtwar (24), Rajouri (18), Udhampur (14), Reasi (11) and Poonch (7).

Jammu also witnessed the highest number of 12,276 minor fire incidents in the last decade, followed by Srinagar (5,119), Baramulla (4,493), Kupwara (3,849), Anantnag (3,819), Samba (2,856), Pulwama (2,431), Kathua (2,358), Budgam (1,881), Kulgam (1,555), Shopian (1,282), Udhampur (1,240), Rajouri (1,234), Doda (1,181), Poonch (950), Reasi (870), Ramban (629), Bandipora (600), Kishtwar (583) and Ganderbal (163), the data showed.

The RTI activist said the department is crucial for fire and emergency services across the Union Territory and must be strengthened to ensure coverage in remote and far-flung areas, many of which remain cut off during winter.

Highlighting their operational importance, he said the fire and emergency services played a key role in Operation Sindoora in May last year, responding effectively to emergencies amid cross-border shelling.

Strengthening the department, he said, is essential for improving response times, enhancing readiness and providing vital services to high-risk communities across Jammu and Kashmir.

Under the revised rules, applicants seeking permission to remove sand or other minor minerals from lands and tanks under the

Tamil Nadu's major cities operate with just 18 buses per lakh population

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Jan 28: Tamil Nadu's major cities operate with just 18 buses per lakh population, far below the benchmark of 60 set by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, according to an actionable road-map titled 'Tamil Nadu Urban Mobility Charter 2031', released Wednesday.

The charter attributes this gap to the misallocation of infrastructure spending, with nearly 70 per cent of urban transport budgets funnelled into vehicle-centric projects such as flyovers and road widening.

Prepared by the Sustainable Mobility Network (SMN), a coalition of more than 30 civil



society organisations across India, the charter argues that this investment pattern has contributed directly to the decline of public transport and a sharp rise in road fatalities in the state's major cities.

"In Chennai alone, 40 per cent of residents lack access to a bus stop within walking distance, while pedestrians account for 30-50 per cent of road fatalities in cities such as Chennai and Coimbatore. Air pollution remains a serious public health risk," the charter noted.

"Modes that receive the least investment-walking, cycling, and public transport-account for 67 per cent of trips across the state," it added.

To address these challenges, the charter proposes a fundamental shift in the state's transport investment strategy.

CM flags off free buses for women

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin flagged off pink-coloured special free buses exclusively for women in five major routes here Wednesday. This initiative is part of the Vidiyal Payanam scheme which first began in May 2021 to provide free travel for women. The new buses are easily identifiable by their pink colour, a feature previously introduced by Deputy Chief Minister Udhayandhi Stalin in August 2022 to help passengers distinguish free buses. In the first phase of this dedicated rollout, 10 buses have been deployed across five major routes, including Vallalar Nagar to Ennore and Broadway to Perumbakkam, with two buses allocated per route. In a significant move toward gender inclusion, these buses are operated by women conductors who have been provided with special pink uniforms.



A train moves amid snowfall on the Katra-Srinagar rail section, in Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Vehicular traffic fully restored on Jammu-Srinagar National Highway



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, Jan 28: Traffic on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway was fully restored Wednesday, a day after being closed for vehicular movement in view of heavy snowfall, officials said.

They said heavy motor vehicles, including trucks, were allowed to ply on the 270-km highway – the only all-weather road link connecting the Kashmir Valley with the rest of the country. "The highway has been restored fully, and traffic has been allowed to ply on both directions," an official said.

Earlier in the day, only light motor vehicles were allowed to ply on the road.

According to the officials, National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) personnel sprinkled salt and urea to get rid of frosty conditions on the road and ensure safe driving.

The reopening of the highway has come as a relief for the people, especially tourists, who were stranded in the Valley in the wake of its closure following inclement weather.

Most parts of Kashmir received snowfall Tuesday, which led to the suspension of traffic on the highway and flight operations at the Srinagar airport.

Fresh snowfall across Kash-

TAMIL NADU TIGHTENS MINOR MINERAL RULES

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chennai, Jan 28: The Tamil Nadu government has amended key provisions of the Tamil Nadu Minor Mineral Concession Rules, 1959, introducing a refundable security deposit system for permission-holders seeking to remove sand and other minor minerals from lands and tanks under the

control of various government departments.

The move is aimed at strengthening regulatory oversight, preventing excess quarrying, and ensuring the protection and restoration of waterbodies.

Under the revised rules, applicants seeking permission to remove sand or other minor minerals must now pay

a refundable security deposit in addition to the application fee. The security deposit will be equivalent to two times the seigniorage fee payable for the quantity of mineral applied for.

At the same time, the government has significantly increased the application fee from Rs 1,500 to Rs 5,000. The amended provisions also redefine the procedure to be

followed in cases where a permission-holder exceeds the permitted quantity of mineral removal or violates the conditions attached to the permission-holder.

As per the new rule, the District Collector is empowered to cancel the permission after providing the permission-holder an opportunity to be heard. In such cases, the difference in

CM Stalin announces additional Waqf Tribunal in Coimbatore

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kumbakonam (Tamil Nadu), Jan 28: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Wednesday announced a series of welfare measures for the Muslim community, including additional Waqf Tribunal in Coimbatore and burial grounds or Kabristans where they are currently unavailable.

He also launched a scathing attack on the opposition AIADMK, accusing the party of betraying minorities to appease their "masters" in Delhi.

The chief minister was addressing the Mahalla Jamath Coordination State Conference organised by the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) here and announced five major measures for the community.

"While Waqf Tribunals are currently functioning in Chennai and Madurai, an additional tribunal will be established in Coimbatore district. In places where there are no burial grounds or Kabristans, lands will be identified and established by the Municipal Corporations," said CM Stalin.

Stalin also announced that the pension for 1,537 Ulamas

(scholars) registered with the Tamil Nadu Waqf Board will be hiked from Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000 while the family pension for 44 members will see an increase from Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,500.

He further stated that the government subsidy for 1,000 Ulamas to purchase two wheelers will be doubled from Rs 25,000 to Rs 50,000. He also said Urdu teacher vacancies in government schools would be filled immediately. Mahalla Jamath organisations act as social service bodies centered around mosques for social help, service, and reform and are fundamentally important in Islamic culture, Stalin said.

"You are proving that these are not just places for prayer, but are linked to social unity, social development, and education," he added.

Recalling how a Milad-un-Nabi festival held in Tiruvarur served as the bridge that connected DMK stalwarts, its founder CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi, the chief minister lauded the deep historical alliance between the Dravidian movement and the Muslim community.

"Without AIADMK's support that bill would have failed in the Rajya Sabha," he claimed.

motivation for the Dravidian government to provide Rs 1,000 as educational scholarships to 1,11,159 Muslim female students studying in government and government-aided schools even when the Union government stopped the educational scholarships provided to minority students, the CM said. On the political front, Stalin characterised the upcoming 2026 Assembly elections as a battle between those who protect Tamil Nadu's welfare and those aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He specifically targeted AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palanisamy claiming the former Chief Minister's name had earned a place in the dictionary as a definition for "betrayal".

"If we count his betrayals they are as long as the Great Wall of China," Stalin said.

He alleged that the AIADMK's support in the Rajya Sabha was the sole reason the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was passed.

"Without AIADMK's support that bill would have failed in the Rajya Sabha," he claimed.

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
LOWER INTRA CANAL DIVISION NO-III, BANGOMUNDA,
AT-PO-BORABHALA, DIST-BALANGIR, ODISHA,PIN-767040**

e-Procurement Notice No. SELICD-01/2025-26, Dt. 17.01.2026 (online)

E-mail ID: eelcd3bangomunda@gmail.com

1st CORRIGENDUM

Dated: 21.01.2026

No. A-1333: In partial modification of this office e-Procurement Notice No. SELICD-01/2025-26, dated 17.01.2026 (online), issued by the Superintending Engineer, Lower Intra Canal Division No-III, Bangomunda, it is hereby notified that due to unavoidable circumstances, the following amendment has been made: The Bid Submission Closing Time has been revised to 10.00 AM on 02.02.2026 in place of 5.00 PM on 01.02.2026. All other terms and conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged.

Sd/- (Er. Soumya Kishore Jaipuri)

Superintending Engineer

Lower Intra Canal Division No.III, Bangomunda

**ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର
ଅଧ୍ୟୁଷଣ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରୀକରଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ,
ଯାଜମ୍ପୁର ଜଳସେବନ ବିଭାଗ**

No. 32001/7/2526

e-Procurement Notice No.05/2025-26

1. ରାଜ୍ୟାଳୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

: ୨୩ ପାତା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

2. ରାଜ୍ୟାଳୟ ସାମାଜିକ ସାମାଜିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

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3. ରାଜ୍ୟାଳୟ ସାମାଜିକ ସାମାଜିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

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5. ରାଜ୍ୟାଳୟ ସାମାଜିକ ସାମାଜିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

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6. ରାଜ୍ୟାଳୟ ସାମାଜିକ ସାମାଜିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

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7. ରାଜ୍ୟାଳୟ ସାମାଜିକ ସାମାଜିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ

: ୩୬ ପାତା କ

national

of the day quote

The President's address covered the full spectrum of national development, reflecting a strong commitment to inclusive and people-centric growth that reaches every segment of society, and capturing our collective aspiration to build a strong, self-reliant, and inclusive *Vikas Bharat*

C P RADHAKRISHNAN | VICE PRESIDENT

Some provisions of the new UGC rules to form 'equity committees' in government colleges and private universities to resolve caste-based discrimination are being opposed by only those from the general category who have a casteist mentality, terming them conspiratorial and discriminatory. This is absolutely not appropriate

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

We have built an agro-industrial park over eight acres of land in Singur. We have commissioned a private industrial park where Amazon and Flipkart will set up warehouses and generate employment for thousands of people in Singur

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

SHORT TAKES

Another 100 stray dogs killed in T'gana village

Hyderabad: Nearly 100 stray dogs were allegedly killed in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana, taking the toll to 1,200 in the state since December 2025, animal rights activists claimed. A FIR was registered in connection with the latest incident of alleged culling of canines, against three persons including the son of a village panchayat president (sarpanch), police said Wednesday. An animal welfare activist M Preethi, in a complaint to police stated that about 100 stray dogs were killed in Thimmaipally village 10 days ago by administering poisonous injections by hiring dog killers for Rs 18,000 and the carcasses were buried two kms away from the village.

36 escape as sleeper pvt bus catches fire

Shivamogga (Karnataka): Thirty-six passengers had a narrow escape, with six sustaining injuries, after a private sleeper bus caught fire in this district, police said Wednesday. The incident occurred late Tuesday night at Arasalu-Suduru in Hosanagar taluk. The bus was en route to Bengaluru via Shivamogga from Hosanagar, police added.

Man shot dead near SSP's office in Mohali

Chandigarh: Two unidentified assailants Wednesday fatally shot a man near the SSP's office in Punjab's Mohali, police said. The victim had gone to a court with his wife when the assailants fired several rounds at him, killing him on the spot.

Ex Arunachal minister Takar Marde no more

Itanagar: Former Arunachal Pradesh minister Takar Marde died at a hospital in New Delhi Wednesday morning. He was 64. Marde is survived by three wives, three sons and a daughter. Born July 9, 1961 at Aya Marde village in Upper Subansiri district, Marde started his political journey in 1987 as a zilla parishad member. From 1992 to 1998, he served as anchal samiti member.



Under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which was started for poor patients, more than 11 crore free medical treatments have been given in hospitals across the country till last year. During the last year alone, 2.5 crore poor patients have received free medical treatment under this scheme

DROUPADI MURMU | PRESIDENT

BUDGET SESSION

Oppn to protest against MGNREGA, SIR issues



Leaders of several Opposition parties of the INDIA Bloc met here in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and discussed the Opposition's strategy for the Budget session, sources said

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as during the Union Budget presentation and debate.

"The Opposition will use all democratic means to demand the restoration of MGNREGA," AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a post on X.

After the leaders protested during the President address to the joint sitting of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju criticised the opposition and said it was matter of shame.

"The manner in which the Opposition acted today is a matter of shame for the country. The Congress and its allies will never be forgiven. While tributes were being paid to 'Vande Mataram' on its 150th anniversary and to Bankim

Chandra Chattopadhyay, the opposition created a ruckus, disrupting the House when the nation should have been remembering their sacrifices," he said. TMC and AAP leaders were not present during the meeting, which was attended among others by former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi, AICC general secretaries Ramesh and K C Venugopal, DMK's TR Baalu, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant, Samajwadi Party's Javed Ali Khan, RJD's Prem Chand Gupta, CPI(M)'s John Brittas, CPI's P Sandosh and RSP's N K Premchandran. The Opposition meeting comes a day after top Congress leaders decided to raise in Parliament's Budget session issues concerning MGNREGA and SIR despite the government's refusal to debate them again.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the party's parliamentary strategy group held Tuesday at the residence of Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi where the Leaders of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Rahul Gandhi and Kharge, were also present.

Nabin slams TMC over infiltration, SIR row

Durgapur (WB): Stepping up its pre-poll offensive ahead of the West Bengal assembly elections, BJP president Nitin Nabin Wednesday launched a blistering attack on the TMC government, accusing it of endangering national security by patronising infiltration and intimidating voters during the SIR to malign the EC. Addressing a public meeting in Durgapur on his first visit to the state after assuming the party's top post, Nabin alleged a "deliberate attempt" by the ruling party to alter Bengal's demography and "turn the state into Bangladesh", warning that the issue posed a grave threat not only to West Bengal, but to the country as a whole. Targeting the Mamata Banerjee government over the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, the BJP president alleged that the ruling party was spreading misinformation and fear to derail a constitutionally mandated exercise.

26 C'garh schools receive bomb threat emails; no explosives found

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ined by the Chandigarh police's cyber team. An FIR has been registered at the Sector 17 Police Station, the officer said, adding schools that did not receive the threat remained open.

Several government and private schools located in sectors 25, 19, 45, 16 and other areas received the threat emails. Students and staff were evacuated, security was stepped up, students on their way to the schools were sent back home, they said.

Courts in 5 Bihar districts receive bomb threats

Patna: Courts in at least five Bihar districts Wednesday received bomb threats through emails, following which the police evacuated the premises and conducted search operations, officials said. The threats to the civil courts in Muzaffarpur, Begusarai, Siwan, Bhagalpur and Samastipur districts later turned out to be hoaxes.

MINORITY CERTIFICATE PLEA

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing a petition filed by one Nikhil Kumar Punia, a resident of Hisar in Haryana, who was seeking admission as a minority candidate on the basis of his claimed Buddhist faith

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certificates are being granted and issued in the state.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing a petition filed by one Nikhil Kumar Punia, a resident of Hisar in Haryana, who was seeking admission as a minority candidate on the basis of his claimed Buddhist faith.

During the hearing, the CJI, who also hails from same place, questioned Punia's so-



Mark Jeffery Aerobatic Team performs manoeuvres during the inauguration of Wings India 2026, Asia's largest civil aviation exhibition and conference.



The top court sought a report from the chief secretary of Haryana as to how minority certificates are being granted and issued in the state

Reacting sharply, the CJI exclaimed, "Wow! This is a new type of fraud."

The bench asked the Haryana chief secretary to place on record the guidelines governing the issuance of minority certificates and to clarify whether candidates from the upper-caste general category can claim minority status by

citing religious conversion.

"Let the chief secretary of Haryana inform: What are the guidelines for issuing a minority certificate? Is it permissible for an upper-class general category candidate, who is not covered under the Economically Weaker Sections and who had declared themselves as 'general' in a previous application, to subsequently declare themselves as belonging to the Buddhist minority?" the bench ordered.

The bench, which dismissed the plea of Punia, kept it for further consideration on the issue of procedures adopted in granting minority certificates after the state government submits its response.

CONSPIRACY CASE: NIA COURT SENDS MAN TO JAIL

A special NIA court has sent a key accused in a Pakistan-led espionage case involving fraudulent use of SIM cards and misuse of social media platforms to more than five years in jail, officials said Wednesday



Ramdev unveils five key pledges on nation's 77th R-Day

AGENCIES

Haridwar, Jan 28: Patanjali Gurukul celebrated India's 77th Republic Day with great zeal and patriotic spirit, as students from the Gurukul showcased their talents through cultural performances that highlighted India's rich heritage and values.

Addressing the gathering, Swami Ramdev administered the Panch Pran—a five-point national resolve focused on Swadeshi education, Swadeshi healthcare, a Swadeshi economy, a Swadeshi Sanatan way of life, and the vision of a self-reliant, developed India through indigenous practices. Ramdev further stated that the world is going through a difficult and risky time, with trade wars, political tension, and social unrest increasing everywhere.



On the admissibility of Aadhaar card as one of the proofs, the top court categorically said that the possibility of forgery cannot be a ground to reject the 12-digit biometric identifier

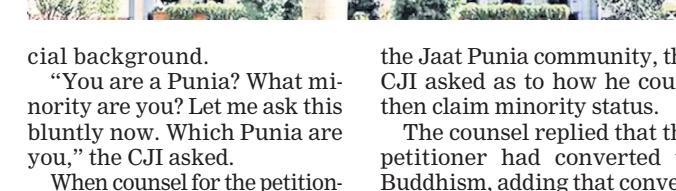
tioned the transparency, timing and legal basis of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

The bench heard rejoinder submissions from senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Gopal Sankaranarayanan, Prashant Bhushan, Vijay Hansaria and petitioner-in-person, Yogendra Yadav.

The court had commenced final arguments in the matter on August 12 last year, when it observed that inclusion or exclusion of names in electoral rolls falls within the constitutional remit of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The ECI has defended the SIR exercise, maintaining that Aadhaar and voter identity cards cannot be treated as conclusive proof of citizenship.

In their rejoinder submissions, the petitioners ques-



the Jaat Punia community, the CJI asked as to how he could then claim minority status.

The counsel replied that the petitioner had converted to Buddhism, adding that conversion was his right.

When counsel for the petitioner responded that he belonged to

national



It is the Congress which has appealed both minority and majority communalism and adopted a soft stand towards the BJP
PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

PARTS OF NORTH INDIA UPTICK IN MINIMUM TEMPERATURES

Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan witnessed wet weather Wednesday, even as multiple places experienced an uptick in minimum temperatures in northern India, including Jammu and Kashmir, where the National Highway was fully restored after being closed due to heavy snowfall earlier



Prominent figures who died in air tragedies

Homi Jehangir Bhabha
India's pioneering nuclear physicist Homi Jehangir Bhabha died in a tragic crash aboard Air India Flight 101 January 24, 1966. The plane crashed into Mont Blanc in the Swiss Alps due to a miscommunication with the Geneva air traffic control.

Sanjay Gandhi
Congress leader and son of then prime minister Indira Gandhi, Sanjay Gandhi died in a tragic crash June 23, 1980. Attempting aerial stunts in a Delhi Flying Club aircraft near the Safdarjung Airport, the plane lost control and crashed.

Madhavrao Scindia
Senior Congress leader Madhavrao Scindia, himself a former civil aviation minister, died September 30, 2001 in a plane crash en route a political rally in Kanpur.

K S Sowmya
Famous South Indian actress K S Sowmya, popular as Soundarya, lost her life in an air crash April 17, 2004.

O P Jindal and Surender Singh
Industrialist and Haryana minister Om Prakash Jindal lost his life in a helicopter crash in 2005 along with Agriculture Minister Surender Singh.

Y S Reddy
Then chief minister of Andhra Pradesh Y S Rajasekhar Reddy (2009), popularly known as YSR, died September 2, 2009, when his Bell 430 helicopter crashed in the dense Nallamala forest due to bad weather.

Dorjee Khandu
Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Dorjee Khandu and four others were killed April 30, 2011, when a helicopter carrying them from Tawang to Itanagar crashed in the West Kameng district of the state.

CDS General Bipin Rawat
India's first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, died in a helicopter crash December 8, 2021. The incident occurred near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu while he was en route from Sulur to Wellington with his wife and 11 others.

Vijay Rupani
Former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani died in a plane crash in Ahmedabad June 12, 2025.

FINAL MINUTES OF PAWAR FLIGHT

Multiple landing attempts, then crash

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Jan 28: The aircraft carrying Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar was cleared for landing in Baramati Wednesday morning after a go-around due to poor visibility, but having finally received a clearance it did not give any 'read-back' or response to the ATC, and moments later burst into flames on the edge of the runway.

The aircraft was trying to land amid poor visibility, Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said earlier. A statement by his ministry recounted the final minutes of the ill-fated Learjet 45 belonging to VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd that crashed, leading to the death of all five persons on board including Pawar.

Baramati has an 'uncontrolled airfield', and traffic information is provided by the instructors/pilots from the Flying training Organisations at Baramati. The aircraft VI-SSK first came in contact at 8.18 am, as per the Baramati Air Traffic Control (ATC).

Its next call was at 30 nautical miles inbound to Baramati. It was advised to descend in "visual meteorological conditions" at the pilot's discretion. The crew enquired about the winds and visibility, and were informed that the winds were calm and visibility was around 3,000 metres.

"Next the aircraft reported on the final approach of Runway 11 and the runway was not in sight to them. They initiated a go-around in the first approach," the civil aviation ministry statement said. After the go-around, the crew was again asked if they could spot the runway.

The reply was: "Runway is currently not in sight, will call when runway is in sight". After a few seconds, the crew reported that they could spot the runway.

"The aircraft was cleared to land on runway 11 at 0843 IST



The death of the 66-year-old leader, fondly known as Dada (elder brother) in the state, has not only left a vacuum in the BJP-led state coalition government, but also cast a shadow on the future of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which he headed
His uncle and NCP founder Sharad Pawar said the plane crash was an accident which shouldn't be politicised
The 'black box' (comprising the Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit Voice Recorder) from the aircraft will be analysed after recovery to determine the cause of the accident, an official said

(8.43 am). However, they did not give a readback of the landing clearance (did not respond to ATC). Next, the ATC saw the flames around the threshold of runway 11 at 0844 IST (8.44 am)," the statement said.

The emergency services then

rushed to the crash site, but it was too late. A specialised team from the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) arrived at the Baramati crash site Wednesday evening to initiate a forensic probe into the tragic accident.

The investigation is expected to focus on the technical factors that led to the crash of the Learjet 45 aircraft, operated by Delhi-based VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd, during its second attempt to land at Baramati table-top air strip.

The last rites of Ajit Pawar will be held with full state honours Thursday in Baramati, Pune district. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are expected to attend the funeral, which will be held at Vidya Pratishthan ground at 11 AM. Leaders cutting across the political spectrum will be present, the Nationalist Congress Party said. The state government declared a public holiday Wednesday and announced a three-day period of state mourning.

Plane crashed after losing control, say eyewitnesses

Mumbai: The ill-fated aircraft carrying Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar appeared "a bit unstable in the air" and exploded the moment it crashed on the ground, according to a woman eyewitness. Another person who witnessed the incident said that after the crash, the aircraft burst into flames, followed by four to five consecutive blasts. A local woman resident said she noticed the aircraft as it circled the Baramati airport in the morning. "It took a round in the air, appeared a bit unstable and as it was approaching the runway to land, it hit the ground hard and exploded. There was a loud sound and could be heard at our home," the woman told a news channel. Another eyewitness also said the aircraft appeared to be losing control as it descended. According to Flight Radar, the flight took off from Mumbai at 8.10 am and it disappeared from radar around 8.45 am.

Oppn leaders back Mamata's demand for SC-monitored probe

New Delhi: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday called for a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the death of Ajit Pawar, alleging that "all other agencies" have been "completely compromised", with several Opposition leaders including Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge backing her demand. Speaking in Kolkata, Banerjee stressed that the truth would not emerge through existing mechanisms and only a probe under the supervision of the apex court would be credible. "We trust only the Supreme Court. All other agencies have been completely compromised," she told reporters. Banerjee also hinted that Ajit Pawar was planning to return to the Nationalist Congress Party faction NCP (SP) led by his uncle Sharad Pawar, noting that reports circulating in recent days had pointed to such a move.



Maharashtra Governor Acharya Devrat, right, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, second left, Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, left, and NCP leader Supriya Sule mourn the demise of Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

PTI PHOTO

Ajit Pawar's death puts question mark over NCP's future

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 28: The tragic and untimely demise of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash Wednesday has not only left a vacuum in the BJP-led state coalition government, but also cast a shadow on the future of the NCP.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is likely to face a leadership crisis following Ajit Pawar's death, as there is no clear second-in-command, say political observers.

State politics was abuzz with speculation about a possible merger of NCP (SP) with the NCP under Ajit Pawar's leadership. However, his untimely death in a plane crash has cast uncertainty over the future of his faction.

Apart from state NCP president Sunil Tatkare and national working president Praful Patel, the party lacks a senior leader capable of succeeding Ajit Pawar.

The only other mass-based leader, Chhagan Bhujbal recently acquitted in a money laundering case is currently unwell.

While Patel and Tatkare have been key organisational figures, they lack the state-wide grassroots connect that Ajit Pawar commanded.

In the ruling Mahayati, which won a massive mandate in the 2024 Assembly polls, the BJP has 132 MLAs, followed by Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena with 57 and Pawar's NCP 41.



deal" for the world and the Indian start-up ecosystem. Creative economy, including film, gaming, fashion, digital content, music and design, will benefit from it, he added.

Both sides also inked two crucial pacts, one on security and defence collaboration and another on mobility of Indian talents to Europe, after Modi hosted EU leaders Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa for summit talks amid frosty ties with the US.

India and the EU Tuesday sealed a landmark free trade agreement to create a market of two billion people with Prime Minister Modi and the top EU leadership unveiling a transformative five-year agenda to largely leverage trade and defence in protecting the rules-based world order.

Addressing a gathering at the annual National Cadet Corps (NCC) PM Rally at Delhi Cantonment here, he said the world is praising the India-European Union (EU) free trade agreement (FTA) as the "mother of all deals" and asserted that it would mean "Freedom to Aspire" for the Indian youths.

Modi said it is also being termed as a "game-changer

for the world and the Indian start-up ecosystem. Creative economy, including film, gaming, fashion, digital content, music and design, will benefit from it, he added.

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international



Pemex makes decisions in the contractual relationship it has with Cuba. Suspending is a sovereign decision and is taken when necessary

CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM |
PRESIDENT, MEXICO**JAPAN'S LAST PAIR OF PANDAS BACK IN CHINA**

Japan's last pair of pandas have returned to China, leaving Japan without the lovable bears for the first time in half a century. The bears are heading back as diplomatic relations between the two countries are at their lowest point in years. The twins Xiao Xiao and Lei Lei have an adoring fan base in Japan, where thousands of people flocked to Tokyo's Ueno Zoo ahead of their departure

**Starmer arrives in China****UK PM encourages firms to seize opportunities**

REUTERS



Thursday.

The visit could mark a shift in ties between Britain and China after years of deep acrimony over Beijing's crackdown on political freedoms in Hong Kong, China's support for Russia in the Ukraine war and allegations by British security services that China regularly spies on politicians and officials.

For China, the visit offers the country a chance to portray itself as a stable and reliable partner at a time of global disorder.

TENSIONS WITH TRUMP SHADOW STARMER'S TRIP

"It doesn't make sense to stick our head in the ground

STARMER'S VISIT IS FIRST BY BRITISH PM SINCE 2018

- PM ENCOURAGES COMPANIES TO SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES
- VISIT MAY HELP MEND UK-CHINA RELATIONSHIP AFTER YEARS OF ACRIMONY
- STARMER SAYS 'PROGRESS' ON CHINA VISA-FREE TRAVEL
- CONCERN OVER SECURITY RISKS REMAIN

and bury it in the sand when it comes to China, it's in our interests to engage," Starmer

told reporters earlier.

European and other Western countries have engaged in a flurry of diplomacy with China as they hedge against unpredictability from the United States under President Donald Trump.

Starmer's trip follows tensions with Trump over his threats to seize Greenland, his criticism of Britain's deal to cede sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago - including an island with a US-UK air base - to Mauritius, and his comments that NATO allies avoided frontline combat during the war in Afghanistan.

Trump threatened to impose a 100% tariff on Canadian goods Saturday if that country's prime minister, Mark Carney, signed a trade deal with China.

The UK leader insisted Britain could continue to strengthen economic ties with China - without angering Trump - because of his country's long history of working closely with the United States.

"The relationship we have with the US is one of the closest relationships we hold, on defence, security, intelligence and also on trade and lots of areas," he said.

Texas halts H-1B visas at State universities, agencies

The freeze will remain in effect through May 2027

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Houston (US), Jan 28: Texas

Governor Greg Abbott has ordered state agencies and public universities to immediately halt new H-1B visa petitions, tightening hiring rules at taxpayer-funded institutions, a step likely to impact Indian professionals.

The freeze will remain in effect through May 2027. The directive issued Tuesday said that the state agencies and public universities must stop filing new petitions unless they receive written approval from the Texas Workforce Commission.

The governor's order, in a red state that is home to thousands of H-1B visa holders, comes as the Trump administration has initiated steps to reshape the visa programme.

"In light of recent reports of abuse in the federal H-1B visa programme, and amid the federal government's ongoing review of that programme to ensure American jobs are going to American workers, I am directing all state agencies to immediately freeze new H-1B visa petitions as outlined in this letter," Abbott said.

Institutions must also report on H-1B usage, including numbers, job roles, countries of origin, and visa expiry dates, the letter said.

US President Donald Trump September 19 last year signed a proclamation 'Restriction on entry of certain non-immigrant

workers' that restricted the entry into the US of those workers whose H-1B petitions are not accompanied or supplemented by a payment of \$1,00,000.

The H-1B visa fee of \$1,00,000 would be applicable only to new applicants, ie all new H-1B visa petitions submitted after September 21, including those for the FY2026 lottery.

Indians make up an estimated 71 per cent of all approved H-1B applications in recent years, according to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), with China in the second spot. The major fields include technology, engineering, medicine, and research.

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is the second-highest beneficiary with 5,505 approved H-1B visas in 2025, after Amazon (10,044 workers on H-1B visas), according to the USCIS.

Other top beneficiaries include Microsoft (5,189), Meta (5,123), Apple (4,202), Google (4,181), Deloitte (2,353), Infosys (2,004), Wipro (1,523) and Tech Mahindra Americas (951).

Texas public universities employ hundreds of foreign faculty and researchers, many from India, across engineering, health-care, and technology fields.

Date from Open Doors -- a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars studying or teaching at higher education institutions in the US -- for 2022-2023 showed 2,70,000 students from India embarked on graduate and undergraduate degrees in US universities, accounting for 25 per cent of the international student population in the US and 1.5 per cent of the total student population.

Man sprays US lawmaker Ilhan Omar with liquid

REUTERS

Minneapolis, Jan 28: Police arrested a man who sprayed Democratic US Representative Ilhan Omar with a foul-smelling liquid in Minneapolis Tuesday as she condemned the actions of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials in Minnesota.

Omar, the frequent target of political insults from President Donald Trump, was uninjured. A security guard immediately grabbed the man and took him to the ground, according to a Reuters witness and video of the town hall event.

Police said they arrested the man for third-degree assault. Trump said Tuesday night that he had not seen the video and hoped he did not "have to bother."



"No. I don't think about her. I think she's a fraud. I really don't think about that. She probably had herself sprayed, knowing her," Trump told ABC News.

In her remarks, Omar was criticizing ICE and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, demanding that Noem resign after the recent shooting deaths of two US citizens in Minneapolis during Trump's immigration enforcement surge.

Israel steps up evictions of Palestinians

REUTERS

Jerusalem, Jan 28: In Silwan

in East Jerusalem, south of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, Kayed Rajabi and his neighbors have been handed eviction orders in favor of an Israeli settler organization which has already taken over parts of the Palestinian district.

Rajabi's home is surrounded by buildings that have raised large Israeli flags - a sign they are owned by settlers, who he said began buying homes in 2004, and have obtained about 40

buildings in Silwan now, many via forced evictions.

Settler group Ateret Cohanim had offered to buy him and other Palestinians out, he said, but most had refused.

He said he was among 32 families in the neighborhood who have now been ordered to leave, with him and his brothers given until the end of Ramadan - mid-March - to depart under an order from Israel's Supreme Court that he showed Reuters.

"They want to force me out of the house I was born in, where

my eyes first opened to life," said Rajabi, explaining that his family had lived there since 1967 and bought the land from a Jordanian officer. Daniel Luria, the executive director of Ateret Cohanim, called Palestinians in Silwan "illegal squatters", saying the land was owned by Yemeni Jews before 1929 and that moving back was rectifying a historical injustice. Rajabi said that account was untrue.

Palestinians seek East Jerusalem, which Israel captured in a 1967 war, for a future state

and say that leaving their homes there could put an end to their hopes for ever. Israel's far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has said the aim is to 'bury' the idea of a Palestinian state.

Israel deems all of Jerusalem its capital - a status not recognised internationally - and has encouraged Jewish settlement of predominantly Palestinian areas. Settler incursions, sometimes violent, have ramped up since the Hamas attack on Israel in October 2023 triggered the Gaza war.

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FIRST WOMAN TO LEAD CHURCH OF ENGLAND**Sarah Mullally confirmed as archbishop of Canterbury**

Mullally will be formally installed as bishop of the diocese of Canterbury March 25 at Canterbury Cathedral, in a ceremony marking the beginning of her new role

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Jan 28: Sarah Mullally was confirmed as archbishop of Canterbury Wednesday, becoming the first woman to lead the Church of England.

The worldwide Anglican Communion, which includes the Episcopal Church in the US, has no formal head, but the archbishop traditionally has been seen as its spiritual leader.

Mullally, 63, a cancer nurse turned cleric, officially took up the responsibilities of her new

job as judges presided over a legal ceremony confirming her appointment, which was announced almost four months ago.

The so-called Confirmation of Election service marks a major milestone for the Church of England, which ordained its first female priests in 1994 and its first female bishop in 2015. The church traces its roots to the 16th century, when the English church broke away from the Roman Catholic Church during the reign of King Henry VIII.

George Gross, an expert on theology and the monarchy at King's College London, highlighted the church's continuing divergence from the Catholic Church, which forbids women from being ordained as priests, much less from serving as the religion's global spiritual leader.

"It is a big contrast," Gross



said. "And in terms of the position of women in society, this is a big statement."

But Mullally's appointment may deepen rifts within the Anglican Communion, whose 100 million members in 165

countries are deeply divided over issues such as the role of women and the treatment of LGBTQ people.

She will also have to confront concerns that the Church of England hasn't done enough to stamp out the sexual abuse scandals that have dogged it for more than a decade.

Gafcon, a global organisation of conservative Anglicans, says Mullally's appointment is divisive because a majority of the Anglican Communion still believes only men should be bishops. Rwandan Archbishop Laurent Mbanda, chairman of the Gafcon council of senior bishops, known as primates, also criticised Mullally's support for the blessing of same-sex marriages.

"Since the newly appointed archbishop of Canterbury has failed to guard the faith and is complicit in introducing prac-

tices and beliefs that violate both the plain and canonical sense of Scripture and the Church's historic and consensual interpretation of it, she cannot provide leadership to the Anglican Communion," Mbanda said in October.

Mullally replaces former Archbishop Justin Welby, who announced his resignation in November 2024, after he was criticised for failing to tell police about allegations of physical and sexual abuse by a volunteer at a church-affiliated summer camp.

She was nominated by a 17-member commission composed of clerics and laypeople and her appointment was confirmed by King Charles III, who is the supreme governor of the church.

But there is still one more step in the long process of appointing the new archbishop.

"No. I don't think about her. I think she's a fraud. I really don't think about that. She probably had herself sprayed, knowing her," Trump told ABC News.

In her remarks, Omar was criticizing ICE and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, demanding that Noem resign after the recent shooting deaths of two US citizens in Minneapolis during Trump's immigration enforcement surge.

of the
day quoteDefence
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relevant jobs

ADITYA NARAYAN MISHRA

MD AND CEO, CIEL HR

The India-EU
Free Trade
Agreement
represents a sig-
nificant milestone
for Indian industry,
and we thank the
Government of India for its strate-
gic vision in deepening economic
partnershipsSUDARSHAN VENU | CHAIRMAN AND MD, TVS
MOTOR COMPANYThis
agreement
will unlock
opportunities for
the two-wheeler
industry to expand
their footprint and
support 'Make in India' products to
the European markets

HARSHAVARDHAN CHITALE | CEO, HERO MOTOCORP

Q3 RESULTS**L&T profit falls
4% to ₹3,215cr**

New Delhi: Infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Wednesday reported 4.2 per cent drop in consolidated profit after tax at ₹3,215 crore for December quarter FY26 on the back of higher expenses. The company had posted a profit after tax (PAT) of ₹3,359 crore in the year-ago period, L&T said in a filing to the BSE. However, revenue from operations in the October-December period rose to ₹71,450 crore from ₹64,668 crore in the year-ago period, the filing said.

**ACC net profit falls
63% to ₹404.25cr**

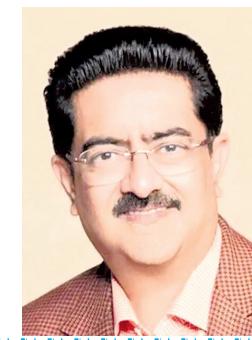
New Delhi: Cement maker ACC Ltd Wednesday said its consolidated net profit declined 63 per cent year-on-year to ₹404.25 crore in the December quarter of FY26. The company recorded a profit of ₹1,091.79 crore in the October-December quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from ACC, now a part of Adani Cement. However, revenue from operations rose 21.7 per cent to ₹6,391.17 crore in the December quarter, which is the highest-ever quarterly revenue. It was at ₹5,251.70 crore in the corresponding period a year ago. This was highest ever quarterly revenue which was driven by higher premium product, which was up 33 per cent on a YoY basis.

Star Health profit falls 40% to ₹128cr

New Delhi: Star Health and Allied Insurance Company Wednesday reported a 40 per cent decline in net profit at ₹128 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025. The standalone health insurer had earned a profit of ₹215 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. During the quarter, gross written premium improved to ₹4,624 crore as against ₹3,796 crore in the same quarter a year ago, Star Health said in a regulatory filing.

**NIIT MTS PAT up
20pc to ₹74.3cr**

New Delhi: Corporate training solutions provider NIIT Learning Systems (NIIT MTS) Wednesday reported a 20.4 per cent increase in consolidated Profit After Tax (PAT) to ₹74.34 crore in the December-ended quarter. The company had registered a PAT of ₹61.73 crore in the year-ago period. The company's revenue from operations climbed 19.2 per cent to ₹499.69 crore in Q3 FY26, as compared to ₹418.87 crore in Q3 FY25.



Our joint venture, Vodafone Idea, has stood in the eye of this storm, navigating one of the most protracted periods of uncertainty in the industry's history

KM BIRLA | CHAIRMAN, ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

**GOVT LIKELY TO EXPAND
DEFINITION OF STARTUPS**

The government is likely to expand the definition of startups to further strengthen the country's ecosystem for budding enterprises, an official said Wednesday. The expanded definition would include deep-tech, cooperatives and allow startups to pivot to deep-tech



Factory output grows at 2-yr high of 7.8% in Dec

NSO also revised the industrial production growth for November 2025 to 7.2 per cent from the provisional estimate of 6.7 per cent released last month

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Jan 28: India's industrial production grew at an over two-year high pace of 7.8 per cent in December 2025 on the back of robust output in manufacturing, mining and power sectors, according to government data released Wednesday.

The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), expanded by 3.7 per cent in December 2024.

"Industry momentum further strengthened in December 2025 as the IIP rose by 7.8 per cent, reaching its highest level in over 2 years, after registering a high growth of 7.2 per cent in November 2025," the National Statistics Office (NSO) said in a statement. The NSO also revised the industrial production growth for November 2025 to 7.2 per cent from the provisional estimate of 6.7 per cent released last month.

During the April-December period of FY26, the country's industrial production growth slowed to 3.9 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent in the same period a year ago.

According to the NSO data, the manufacturing sector's output grew by 8.1 per cent in Dec 2025 compared to 3.7 per cent in the year-ago month.

"In manufacturing, highest growth recording industries are computer, electronic and optical products (34.9 per cent),

During the April-Dec period of FY26, industrial production growth slowed to 3.9 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent in the same period a year ago
According to the NSO data, the manufacturing sector's output grew by 8.1 per cent in Dec 2025 compared to 3.7 per cent in the year-ago month

motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (33.5 per cent) and other transport equipment (25.1 per cent)," it said.

Mining production rose by 6.8 per cent against a growth of 2.7 per cent recorded a year ago.

Power generation grew by 6.3 per cent in December 2025, compared to 6.2 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The corresponding growth rates of IIP as per use-based classification in December 2025 over December 2024 recorded at 4.4 per cent in primary goods,

8.1 per cent in capital goods, 7.5 per cent in intermediate goods, 12.1 per cent in infrastructure/construction goods, 12.3 per cent in consumer durables and 8.3 per cent in consumer non-durables.

Based on use-based classification, the top three positive contributors to the growth of IIP in December 2025 are infrastructure/construction goods, primary goods and intermediate goods.

Within the manufacturing sector, 16 out of 23 industry groups have recorded a positive growth in December 2025 over the year-ago month.

The top three positive contributors to December 2025 IIP numbers include the manufacturing of basic metals (12.7 per cent), motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (33.5 per cent) and pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products (10.2 per cent).

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The top three positive contributors to December 2025 IIP numbers include the manufacturing of basic metals (12.7 per cent), motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (33.5 per cent) and pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products (10.2 per cent).

India and the European Union Tuesday sealed a landmark free trade agreement (FTA), under which a number of domestic sectors such as apparel, chemicals and footwear will get duty-free entry into the 27-nation bloc, while the EU will get access to the Indian market at concessional duty for cars and wines, an official said.

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Markets rally for 2nd day; Sensex jumps 487 points

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Nifty surged 167.35 points or 0.66 per cent to end at 25,342.75.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics surged nearly 9 per cent post its December quarter earnings.

Eternal, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Trent, Mahindra & Mahindra and UltraTech Cement were the other major gainers.

However, Asian Paints dropped over 4 per cent after the firm reported a decline of 4.83 per cent in consolidated

net profit at ₹1,073.92 crore for December quarter FY26 on a year-on-year basis on account of exceptional items as implementation of the new Labour Codes and impairment of loss in a subsidiary.

Maruti, Sun Pharma, Infosys and Bharti Airtel were among the other laggards.

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Mumbai, Jan 28: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended higher Wednesday, extending their previous day's rally, on optimism over the India-EU landmark free trade agreement.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 487.20 points or 0.60 per cent to settle at 82,344.68. During the day, it soared 646.49 points or 0.78 per cent to 82,503.97. The 50-share NSE

lion people with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top EU leadership unveiling a transformative five-year agenda to largely leverage trade and defence in protecting the rules-based world order.

The free trade agreement that will account for almost a quarter of the global GDP will reduce tariffs on 99 per cent of Indian exports to the EU and cut duties on over 97 per cent of the EU's exports to India, according to officials.

Jagatsinghpur: AM/NS India marks National Girl Child Day



Arcelormittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India), in collaboration with Humana, celebrated National Girl Child Day through a week-long series of educational and community activities across 16 Anganwadi centres in Jagatsinghpur district. Organised under the company's CSR project 'Padhega Bharat' as part of its Smart Anganwadi Initiative, the programme aimed to promote the welfare, education and empowerment of the girl child. Adolescent girls, women's groups and children participated in competitions such as rangoli, mehendi and drawing to showcase creativity and skills. Awareness marches were also held to highlight the importance of gender equality and a brighter future for girls.

Participants received prizes to encourage confidence and continued engagement. Dr Vikas Yadav, head of corporate social responsibility at AM/NS India, said empowering girls was key to building a progressive society.

New Delhi, Jan 28: Gold and silver prices showed no signs of cooling as both precious metals scaled fresh records in the national capital Wednesday amid a weak US dollar and strong buying trends in global markets.

According to the marketmen, silver extended its gains for the third straight day by soaring ₹15,000, or 4.05 per cent, to touch an all-time high of ₹3,85,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). In the previous session, the white metal jumped sharply by ₹40,500 to ₹3,70,000 per kg, from Friday's close of ₹3,29,500 per kg.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also climbed by ₹5,000, or 3 per cent, to a fresh peak of ₹1,71,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) in the bullion markets. It settled at ₹1,66,000 per 10 grams Tuesday, according to traders.

Gold and silver continue to witness a strong and sustained rally, with bulls finding fresh catalysts almost every day to push prices higher, Saumil Gandhi,

REUTERS

Rupee falls 11p to close at 91.79 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 28: The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day in the negative territory, down 11 paise at 91.79 (provisional) against the US dollar, as the support from the retreating dollar index was negated by sustained foreign fund outflows.

Forex traders said the rupee opened higher as the US dollar index softened and a long-awaited trade breakthrough with Europe offered quiet reassurance.

However, selling pressure from foreign funds and ongoing geopolitical tensions dented investors' sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.60 and touched an early high of 91.50, but pared the gains to touch an intra-day low of 91.83 against the greenback.

The domestic unit settled at 91.79 (provisional), down by 11 paise from its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee rebounded from its all-time low levels and gained 22 paise to close at 91.68 against the US dollar.

Forex traders said the rupee opened higher as the US dollar index softened and a long-awaited trade breakthrough with Europe bolstered investor sentiment.

India and the European Union Tuesday announced the conclusion of negotiations for the free trade agreement (FTA), under which a number of domestic sectors such as apparel, chemicals and footwear will get duty-free entry into the 27-nation bloc, while the EU will get access to the Indian market at concessional duty for cars and wines, an official said.

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REUTERS

Amazon cuts 16K corporate jobs

REUTERS

Dawn to some Amazon Web Services staff, unsettling thousands of workers.

RISING AI ADOPTION

The job cuts also underscore how artificial intelligence is changing corporate workforce dynamics. Significant improvements in AI assistants are helping enterprises execute duties from routine administrative tasks to complex coding problems with rapid speed and precision, driving widespread adoption.

Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said last summer that the increased use of AI tools would lead to more automation of duties, resulting in corporate job losses.

Executives at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos said last week that while jobs would disappear, new ones would spring up, with two telling Reuters that AI

would be used as an excuse by companies planning to cut jobs anyway.

Tech giants, including Amazon, Facebook-parent Meta Platforms and Microsoft had sharply ramped up hiring during the COVID-19 pandemic and have lately been restructuring their workforce. Amazon began the cuts Tuesday by announcing it planned to close all remaining brick-and-mortar Fresh grocery stores and Go markets, a further retreat from its physical store strategy.

The company has been investing in robotics at its warehouses to speed up packaging and deliveries for its e-commerce segment, reduce the reliance on human labour and cutting costs.

Amazon Tuesday mistakenly sent an email appearing to refer to the layoff plan as Project



Silver, gold continue record run

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**White metal****glitters to****record****₹3.85L/****kg; yellow****storms****₹1.71L/10g**

strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower, which further supported international bullion prices.

According to FOREX.com, gold gained USD 74.57, or 1.44 per cent, to USD 5,256.35 per ounce. In the intraday session, spot prices appreciated by USD 130.13, or 2.51 per cent, to touch a new record of USD 5,311.38 per ounce in the global markets.

NZ win big; Dube's blitz in vain

4TH T20I

Shivam Dube hit a marauding 65 but the hosts eventually finished at 165 all out as the Kiwis reduced the margin to 3-1 in the five-match series



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in the five-match series.

With Ishan Kishan sitting out with an unspecified injury, Abhishek Sharma and Suryakumar Yadav were expected to lead the chase.

But Abhishek fell in the first ball of India's innings, skying Matt Henry to Devon Conway at deep point.

Suryakumar's meek push was converted into a brilliant return catch by Jacob Duffy as India slumped to 9 for 2.

Rinku Singh (39) and Sanju

Samson (24) tried to keep India afloat but they struggled to force the pace either in the Power Play or after that.

Rinku fell leg before to Zak Foulkes and Samson, who hit a delicious flicked six off Duffy, was foxed by Mitchell Santner's straight delivery to get castled.

Dube batted fearlessly, and hardly displayed the pressure of an ever-climbing asking rate that hovered around 14 almost all the while.

Dube, who was saved by DRS from a leg-before decision on 46, raised the hopes in the Indian camp, biffing 29 runs off leg-spinner Ish Sodhi's third over that included a sequence of 4, 6, 4, 6, 6.

The left-hander brought up his fifty in just 15 balls with a six over square leg off Duffy. The sixth wicket of Dube and Harshit Rana added 63 runs and the latter's contribution was a princely four runs.

But Dube's fortune finally deserted him when Rana's rasping straight drive shattered the stumps at non-striker's end after taking a deflection off Henry's hand.

That effectively signalled the end of India's chase.

Earlier, New Zealand's innings revolved around Tim Seifert's blistering fifty.

Seifert (62 off 36 balls, 7x4, 3x6) was the standout Kiwi batter but he did not have enough followers to fully drive home the advantage after India produced tight bowling in the middle overs.

In the pacer's next over, Seifert eked out a six and four in successive balls before sending a Jasprit Bumrah delivery to the sight-screen for another maximum.

New Zealand reached fifty in the fourth over and ended the Power Play at 71 for no loss.

The Indians did not bowl any magic spell but the visiting batters were overly eager to maintain a run rate of 12 that the Seifert-Conway combine was scoring at.

But that overzealous attempt resulted in them losing wickets in a cluster. Daryl Mitchell (39 not out, 18b) made some strong hits in the death overs to take New Zealand past 200.

BRIEF SCORES

New Zealand: 215/7 in 20 overs (Tim Seifert 62, Devon Conway 44,

Daryl Mitchell not out 39;

Arshdeep Singh 2/33, Kuldeep Yadav 2/29) beat **India:** 165 all out in 18.4 overs (Shivam Dube 65,

Rinku Singh 39; Mitchell Santner 3/26) by 50 runs

TATA STEEL MASTERS

Gukesh faces loss, Arjun draws easy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wijk Aan Zee (The Netherlands), Jan 28: World Champion D Gukesh suffered yet another defeat in the Tata Steel Masters, this time against Matthias Bluebaum of Germany in the ninth round while Arjun Erigaisi was forced to settle for a quick draw with Hans Moke Niemann of United States.

World Cup winner Javokhir Sindarov played out a draw with sole leader and Uzbek compatriot Nodirbek Abdusattorov leaving the latter still in command on six points. Sindarov was joined in the second spot by Jorden van Foreest of Holland on 5.5 points along with Yagiz Kaan Ergodmus of Turkey.

The trio is followed by Niemann with four rounds still to come in the event. Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa and Arjun continue to struggle with four points apiece and for the World champion it was another heart-breaking result with white pieces.

Playing the King pawn game, Gukesh tried the Bishop's opening that has not been very popular off-late in elite level tournaments.

Bluebaum was quite up to the task in finding his counter play right from the opening and came up with some imaginative display as Gukesh's light squared Bishop found itself trapped by its own forces.

The initiative was in the

favour of the German and he played fearlessly to win a rook for a minor piece after which it was just a matter of a few more moves. Gukesh resigned on his 37th turn.

Praggnanandhaa defeated Aravindh Chithambaram outplaying the former in what should have been a draw. Praggnanandhaa defeated Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 2.5); Anish Giri (Ind, 4.5) drew with Vladimir Fedoseev (Slo, 4.5); Arjun Erigaisi (Ind, 4) drew with Hans Moke Niemann (Usa, 5); Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 6); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 5.5) beat Vincent Keymer (Ger, 4); Thai Dai Van Nguyen (Cze, 3) lost to Yagiz Kaan Ergodmus (Tur, 5.5).

ASIAN C'SHIPS

B'desh shooters to travel to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 28: The Bangladesh government has approved its shooters to travel to India for next month's Asian Rifle and Pistol Championships, days after refusing to send its national cricket team to the country to participate in the upcoming T20 World Cup due to security concerns.

While the T20 showpiece will be held in venues across India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8, the shooting event will take place at the Dr Karni Singh Range here from February 2 to 14, with 17 countries sending more than 300 shooters.

Bangladesh will field two rifle shooters, who will compete in a total of three events.

There had been speculation that after Bangladesh pulled out of the global T20 cricket tournament, its shooting team might also withdraw over "security concerns". However, the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) told PTI on Wednesday that the players from the neighbouring country is set to compete.

Bangladesh will be represented by 21-year-old women's rifle shooter Arefin Shaira and 26-year-old Olympian Md Robul Islam. The two 10m air rifle shooters will compete in the individual events before teaming up for the mixed team competition. A report in Dhaka's Daily Sun Wednesday stated that the Bangladesh government had approved the shooting team's tour of India.

According to the report, Bangladesh government believes the shooting championship will "not pose significant security risks, as the competition is set to be held indoors at a secured venue (Karni Singh Range)".

The uncertainty had arisen after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) refused to let its team travel to India for the World Cup, citing security concerns in the wake of Mustafizur Rahaman's ouster from the Indian Premier League.

THAILAND MASTERS

George, Manjunath enter second round

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