



Shruti's battle

Actor Shruti Haasan reveals her long struggle with 'crippling anxiety', which led her to step away from acting in 2018

LEISURE | P2



EU hits Iran

EU lists Iran's Revolutionary Guard as terrorist organisation in the aftermath of Tehran's bloody crackdown on protests

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Gold demand dampens

India's gold demand declines by 11% in 2025 and is expected to be around 700 tonne this year

BUSINESS | P11



Supreme Sabalenka

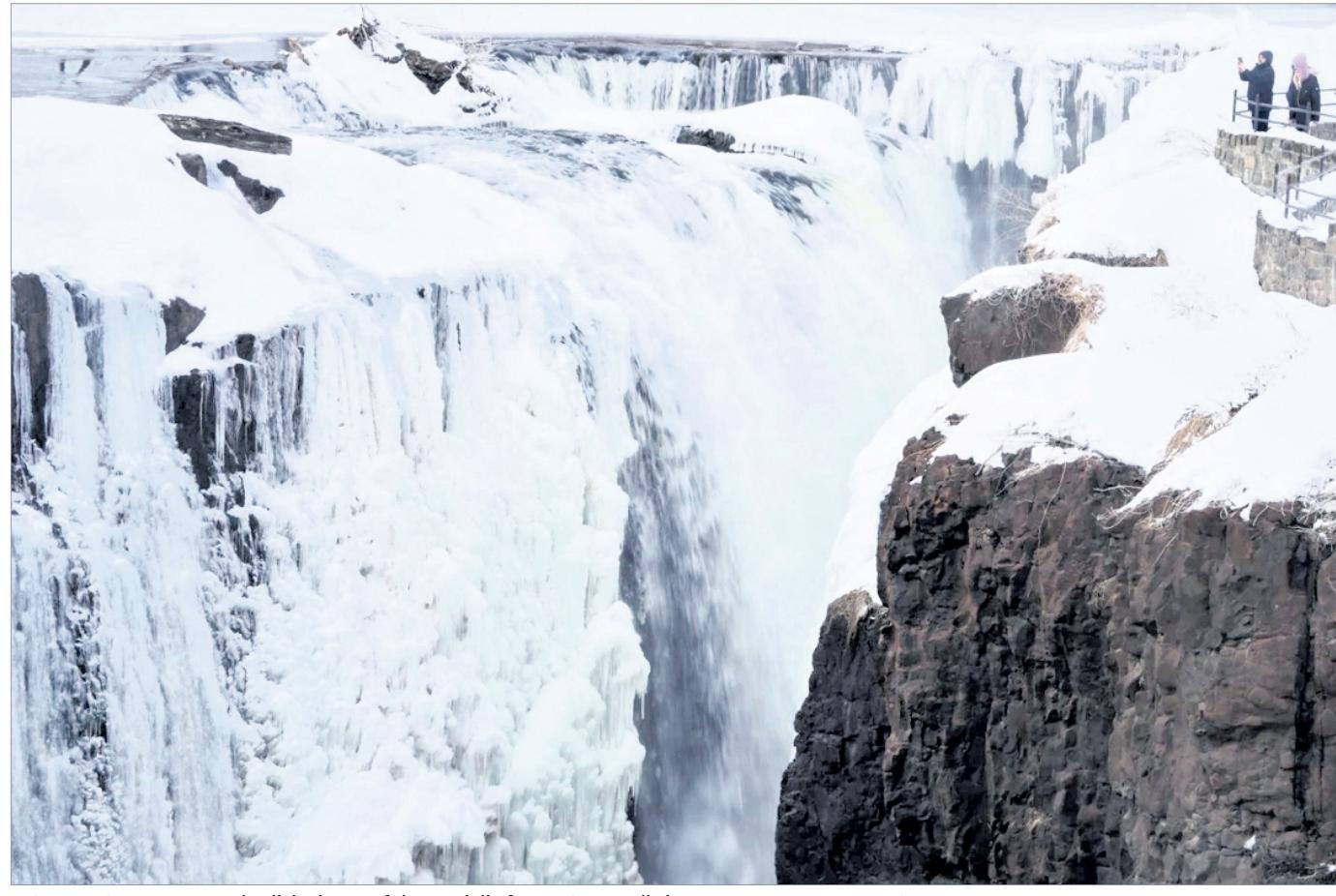
Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka overpowers Elina Svitolina to move within one victory of a third Australian Open title in four years

SPORTS | P12

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WORTH A CAPTURE: People click photos of the partially frozen Great Falls in Paterson, New Jersey, US

SC stays 2026 UGC equity regulations

PTI & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 29: In what came as a setback to the Centre, the Supreme Court Thursday kept in abeyance the implementation of the contentious University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations, 2026, observing that the framework is *prima facie* vague, could have 'very sweeping consequences', and may end up 'dividing society' with a 'dangerous impact'. While hearing three pleas challenging the validity of the regulations—on the ground that caste-based discrimination is defined strictly as discrimination against members of the SCs, STs, and OBCs—the apex court sought responses from the Union government and the UGC in this connection by March 19.

"If we do not intervene, it will lead to dangerous impact, will divide the society and will have grave impact... *Prima facie* we say that the language of the regulation is vague and experts need to look into for the language to be modulated so that it is not exploited," a bench of CJI Surya Kant and Justice Joymalaya Bagchi said.

While keeping in abeyance, the 'non-inclusionary' definition of caste-based discrimination that excluded general categories from institutional protection under rule 3(1)(c),



- The SC sought responses from the Union government and the UGC over the issue by March 19
- The apex court revived the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012

the bench revived the UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2012. "Issue notice returnable on March 19. The Solicitor General accepts notice. Since issues raised in 2019 plea shall also have bearing while examining constitutionality.. let these petitions be tagged with the same. Meanwhile, let the UGC Regulations 2026 shall remain in abeyance," it said.

The 2026 regulations triggered protests at various places, with student groups and organisations demanding its immediate rollback. The CJI suggested that the matter be revisited by a committee comprising eminent jurists and experts familiar with social realities.

At the outset, the bench flagged concerns with the 2026 regulations and questioned the need for a separate definition of caste-based discrimination.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, appearing for one of the petitioners, assailed Regulation 3(1)(c), which defines caste-based discrimination as discrimination 'only on the basis of caste or tribe' against members of SCs, STs, and OBCs.

Jain said the definition excludes discrimination against persons belonging to the general category and creates a presumption that only certain sections face caste-based discrimination. He sought a stay on its operation.

Advocate Indira Jaising, appearing in the 2019 PIL filed by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, which led to the framing of the 2026 regulations, defended the regulations. The CJI cautioned that the regulations could have 'very sweeping consequences' and may end up 'dividing society' with a 'dangerous impact'.

The SC was hearing pleas challenging the validity of the regulations filed by Mritunjay Tiwari, Vineet Jindal and Rahul Dewan.

CM, Banga discuss boosting cooperation in key devpt sectors



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi met World Bank (WB) Group President Ajay Banga at Lok Seva Bhawan here Thursday to discuss strengthening cooperation across key development sectors and advancing the state's long-term growth and reform agenda.

The meeting was attended by senior state government officers, including Chief Secretary Anu Garg, Development Commissioner DK Singh, and WB representatives.

Discussions focused on accelerating inclusive and sustainable development, skilling youth for private sector employment, enhancing infrastructure, improving social sector outcomes, and promoting resilient, technology-driven growth.

The CM highlighted Odisha's flagship initiatives and reform measures aimed at boosting economic growth, including increased investment in infrastructure, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), agriculture and allied sectors, and tourism, with a focus on generating employment opportunities for youth and women. He noted that reforms in acts and rules have made Odisha more business-friendly, helping attract significant investments. As per CMIE data published in December 2025, Odisha ranked second in the country after Andhra Pradesh, with investments worth ₹2.5 lakh crore.

Global media, leaders hail India-EU FTA



PM Narendra Modi with European Council President António Costa (L) and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Jan 29: The conclusion of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has drawn strong and positive reactions globally, cutting across international media, foreign political leadership, global business heads and policy experts. The deal is widely being described as his-

toric, strategic and timely, both economically and geopolitically.

Leading global media outlets have highlighted the scale, ambition and strategic timing of the FTA. The Telegraph, in an article by James Crisp titled 'Modi is real winner in 'mother of all trade deals' with EU', described the agreement as the 'mother of all trade deals', arguing that

India has emerged as the real strategic winner. The paper noted that the deal eliminates or reduces tariffs on 96.6% of EU exports to India, while the EU will cut tariffs on 99.5% of Indian goods over seven years.

Bloomberg, in an article by Dan Strumpf titled 'All Roads Lead to Modi as World Hedges Trump', said that the 'mother of all deals' concluded between India and the EU is the latest example of an emerging pattern: New Delhi as the go-to partner for countries.

The Wall Street Journal framed the agreement as a response by middle powers to global tariff disruptions, highlighting how India and EU are expanding alliances amid uncertainty created by US trade policies.

The New York Times stressed that the deal brings together the world's largest economic bloc and the fastest-growing major economy after nearly two decades of negotiations.

Contd...P4

'Extraordinary' trove of ancient species found in China



The discovery is particularly exciting for scientists because of the period when these strange animals lived. **Evolution's big bang** Life first emerged on Earth more than 3.5 billion years ago – but was little more than a layer of slime for most of our planet's history. Then came the Cambrian explosion, known as

evolution's 'big bang', roughly 540 million years ago. Suddenly, most of the major groups of animals alive today – including vertebrates which would eventually include humans – evolved and started populating the world's oceans.

This burst of life is thought to have been driven by a rise in oxygen in Earth's atmosphere.

However, it came to a sudden end when up to half of all animals died off 513 million years ago. This mass extinction, known as Sinsk event, is thought to have been caused by declining oxygen levels.

The animals in the Chinese quarry, which were dated to around 512 million years ago, represent the first major discovery of soft-bodied fossils that lived directly after the Sinsk event, Han explained. This means the fossils – dubbed the Huayuan biota after the county where they were found – 'open a new window into what happened', he added.

Safety in the cellar

Michael Lee, an evolutionary biologist at the South Australian Museum not involved in the

research, said 'the new fossils from China demonstrate that the Sinsk event affected shallow water forms most severely'. A deep-water fish called coelacanth similarly survived the mass extinction that wiped out all the dinosaurs that did not evolve into birds, he pointed out.

"The deep ocean is one of the most stable environments through geological time, in a similar way to how the cellar of a house is buffered from daily and seasonal changes and has less temperature fluctuations than the attic," Lee told AFP.

Scientists have warned that Earth is currently going through another mass extinction – this one caused by humans.

AFP

Almost a hundred new animal species that survived a mass extinction event half a billion years ago have been discovered in a small quarry in China, scientists have revealed.

The treasure trove of fossils offers a rare glimpse into a cataclysmic event that brought a sudden end to the greatest explosion of life in our planet's history.

The site where the fossils were found in the southern Chinese province of Hunan was 'extraordinary', Han Zeng of the Chinese Academy of Sciences told AFP Wednesday.

"We have collected over 50,000 fossil specimens from a single, 30-metre long and eight

metres wide," added the lead author of a new study in the journal *Nature*. In this small space, the Chinese team uncovered more than 150 different species – 91 of them new to science – between 2021 and 2024.

Han described wonderful experiences when they realised that those animals were right there on the rock. "Many fossils show soft parts including gills, guts, eyes and even nerves," he added.

Among the species discovered were ancient relatives of worms, sponges and jellyfish.

They also found many arthropods – a family that includes modern-day crabs and insects – including spiny, stalk-eyed creatures called radiodonts which were the apex predator of the time.

The discovery is particularly exciting for scientists because of the period when these strange animals lived. **Evolution's big bang** Life first emerged on Earth more than 3.5 billion years ago – but was little more than a layer of slime for most of our planet's history. Then came the Cambrian explosion, known as

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leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES

Today, you will appreciate beautiful things and exotic artefacts. You may even seriously think of pursuing a business related to such commodities. However, you may not be able to make up your mind, says Ganesha. However, you will decide to keep an open mind about it.



TAURUS

You may find it hard to stop the impending outflow of cash while shopping today, says Ganesha. You aren't the one to be dominated and God help anyone who tries to dictate terms to you today. You may end up spending a small fortune, more than lavish to be precise, on the opposite sex today.



GEMINI

Today, you are likely to get encouragement and support for your endeavours from all quarters. You have a gift of gab and your ability to dispel tension with even the simplest of your remarks will be put to test. Still, you will rise to the occasion and prove your mettle. Taking good care of your health is important, and you are no exception.



CANCER

Today is a good day for you. However, don't expect a windfall. It is just one of those days when you will be in a good mood, irrespective of your problems, if any. You will treat your subordinates well, and they will show their appreciation. But if you think the atmosphere at your workplace is good, wait till you reach home.



LEO

Everyone wants to be different. But little do they realise that they already are unique, says Ganesha. Today, you may meet a lot of such different people at work, some of whom may even test your patience. Always remember that working in a team means balancing a variety of egos and opinions.



VIRGO

Take time off all by yourself and introspect today, says Ganesha. Office cubicle looks set to be a war front and pay due attention there, lest things turn to be more difficult, advises Ganesha. New love may just blossom today, and you may even enjoy a nice quiet evening with friends.



LIBRA

Gear up to play the peace maker today! Your ability to handle a 'Brady Bunch' hasn't gone unnoticed. So expect to be put in charge of handling disputes among your subordinates at work today, hints Ganesha. Research work may slow to a crawl today, but the offshoot is that it's an auspicious day to enter into new contracts.



SCORPIO

You shall be completely immersed in your routine today. It's the same old humbug of a day for you, says Ganesha. But this exhausting day may transform into an exciting evening - so be prepared to get surprised.



SAGITTARIUS

Your ship may be rocked by stormy controversies today. Ganesha advises you to steer clear of people looking to give you a piece of their mind. The storm looks to ease away if you lend a patient ear to all such elements, and try and accommodate their views.



CAPRICORN

It's a lucky day for your sweetheart! Wonder why it's written in your horoscope? You will pamper him/her to the hilt, take them out on a shopping spree and buy whatever they lay their eyes on, even if it's way beyond reasonable, says Ganesha. You will go overboard to make your love feel that nothing else matters, and although this lavish outing will serve the purpose, you may later repent not keeping a count of your cash.



AQUARIUS

Good news from across the seven seas brings cheer! If you're seeking a visa, you may get one today. Everything looks positive and it reflects in your mood. Share your happiness with your family, says Ganesha, and you will find it multiplies manifold.



PISCES

Conflicts galore will come your way at the workplace today. Keep a calm head over your shoulders and do keep tabs on your tongue. Differences only crop up if there are substantial thought processes involved, and keeping this in mind ought to give you the perspective needed to get ahead, says Ganesha.



ROB SCHNEIDER, PATRICIA AZARCOYA FILE FOR DIVORCE

Hollywood comedian Rob Schneider and his TV producer wife, Patricia Azarcoya, have ended their 15-year marriage. Reports state that Patricia filed for divorce in Arizona's Maricopa County Superior Court, citing irreconcilable differences. The petition notes that the marriage is irretrievably broken, with no possibility of reconciliation.

MINAJ DECLARES HERSELF AS TRUMP'S NO. 1 FAN

Rapper Nicki Minaj has spoken up on her controversial support for President Donald J. Trump with a short speech at a special session. She told the assembled audience that Trump is being "bullied" and "smeared" and declaring herself "probably the president's Number 1 fan", reports *Variety*.



Shruti's honest confession

Mumbai: Shruti Haasan recently opened up about her long battle with what she described as "crippling anxiety," revealing that it played a major role in her decision to step away from acting in 2018. The actor and musician shared that for years, her anxiety had reached a point where it interfered with her ability to carry out everyday activities, leaving her mentally exhausted and unsure of herself.

In a recent interview, Shruti explained that taking a break became essential for her mental well-being.

The pause allowed her to slow down, reassess her life, and finally address the anxiety she had been struggling with for much of her adult life. She admitted that during this

period, she was uncertain about who she was and what she truly wanted, making self-reflection unavoidable.

Living alone in London proved to be a turning point. Away from familiar expectations, Shruti focused on healing through music, writing, and routine daily tasks, which brought her a sense of grounding and independence. She spoke about rediscovering joy in simple activities and reconnecting with creativity without pressure. Looking back, Shruti described this phase as deeply transformative, saying that confronting her anxiety head-on helped her rebuild confidence, regain balance, and emerge stronger both personally and professionally.

AGENCIES

Bhumi: Good cinema needs viewers' backing

Mumbai: It is heartbreaking when good films don't work at the box office, says actor Bhumi Pednekar, who believes some of the responsibility also lies with the audience as their feedback decides what gets made next.

Citing the example of cally-lauded films such as *and Afwaah*, which failed in theatres despite good for tackling issues like and migrant crisis as well of fake news, Bhumi said are not getting an opportunity to tell

"It really breaks your like *Bheed* or *Afwaah* mi told this news

"*Bheed* has a platform on the audience, it is want good content and to watch that film. those films came I don't it. All I work, small

"Word-tire bracket which has taken away. such good es don't get actor added.



criti-
Bheed to stay reviews pandemic the menace right voices opportunity to tell

heart when a film doesn't do well," Bhumi

agency.

(OTT). The onus is also not just on the filmmaker. If you a good film to be made, you've

If you don't watch that film, then will not be made. It's like, what first, the chicken or the egg?

really have an answer for

know is if you want good

you have to go support

films," she said.

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within our films, just completely been

That's why I feel

films and newer voic-

an opportunity," the

PTI



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES

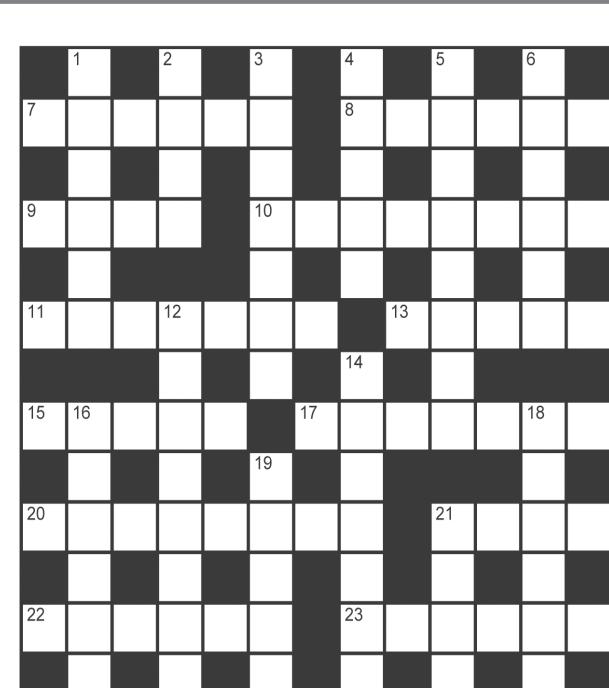


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



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Across

7 Whacked

8 Housetop

9 Iridescent gem

10 Summer

quencher

11 Ice cream flavour

13 Pool action

15 Apia locale

17 Sun hats for

ladies

20 Volcanic glass

21 *La Dolce Vita*

setting

22 A place to

view relics

23 Leon Uris title

4 Leftover

5 Everest, e.g.

6 Interfere

12 Puts on a

pedestal

14 Sporting dog

16 Framework for

plants

18 Adipose tissue

19 Motion

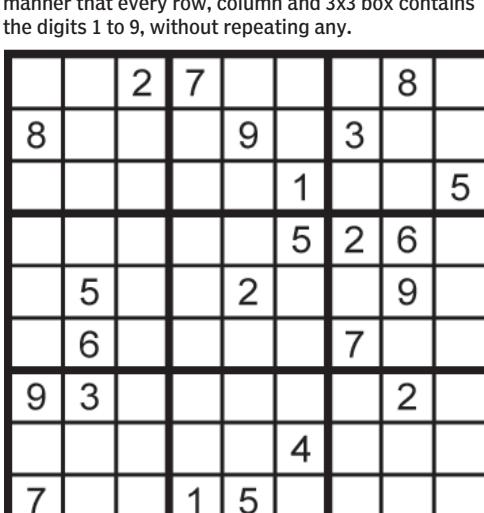
pictures

21 Tooth part

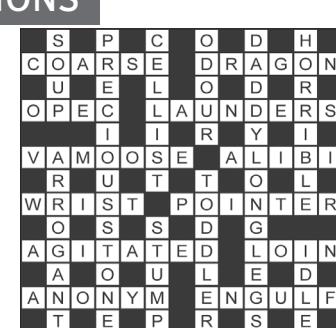
CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

SUDOKU

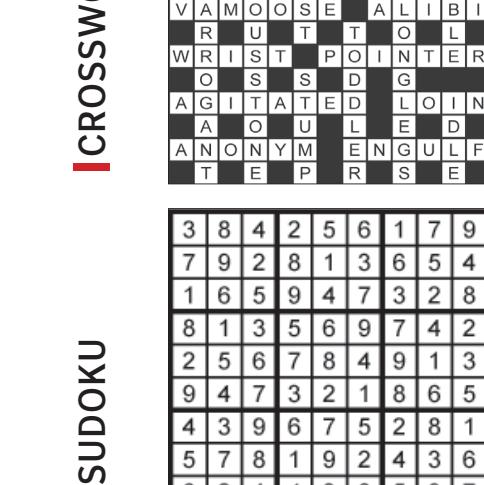
To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



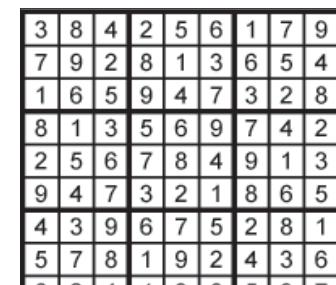
SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



downtown

Vig nets SCBMCH doc with ₹2.63 lakh cash

POST NEWS NETWORK



Accused doctor Sanatana Behera failed to give a satisfactory explanation regarding the source of the recovered money, following which the cash was seized

ment issued by the Vigilance said.

It said that Behera failed to give a satisfactory explanation regarding the source of the

recovered money, following which the cash was seized.

Meanwhile, Vigilance officials have launched simultaneous searches at three locations linked to the doctor as part of a disproportionate assets probe.

A case (4/2026) has been registered against him at the Cuttack Vigilance police station under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2018. Further investigation is in progress, and more details are awaited, it said.

In another development, Ramanath Das, a former multi-purpose health supervisor, was convicted by a Vigilance court of Sundargarh for misappropriation of government funds and was sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment (RI) for a period of two years.

A release issued by the Vigilance Directorate here Thursday said that the competent authority will be approached to stop the pension of Das, who was working with the Rourkela Municipality, when the vigilance case was registered against him in 2001.

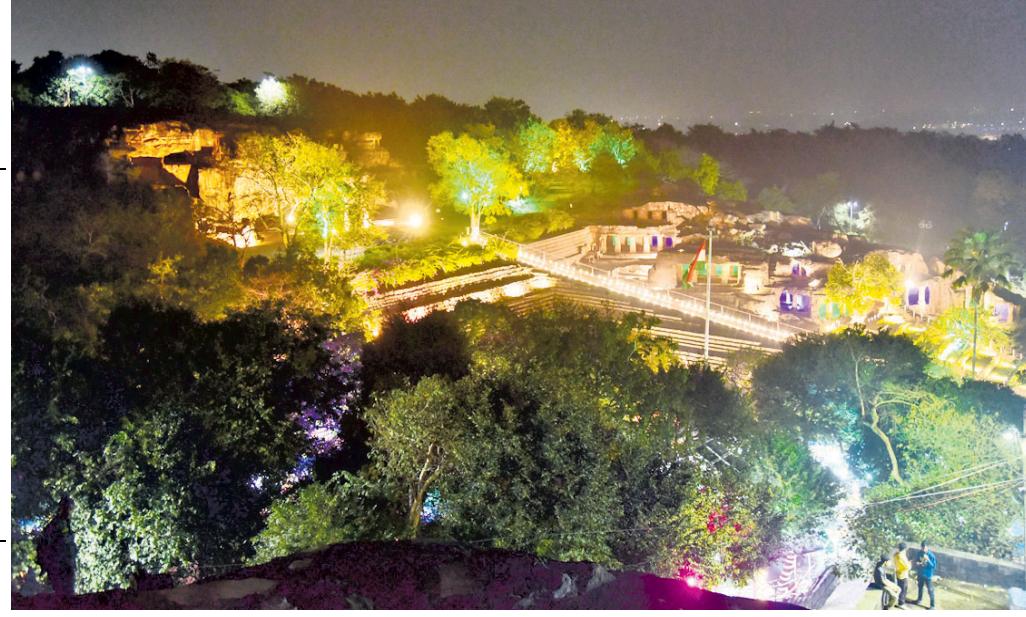
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VANTAGE POINT: A bird's-eye view of Khandagiri and Udaygiri caves in Bhubaneswar that's decked up with lights as the annual Kumbhamela gathers pace attracting sadhus from different sects and crowds every evening to the venue

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

Supplies Min orders swift redressal of paddy procurement complaints

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra inspected the Command, Control Cum Experience Centre of the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation (OSCSC) and directed officials to ensure prompt resolution of any complaints related to paddy procurement during the ongoing Kharif season.

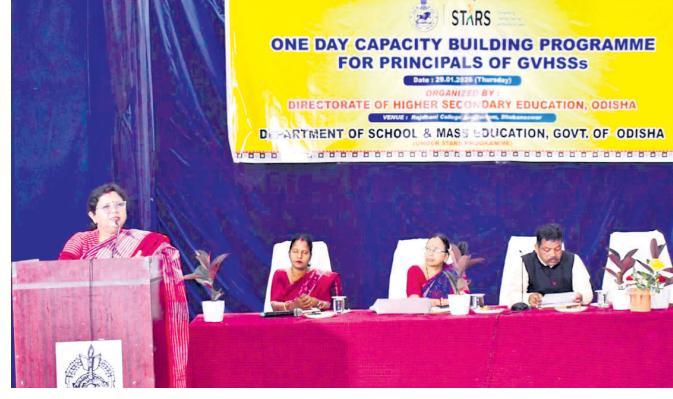
Reviewing the arrangements, the Minister emphasised that farmers' interests must be protected and any irregularities in paddy purchase is addressed without delay. He examined the procurement process at mandis, CCTV surveillance systems, real-time monitoring arrangements and the tracking of vehicles transporting paddy from mandis to rice mills.

The Minister also interacted with farmers, nodal officers and officials deployed at mandis, seeking feedback on facilities and challenges faced during procurement. He reiterated that farmers can lodge grievances through the toll-free helpline 1967, enabling direct communication of issues with the authorities.

Directing departmental officials to maintain strict vigilance, the Minister said immediate corrective steps should be taken whenever complaints are received from farmers regarding paddy procurement.

OSCSC Managing Director K. Sudarshan Chakraborty briefed the Minister on the Centre's operations and the measures adopted for speedy disposal of grievances. Senior officials of the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Department and the State Civil Supplies Corporation were present during the inspection.

Capacity building workshop held for principals of vocational schools



Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: A one-day Capacity Building Workshop for principals of Government Vocational Higher Secondary Schools was organized Thursday. Principals from all 230 Government Vocational Higher Secondary Schools across the state participated in the workshop.

The programme was attended by Niyati Pattnaik, Director, DHSE, Binita Senapati, Joint Director, DHSE, Susmita Sahu, RD, Bhubaneswar, Sasmita Mali, Joint Director, DHSE, Jitendra Nayak, Deputy Director, DHSE and Sarojakanta Choudhury, Principal, Rajdhani College among others.

Addressing the participants, Director Pattnaik highlighted that the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has laid special emphasis on vocational education. She stated that the workshop would empower principals of vocational institutions and strengthen coordination among them. The workshop, she added, focused on identifying challenges and finding practical solutions for effective implementation of vocational education.

Joint Director Senapati, in

her address, said that vocational education plays a crucial role in making students self-sufficient. She advised principals to encourage students based on their individual interests and guide them towards suitable vocational streams.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarojakanta Choudhury emphasised that strengthening institutions is essential to effectively take vocational education to students. He noted that prioritizing vocational education and enabling students to become self-reliant is key to achieving the vision of a Viksit Bharat. During the programme, Joint Director Sasmita Mali conducted the program, while Deputy Director Jitendra Nayak delivered the vote of thanks.

The workshop featured detailed discussions on the importance of vocational education, examination management, academic administration, SAMS portal management, and career guidance. Other dignitaries present at the workshop included Regional Director (Sambalpur) Pabitra Mohan Sahu, Regional Director (Berhampur) Jagannath Dharua, Joint Director Snigdha Mishra, and Deputy Director CH Bijayalakshmi.

BJD claims BJP leader's involvement in Nayagarh woman's abduction

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Thursday alleged a BJP leader's involvement in the abduction of a married woman in Nayagarh district and accused the state government of failing to act, claiming the incident reflects a worsening law and order situation and growing insecurity for women in the state.

Addressing a press conference at Shankha Bhawan, Daspalla BJD MLA Ramesh Chandra Behera and party spokesperson Lora Mohapatra alleged that Raghab Mallick, BJP's Daspalla Assembly candidate in the last election, kidnapped a woman who has been reportedly missing for nearly a month.

Behera said the woman's husband had filed a complaint with the local police station December 31, alleging his wife was abducted. He claimed that despite the complaint, police have taken no effective action so far and the woman's whereabouts remain unknown. According to the BJD leader, the complainant submitted WhatsApp chat records between the accused and the woman as evidence. He further alleged that the accused had threatened the woman's husband. Describing the incident as part of a broader plan, Behera accused the BJP government of providing protection to party leaders involved in crimes against women, resulting in a breakdown of law and order. He demanded immediate action and warned of street protests if the situation does not improve.

Party spokesperson Lora Mohapatra alleged that cases of atrocities against women have increased since the BJP came to power. Citing party data, she claimed that more than 40,000 cases of crimes against women were registered in the state over the past 18 months, including around 4,000 rape cases.

She also referred to other recent incidents allegedly involving BJP leaders in Khandapada and Rajnagar and claimed that several such cases have surfaced without any action being taken. "The Chief Minister speaks of women's safety, but the involvement of leaders from the ruling party is weakening law enforcement," she said.

Majhi made the statement based on the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament earlier on the day.

"The Economic Survey of India (2025-26) affirms the steady progress Odisha is making on the path of inclusive and sustainable growth. The state's economy continues to strengthen. Odisha's Net State

Product (NSDP) has increased from ₹6.99 lakh crore in 2023-24 to an estimated ₹7.90 lakh crore in FY 2024-25 per cent."

"Per capita NSDP has reached ₹1,68,966, reflecting a 12.33

per cent increase and improving income levels for the people of Odisha," the CM said, adding that agriculture remains a key pillar of the state's development

Union Min lauds Odisha's agri sector performance

Bhubaneswar: Union Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Shrikrishna Singh Chouhan Thursday expressed satisfaction over Odisha's progress in agriculture sector, lauding the effective utilisation of funds and urging the state to maintain the momentum of development. Chouhan was reviewing the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-KVY) and Krishonati Yojana during a video conference attended by Agriculture ministers from all the states. Odisha Deputy Chief Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment, KV Singh Deo participated in the meeting and highlighted the successful execution of both the flagship schemes in the state. He said Odisha has already utilised 79 per cent of the funds under PM-KVY and 80 per cent under the Krishonati Yojana, significantly accelerating agricultural growth. Singh Deo added that six new projects could be initiated if the Central government releases the remaining funds at the earliest. PM-KVY aims to promote sustainable agriculture, while the Krishonati Yojana focuses on enhancing food security and self-sufficiency. Odisha's initiatives in natural farming, crop diversification, and millet promotion were highlighted as best practices, positioning the state as a model for agricultural development.

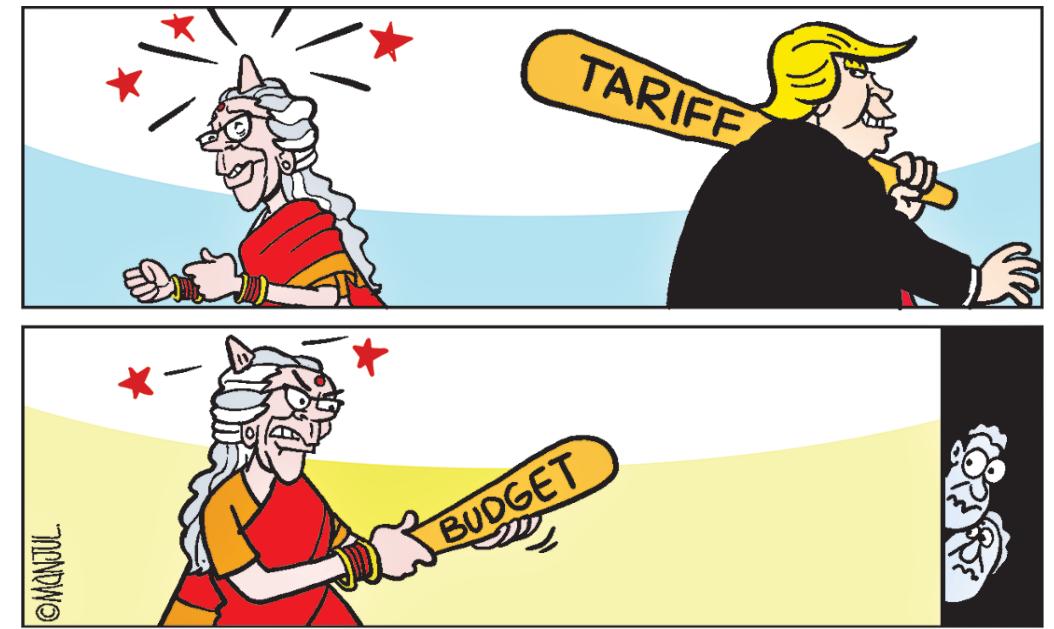
The meeting was attended by Arabinda Kumar Padhee, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment department, and Shubham Saxena, Director of Agriculture.

ROAD SAFETY MONTH

Students of NM Institute of Engineering and Technology, in association with Commissionerate Police, spread awareness on road safety near AG Square in Bhubaneswar Thursday



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



BJP leaders hold closed-door meeting amid RS election buzz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Senior Odisha BJP leaders, including Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Thursday held a closed-door meeting here to discuss the party's strategy for the Rajya Sabha election and also strengthening the organisation ahead of the rural polls, a party leader said.

The meeting held at the party's state headquarters under the chairmanship of Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal was also attended by the party in-charge for the state Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, ministers, MLAs, district presidents and key office bearers.

Majhi in a post on X said, "I participated as a worker in the state-level workers' meeting organised at the state BJP office in Bhubaneswar. On this occasion, there was an extensive discussion on strengthening the organisation further and giving topmost priority to public service."

"As the chief servant of the state, I expressed my opinion on the direction and coordination of the government and the party to ensure that the government's welfare initiatives reach the individuals at



the last mile of society," Majhi stated.

Replying to a question, Samal said, "The BJP has its Parliamentary Party Board to take a decision on the Rajya Sabha elections."

The meeting was held at a time when the state is witnessing political discussions over the Rajya Sabha elections after ECI asked the state Chief Electoral Officer to prepare for the elections for four RS seats to fall vacant in April, 2026.

Keeping in view the present strength in the Assembly, the BJP is certain to win two seats, while the opposition BJD will easily get its one candidate elected. The tussle is likely to be for the fourth seat for which neither the BJP nor the BJD have the required support of 30 MLAs.

The BJP has 79 MLAs and the support of three independent legislators, while the BJD has 48 MLAs plus two sus-

pended MLAs. The Congress has the support of 15 MLAs, including one from CPI (M).

Sources said Thursday's closed-door meeting discussed the strategy on how to win the fourth seat despite not having the required number.

Earlier, Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan told reporters that the BJP will win the fourth seat. After ensuring the victory of its two candidates in the upcoming RS polls, the BJP will have 22 additional MLAs, short of 8 MLAs to win the fourth seat. Similarly, the BJD will have 18 surplus MLAs and short of 12 votes.

Thursday's meeting is politically significant as it was held a day after Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das sought an appointment with BJD president Naveen Patnaik and proposed to field a united opposition candidate to restrict the ruling BJP to two seats.

However, BJP state general secretary Biranchi Narayan Tripathy, after the meeting, said that organisational issues and people-oriented work of the Centre and state government were discussed in detail by the leaders in the meeting.

State making steady progress: CM on Economic Survey

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday said Odisha has been making steady progress and is on the path of inclusive and sustainable growth as evident from the Economic Survey of India 2025-26.

Majhi made the statement based on the Economic Survey tabled in Parliament earlier on the day.

"The Economic Survey of India (2025-26) affirms the steady progress Odisha is making on the path of inclusive and sustainable growth. The state's economy continues to strengthen. Odisha's Net State

Product (NSDP) has increased from ₹6.99 lakh crore in 2023-24 to an estimated ₹7.90 lakh crore in FY 2024-25 per cent."

"Per capita NSDP has reached ₹1,68,966, reflecting a 12.33

per cent increase and improving income levels for the people of Odisha," the CM said, adding that agriculture remains a key pillar of the state's development

strategy.

Majhi said Odisha now ranks among the top three sunflower-producing states in India, contributing 0.03 million tonne, or 11.6 per cent of national production. This reflects the government's emphasis on crop diversification, productivity enhancement, and farmer welfare, he said.

Noting that agriculture continues to be a key pillar of Odisha's development strategy, the CM said the state ranked

among the top three sunflower-producing states in the country. Financial inclusion is deepening across the state, as bank deposits have risen to ₹5.83 lakh crore, strengthening savings and investment.

"Our fiscal position remains strong, enabling sustained investment in infrastructure, education, and social welfare. Progress in education and poverty reduction further reflects our commitment to inclusive development," Majhi said, adding that the state government remains firmly committed to translating this growth into higher incomes, quality employment, and improved opportunities for every Odia.

On the occasion of WEDDING SEASON Presenting ବିଜୁ କେତ୍ରାୟା

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HOTEL PRACHI NEW MARRION HOTEL

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Time : 10:30 am-8:30 pm

Entry & Parking Free

Org. by: O.A.C.

Three held for ₹94.62 lakh online investment fraud

Police seize three mobile phones, an SBI ATM card and a UDYAM registration certificate from the accused



THE APPS SHOWED FABRICATED TRADING PROFITS, CREATING AN ILLUSION OF GENUINE MARKET ACTIVITY

Complainant was lured to invest through two mobile trading apps—BOB Caps (BOB Capital Markets, Mumbai) and Chola Pro (Cholamandalam Securities, Chennai)

VICTIM TRANSFERRED MONEY VIA UPI, NEFT AND RTGS TO VARIOUS THIRD-PARTY BANK ACCOUNTS AS INSTRUCTED BY THE ACCUSED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: The Commissionerate Police has arrested three persons in connection with a large-scale online investment fraud involving fake trading applications, in which a man was cheated of ₹94,62,461 lakh, police said Thursday.

The accused have been identified as Lala Basantara (21), Manas Kumar Sahu (30) and Chinmaya Sahoo (19), all residents of Debagarh district.

Acting on reliable intelligence, a special team of the Commissionerate Police, including the Cyber Crime and Economic Offences Wing (EOW) conducted raids and apprehended the accused.

According to police, the accused posed as representatives of SEBI-registered financial institutions and added the complainant to multiple WhatsApp groups, luring him with promises of high returns through stock trading, share investments and IPOs. The groups falsely assured compliance with SEBI norms to gain the victim's trust.

The complainant was induced to invest money through two mobile trading applications named BOB Caps (BOB Capital Markets Limited, Mumbai) and Chola Pro (Cholamandalam Securities Limited, Chennai). These applications displayed fabricated trading profits to create an illusion of genuine market activity.

Believing the claims to be genuine, the complainant transferred money through UPI, NEFT and RTGS to various third-party bank accounts as directed by the accused. When he later attempted to withdraw the amount, he was asked to pay additional charges, including a 30 per cent service fee in the name of tax and processing charges.

Despite making further payments, withdrawal was not allowed.

Subsequently, the applications showed the account status as abnormal and all related WhatsApp groups became inactive, raising suspicion of fraud.

The victim then lodged a complaint with the cyber police, following which the case was registered and investigation was taken up.

Police seized three mobile phones, one SBI ATM card and one UDYAM Registration Certificate from their possession.

After completion of all legal formalities, the accused were forwarded to the court. Further investigation is underway to trace other accomplices and the money trail, police added.

CM pays tribute to soldier Jitu Behera

POST NEWS NETWORK



31-year-old jawan, serving as a Naik in the Army, collapsed on duty in Tangdhar, Kupwara district, January 26 and was rushed to a nearby health centre following a suspected cardiac arrest, but could not be saved

Bhubaneswar, Jan 29: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Thursday expressed deep sorrow over the untimely demise of brave Army soldier Jitu Behera, a native of Anandapalli village in Nayagarh district, who was serving in Jammu and Kashmir.

"I am deeply heartbroken to learn about the untimely demise of brave soldier Jitu Behera from Anandapalli village in Nayagarh district. Losing a son of Odisha who dedicated his life to the nation's security is an irreparable loss for the state and the country," Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said in a condolence message.

He added that Behera's dedicated service and unparalleled patriotism in the Indian Army would continue to inspire the youth of the state.

Extending his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, Chief Minister Majhi prayed to Lord Jagannath for the peaceful repose of the departed soul during this time of profound grief.

According to reports, the 31-year-old jawan, who was serving as a 'Naik' in the Army's NK Rank, collapsed while on duty in the Tangdhar area of north Kashmir's Kupwara district January 26. He was rushed to a nearby health centre following a suspected cardiac arrest but could not be saved.

Jitu's mortal remains were brought back to his native village on Wednesday evening. A large number of people gathered to pay their final respects

as the last rites were performed with full state honours.

A solemn procession was taken out, during which police personnel from Itamati and Nayagarh district also paid tribute to the fallen soldier.

The entire village remains in shock following his sudden demise. Jitu had married only a few months ago.

FROM P1

The Washington Post called it a historic deal with its headline saying 'India and EU clinch the 'mother of all deals' in a historic free trade agreement'.

Associated Press highlighted the scale of the deal with its headline saying that 'India and the European Union reach a free trade deal representing a third of global trade'.

On Fox News, Pakistani journalist Qamar Cheema said India is set to benefit from this agreement, as tariffs will be reduced to zero in several key sectors. He said that neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh will no longer be able to compete with India in the European market.

Several senior political leaders across Europe publicly welcomed the FTA.

Germany Chancellor Friedrich Merz called the conclusion of negotiations a 'very

positive sign' and urged swift implementation to boost growth and prosperity.

Finland President Alexander Stubb described the FTA as historic and the largest trade deal ever concluded by either side, saying it would significantly intensify economic and political ties.

Sweden Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said the agreement marks the launch of a new era of cooperation, strengthening prosperity, competitiveness and security through trade and partnership.

Denmark Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen extended full support to the FTA, calling it geopolitically crucial and highlighting the first-mover advantage in a combined market of two billion people.

Global business leaders

operating in India responded with strong optimism, calling the FTA a long-awaited breakthrough.

Jürgen Westermeier, President and Managing Director for India and South Asia at Airbus and President of the Federation of European Business in India, described the FTA as a 'big moment' after 20 years of discussions and said it would act as an accelerator of opportunities for both sides.

Jan Noether, Director General of Indo-German Chamber of Commerce, said the FTA brings together two billion people and nearly a quarter of global GDP, describing it as the 'mother of all free trade agreements'.

Leading industry representatives, including CEOs from key German carmakers such as Volkswagen, BMW,

and Mercedes-Benz, praised the deal's potential to boost German exports to India and strengthen global supply chains.

Global policy experts and think tanks described the FTA as substantively strong and strategically well-timed.

Richard Rossow, Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the deal brings together a quarter of the world's population and a massive share of global trade, adding that the positive optics reflect strong substance.

Michael Kugelman, Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, called the FTA the 'right deal at the right time', stressing that it goes beyond cushioning US tariffs and instead consolidates a broader, fast-growing strategic partnership.

Technology, Sri Sri University, thanked the TRAI Regional Office, Hyderabad, for choosing the university to conduct the programme and urged students to use the opportunity to update their knowledge in pursuit of their goals.

G Suresh Reddy, ITS, Joint Advisor, TRAI Regional Office, Hyderabad, delivered the keynote address and explained the growth of the telecom sector and TRAI's role in its orderly development, while safeguarding consumer interests.

In his presentation, Reddy detailed the steps taken by TRAI to address unsolicited communications, the telecom complaint redressal mechanism, maintenance of quality of service, mobile number portability and EMF radiation among other things.

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Gangrape of minor: 6 men awarded 20 years in prison

POST NEWS NETWORK



20-year RI for minor's rape

PHULBANI: A POCSO court in Kandhamal district Thursday sentenced a man to 20 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) for raping a 16-year-old girl in 2021. POCSO court judge Manoranjan Das has also imposed a fine of ₹50,000 on the convict.

If the penalty is not realised, he will remain in custody for another six months, said Ramesh Chandra Mohanty, Special Public Prosecutor of the court.

According to the prosecution, the accused, who was an unemployed youth in 2021, raped the girl when she went to the outskirts of her village in the evening to attend to nature's call. The convict threatened the girl and also raped the girl several times under Belghar police station area, Mohanty said.

Later, the victim's family member lodged an FIR with Belghar police. Patra was then arrested and forwarded to judicial custody, he added.

erred the verdict after the six accused were brought from Berhampur Circle Jail to the court.

According to court records, the victim, a student of Class XII at a private college, was

waiting for her father near Hillpatna after visiting a friend on the evening of May 3, 2024. She was approached then by the prime accused and her male friend, Rutun Kumar Das.

Das, who she knew, lured her to a bachelors' residence in Brahmanagar Second Lane in the city. She became suspicious and asked Rutun about the place. Das reportedly offered her a spiked soft drink under the pretext of calling his mother before the assault took place involving the other five accomplices.

According to police reports, the victim lost her sense after consuming the drink. Investigators said Rutun then called five to seven friends to the room, where they took turns to rape the unconscious girl. The assault continued from 7pm till 10pm.

The victim's father attempted to contact her by phone several times during the ordeal but was unsuccessful. When the victim regained consciousness around 10pm, Rutun allegedly threatened her to remain silent before dropping her off at Bijipuri Junction on his motorcycle.

The survivor informed her family of the assault upon returning home. A formal complaint was lodged at the Baidyanathpur police station May 5. Police registered a case (240/24) and launched an investigation. Later, police apprehended Rutun and subsequently arrested the other suspects from various locations.

Kalikaprasad gate and Gud-

Opium plantation on 2 acre destroyed

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda/Barbil, Jan 29: Police Thursday destroyed illicit opium cultivation spread over nearly two acres in a remote forest area of Keonjhar district, officials said.

Acting on specific intelligence inputs, a police team raided an abandoned and inaccessible forest patch in the Sunanadi river basin under Roida panchayat of Joda block, within Barbil police station limits. The team uprooted and destroyed opium plants, including flowers and mature crops, cultivated across the area.

No arrests were made during the operation, and an investigation is underway, police said.

According to officials, Keonjhar Superintendent of Police Nitin Kushalkar received confidential information about the illegal cultivation. Acting on



his directions, the raid was led by Barbil Sub-Divisional Police Officer Devendranath Pingua, along with Barbil Inspector In-Charge Ashok Kumar Nayak and other police personnel. The operation began around 9am.

The Forest department estimated the destroyed crop could have yielded opium worth more than ₹5 crore. Officials said opium is processed to extract morphine, which is further refined

to manufacture heroin, a highly addictive narcotic.

Barbil Additional Tehsildar Santosh Kumar Kar and Jonson Kindu were present on magistrate duty during the destruction of the crop.

Local residents, speaking on condition of anonymity, said several Hindi-speaking youths from outside the area had been frequenting the site to tend to the crop. They added that fa-

vorable cold weather this season had accelerated plant growth and that harvesting was expected in March.

Public concern has grown over how opium cultivation was allowed to flourish over a large forest stretch in the Rolda forest range despite the presence of forest protection staff. The area, surrounded by mining operations, is regularly visited by officials from the mining, forest and other government departments.

Residents alleged the cultivation was carried out in an organised manner, raising questions about possible institutional lapses. Police said this is the first instance of large-scale opium cultivation detected in the district and suspect the involvement of interstate traffickers.

Citing the sensitivity of the investigation, Pingua declined to share further details.

Tribal man kills mother suspecting 'witchcraft'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, Jan 29: A 35-year-old tribal man allegedly hacked his mother to death, suspecting her of performing witchcraft in Mayurbhanj district, police said Thursday.

The deceased was identified as Raimani Singh (55). The incident took place at Kalarafulia village under Betnoti police station limits Thursday. The accused was her son, Tapan Singh. Police said that the elderly woman died on the spot, and a case of murder was registered at Betnoti police station.

Betnoti police station Inspector In-Charge Sasmita Mohanty said that Tapan killed his mother after suspecting her of performing witchcraft on his wife, who often fell sick. Tapan was arrested, police said.

The body was sent to PRM Medical College and Hospital, Baripada, for post-mortem, police added.

Prez visit: Curbs for tourists in Similipal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, Jan 29: The authorities of Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district Thursday imposed certain restrictions on the movement of visitors due to security and administrative arrangements for President Droupadi Murmu's tour.

The office of Similipal Field Director Prakash Chand Gogineni, in an order, said that three roads leading to the National Park will remain closed for visitors from February 4 to 6.

Kalikaprasad gate and Gud-

gudia tourism zone will be closed from February 4 to 6 for tourists. The safari at central zone (Gudgudia) will also be closed for the afternoon of February 5 and the morning of February 6, the order said.

Forest department sources said that President Murmu will make a night halt in Similipal National Park February 5 and return the next day.

According to officials, the President will undertake a six-day visit to Odisha beginning February 2. She will reach Bhubaneswar February 2 and stay overnight at Lok Bhavan in the state capital.

The President is slated to visit Jajpur and offer prayers at the temple of Goddess Biraja February 3. Thereafter, she is set to attend the convocation ceremony of Fakir Mohan (FM) University in Balasore as the chief guest.

The same evening, Murmu is scheduled to proceed to Puri, where she will visit Shree Jagannath Temple for darshan of the trinity February 4.

The President is also slated to visit her native Mayurbhanj district February 5 and 6, where she will participate in multiple official and cultural programmes.

Bonda culture draws foreign tourists at Ankadeli market



Koraput, Jan 29: The culture and traditions of the Bonda tribe were on display at the Ankadeli weekly market as foreign tourists visited the haat and interacted with members of one of Odisha's oldest indig-

enous communities, officials and locals said.

The visit turned the weekly market into site of cultural exchange, with tourists engaging with Bonda women, taking photographs and admiring their traditional ornaments, distinctive attire and age-old

customs. Tourists also purchased locally made products from Bonda women, providing economic support and encouragement to the community.

The Bonda tribe is known for preserving its ancient traditions and lifestyle despite modern influences. The Ankadeli weekly market serves as an important platform for the community to showcase its identity through traditional clothing, handmade jewellery, forest produce and local crafts.

Local residents and officials said such visits help draw wider attention to tribal cultures that are often confined to remote regions. A local official

said the presence of foreign tourists reflects growing interest in tribal heritage and cultural tourism, adding that responsible tourism can help support preservation efforts.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, DEOGARH
E-mail : eerv_deogarh@yahoo.co.in
1st Corrigendum to
TCN NO. SERWDGH-Online - 12 of 2025-26
No.25001/8/2526 : In partial modification to this office Tender Call Notice No. 12/2025-26 issued vide this office letter no. 49 dttd. 05.01.2026, it is hereby notified that the date & time of availability of tender documents online for bidding as well as the date & time of opening of the tender have been re-scheduled as detailed below.

1. Period and time of availability of the bid documents from 31.01.2026

10.00 A.M to 06.02.2026 up to 5.00 PM instead of the earlier scheduled period from 03.01.2026 A.M to 09.01.2026 up to 5.00.

2. Date and time of Opening of tender on 07.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M instead of the earlier fixed date 10.01.2026 at 11.00 AM.

N.B- All other terms & conditions of the TCN shall remain unchanged.

OIPR-25001/25087/1/25-26/0008 Sd/- Superintending Engineer R.W. Division, Deogarh

कर्नारा बैंक Canara Bank A Govt. of India Undertaking
सिनियर सायडिके

ASSET RECOVERY MANAGEMENT BRANCH Bell's House, 21, Camac Street, 5th Floor, Kolkata - 700 016
E-mail : cb2364@canarabank.com

Ref: ARMB/SUNIL-ISPAT/INVOC/2026 Date : 20.01.2026

Sri Shyam Sundar Mall, S/o. Late Bajrang Lal Mall, Loudon Manor, 3rd Floor, 8/2, Loudon Street, Kolkata - 700017.

Also at : 4, Motilal Basak Lane, Kanguragachi, Kolkata - 700054

Sri Sunil Kumar Mall, S/o. Shyam Sundar Mall, Loudon Manor, 3rd Floor, 8/2, Loudon Street, Kolkata - 700017

Also at : 4, Motilal Basak Lane, Kanguragachi, Kolkata - 700054

Sri Mukesh Kumar Agarwal, S/o. Hariram Agarwal, AA - 7 Civil Township, Rourkela, District - Sundargarh, Orissa - 769004

Sri Bharat Kumar Agarwal, S/o. Shiv Kumar Agarwal, AA - 7 Civil Township, Rourkela, District - Sundargarh, Orissa - 769004

Sri Hanuman Prasad Agarwal, S/o. Dulichand Agarwal, O-5 Civil Township, Rourkela, District - Sundargarh, Orissa - 769004

Also at : AA-7 Civil Township, Rourkela, District - Sundargarh, Orissa - 769004

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject : Invocation of Guarantee and Demand Notice in respect of unpaid debt in default due from M/s. Sunil Ispat and Power Limited

1. M/s. Sunil Ispat and Power Limited hereinafter referred to as the "borrower" has availed the credit facility from us on the terms and conditions as detailed in sanction/Advice as given below:

Sl. No. Nature of Credit Facility / Facilities Amount / Limit Sanctioned (Extensions, If any) Date of Sanction

1. Term Loan Rs. 6,75,00,000.00 15-03-2004

2. OCC / ODBD Rs. 2,00,00,000.00 27-03-2009

3. LC Rs. 40,00,000.00 27-03-2009

TOTAL Rs. 9,15,00,000.00

2. In consideration of the above loan / credit facility to the aforesaid borrower, you have executed documents in favour of the Bank and to secure repayment of the said loan/credit facility you have executed various documents, details of which are given hereunder:

Sl. No. Description of Document Date of Execution

1. Guarantee Agreement 06-05-2009

3. The borrower has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of the loan and defaulted in repayment and/or charges and/or failed to serve interest in its account on time. Hence, the borrower has defaulted a sum of Rs. 2,02,44,26,050.28 (Rupees Two Hundred Two Crores Forty Four Lakhs Twenty Six Thousand Fifty and paise Twenty Eight Only) as on 19/01/2026 together with further interest and incidental expenses and costs from 20/01/2026.

4. By this notice, the guarantee as furnished by you against the credit facilities availed by the M/s. Sunil Ispat and Power Limited is hereby invoked and you are called upon to discharge/pay the amount under default as on date and also future interest thereon, costs and expenses, to us within 7 (Seven) days from the date of this notice, failing which the bank shall be proceeding under the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016 and the Regulations thereunder.

5. This notice is issued without prejudice to any other rights available to our bank under any other law in force.

Yours Faithfully,

Authorised Officer

Canara Bank, ARM Branch - Kolkata

Dream come true: Berhampur Class IX girl after meeting PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jagannath". He immediately responded the same and inquired about her home state.

During the session, she posed a question to PM Modi in writing regarding time management before the exam.

To my surprise, the PM grasped the essence of my query and provided a detailed response to my question, which I will follow for the rest of my life," she said.

Brinda, daughter of a police officer, was the only student from the state to win an award in Veer Gatha in the secondary stage and to participate in Pariksha Pe Charcha.

She is also one of the 'Super 100' winners of Project Veer Gatha, jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defence.

Brinda was given a cash award of ₹10,000, a medal and a certificate as an award in the ceremony at New Delhi, after her painting about great Indian warriors who sacrificed their lives for the nation was selected in the secondary stage (Class IX and X) in a function held at New Delhi on the same day.

Her school principal AK Mishra said, "We are very happy as

Brinda was the only student from the state to win an award in Veer Gatha in the secondary stage and to participate in Pariksha Pe Charcha."

After visiting Rashtrapati Bhavan and attending the Republic Day parade in Kartabaya Path January 26, Brinda returned to her hometown Berhampur.

Brinda was given a cash award of ₹10,000, a medal and a certificate as an award in the ceremony at New Delhi, after her painting about great Indian warriors who sacrificed their lives for the nation was selected in the secondary stage (Class IX and X) in a function held at New Delhi on the same day.

Her school principal AK Mishra said, "We are very happy as

Youth gets life term for double murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

During the trial, statements of 33 witnesses were recorded. The prosecution was conducted by Additional Public Prosecutor Rajat Kumar Das on behalf of the state government.

The incident took place amid political violence following the panchayat elections in 2022, when tension prevailed between two groups of supporters of a particular political party. The incident occurred when Pradeep Sahu, 26, of Nabarangpur village and his friend Babu Gouda, 38, were returning home after bathing in a pond at around 8pm, May 29, 2022. They were allegedly attacked by members of the rival group and hacked to death with swords and knives on the village road.

Based on a complaint filed by Aparna Sahu, brother of deceased Pradeep, Digapahandi police registered a case (185/22) and launched an investigation. The then investigating officer, Deepi Ranjan Behera, arrested the prime accused Bijay June 19, 2022. The other accused Mayur, who had fled, was later arrested from Mumbai and produced before the court.



By your stumbling, the world is perfected.

SRI AUROBINDO



West Betrayed

Among the more remarkable features of US President Donald Trump's meandering speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos was his invocation of the cultural bonds that made the West so prosperous. But Trump obviously did not believe a word he said when he praised the "special culture" and "spirit that lifted the West." After all, that culture was liberal, market-oriented, and committed to providing dignity to all people. It challenged entrenched hierarchies and rejected absolute authority. The West prospered by rejecting the type of regime he is seeking to create in America, embraced in Hungary, Turkey, and elsewhere, and would like to see take root across Europe.

Economists and sociologists have studied this culture to understand where the West's dynamism came from. The most recent Nobel laureates in economics, Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion, and Peter Howitt, have made this their life's work, and their findings are wholly incompatible with the Trump administration's policies.

When US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick declares that "capitalism has a new sheriff in town," he mischaracterizes the essence of markets. They do not need sheriffs. They need credible rules and competition. Having a supervisor-in-chief is closer to the Chinese model than to the "spirit" to which Trump paid lip service in Davos.

Like China, the Trump administration has also tried directing resources that are better allocated through markets, as well as bluntly demanding shares of private firms. Trump even coercively engineered the sale of TikTok to ensure that one of the biggest stakes in the new US entity went to his billionaire buddy, Larry Ellison of Oracle. This is virtually crony capitalism, Kremlinstyle. The traditional Western form of capitalism, mostly recently espoused by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, would leave firms and central banks alone to do their work of building prosperity.

The "special culture" also rejected permanent castes and inherited status. The Athenian spirit that led to the rise of the West slowly did away with these, not least by ending absolute monarchy. The "divine right of kings" gave way to democratic elections and other mechanisms of public accountability.

Trump's assertion that he is guided by nothing other than his own morality returns us to the Hobbesian world of the Leviathan. That system helped preserve royal privilege until liberal ideas – as espoused by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and many others – undercut the rationale for the kind of absolute authority that Trump craves, and which the conservative majority on the US Supreme Court has been enabling.

The curbing of royal privilege led to greater inclusion and opportunities for all members of society to make a decent living by drawing on their own free thoughts and labor. The hierarchy of the countryside was replaced with the liberty of the city. Stadtluft macht frei – city air makes you free – said the Germans. Towns won out over the countryside and the old feudal order. Now MAGA wants to return us there.

Liberal capitalism has been the great engine of inclusion, advancing what the economic historian Deirdre McCloskey calls "bourgeois dignity." It allowed professions to flourish and cut down old barriers to class mobility (thus falsifying Marxist predictions), and it subsequently overrode gender, race, ethnic, and national biases, as well as toppling hierarchies such as slavery and colonialism.

One of the more beautiful and enduring legacies of the culture of the West is liberal arts education, which aims to free the imagination and inculcate a belief in open-mindedness and an allergy to intellectual rigidity or dogma. Until the end of the 18th century, the prevailing assumption was that only the propertied classes could think freely. Liberal arts freed minds from the bonds of birth, a movement with roots in the Renaissance, with Machiavelli tying good governance to virtue rather than fortune.

This culture also afforded dignity to all professions. Until the 18th century, art was considered a frivolous activity, suitable only under royal patronage. But with the ever increasing commercialization of the arts, the creative professions flourished. Whereas opera on the Old Continent depended on subsidies and patronage, the Americans invented the Broadway musical and, later, Hollywood. Such market-oriented creations (all examples of creative destruction) produced the American culture that would achieve unrivaled global influence in the 20th century.

The addition of Trump's name to the Kennedy Center in Washington symbolically returns us to the days of royal patronage, albeit without even an opera company. Trump boasts of the \$250 million in patronage he has brought in, but as usual, the facts tell a different story: ticket sales have dwindled, and artists will not sing and dance at a venue that has been dragged into advancing an illiberal vision of America.

The "pinnacle of human achievement" that Trump appeared to praise in his Davos speech rests not on authoritarianism, but on policies to encourage and attract virtue and creativity. In a recent finding, Aghion and his colleagues show that IQ, more than the fortunes of birth or economic privilege, overwhelmingly accounts for inventors and inventions. Openness to global talent is part of America's "precious inheritance."

The rise of the West is a simple story to tell culturally. It's about Europe moving toward openness, cosmopolitanism, intellectual freedom, the deepening of markets, transparent rules, and, above all, institutional checks and balances. Trump's actions and policies negate these achievements at every turn. His administration claims that Europeans face "civilizational erasure," even as it encourages white Christian nationalism at home.

Trump and the MAGA faithful know nothing of the "spirit that lifted the West." On the contrary, they represent everything that it swept away centuries ago.

The writer is University Professor at the Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, and Richard von Weizsäcker Fellow with the Robert Bosch Academy (Berlin).

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WISDOM CORNER

Work of art is not a hypothesis worked out into a neat theorem. It is full of contradictions and inconsistencies.

GURU DUTT

I don't dream at night, I dream at day, I dream all day; I'm dreaming for a living

STEVEN SPIELBERG

It would be wonderful if I could see the end of civilization during my lifetime.

HAYAO MIYAZAKI

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Vijayan calls for overseas Keralites' expertise for state's development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 29: Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Thursday said Kerala needs the cooperation and expertise of its overseas community for the state's overall development.

He was speaking after inaugurating the fifth edition of the Loka Kerala Sabha, a conference of the diaspora organised by the state government here.

"The role of the overseas community should not be viewed only in terms of remittances, but also in terms of their expertise across sectors, which could play a key role in Kerala's development. The country also owes a great deal to expatriates for their contribution to the economy," Vijayan said.

Referring to rapid changes in science and technology, the chief minister said Kerala needs to modernise accordingly and build a new state driven by scientific and technological progress, for which the cooperation of the diaspora is essential. "The aim is inclusive development so that all sections benefit," he said.

Vijayan said Keralites have reached almost every country in the world and many among them, including scientists, technocrats, academicians and businesspersons, have established themselves abroad. He said though expatriate



Keralites remain emotionally connected to the state, they earlier lacked a platform to contribute their ideas and expertise for Kerala's progress.

To ensure such cooperation and assistance, the Loka Kerala Sabha was created in 2018, he said.

He said the Sabha has now become a rare and globally admired model, with legislators, MPs and overseas Keralites as its members.

"After the launch of the Loka Kerala Sabha, the Centre even asked other states to consider similar initiatives," he said.

Vijayan said the Sabha has evolved from being merely a forum for expression to one that offers concrete suggestions for Kerala's growth, and that its major achievement was its ability to influence policy.

He recalled the support extended by the overseas community during crises such as floods, the covid-19 pandemic and the Wayanad landslide in 2024, and thanked non-resident Keralites for their solidarity.

"Participation in the Sabha has grown from representatives of 35 countries in 2018 to 103 countries in the last edition," he said, adding that the state government has always stood with overseas Keralites and has set up a separate department for them.

Highlighting infrastructure development that took place in the last 10 years in the state, Vijayan said national highway expansion, once considered unrealistic, has become a reality, and several stretches will be inaugurated in the coming months.

Mizoram observes 'Girls in Aviation Day'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, Jan 29: In a significant move to break the glass ceiling in the aerospace sector, Mizoram Thursday became the first state in the Northeast to host Girls in Aviation Day.

The event, held at the state's Information and Public Relations department's Lianchihi Run (Hall), was jointly organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Women in Aviation International (WAI).

The programme brought together students from high schools and higher secondary institutions across the region, transforming the venue into a hub for aspiring pilots, engineers, and aviation executives.

Addressing a packed room of students, School Education Minister Vanlalthlana emphasised that Mizoram is no longer just a spectator in India's aviation growth.

"Mizoram holds a strategic position in the nation's regional aviation roadmap," he said.

The minister also called for stronger collaborative efforts among the government, industry and professional bodies to "unlock the full potential" of the state's youth.

The day was marked by high-energy interactive sessions where industry experts broke down emerging trends and technical "best practices". For many students, the event served as a first-of-its-kind bridge between classroom theory and high-flying career opportunities.

While submitting the dossier,

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

India nominates Meghalaya's root bridges for consideration



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sharma, the Permanent Representative to UNESCO, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and the Meghalaya CM for their support to the nomination, the Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO said in a statement.

Sharma also acknowledged the role of Meghalaya Principal Secretary Frederick Kharkongor, officers of the Archaeological Survey of India, the Ministry of External Affairs, experts and the local communities in safeguarding the property and preparing the nomination.

The dossier was handed over by India's Ambassador Vishal V Sharma to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre Director Lazare Assomo Eloundou, a statement said. "We are hopeful that the living root bridges will be inscribed this year, ensuring that the indigenous communities, the true guardians of this living heritage, receive the global recognition they so richly deserve," Sangma said on X.

While submitting the dossier,

indigenous Khasi and Jaintia communities.

"The landscape reflects a deep-rooted and harmonious relationship between people, nature and spirituality, embodied in traditional systems of land use, governance and ecological stewardship," the statement said.

The indigenous worldview underpinning the cultural landscape is anchored in principles of respect, reciprocity and responsibility towards Mei Ramei (Mother Earth), it said.

"The submission of this nomination underscores India's commitment to recognising and preserving living cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge systems, and to advancing global heritage conservation efforts through UNESCO," the statement added.

'ASIA'S CLEANEST VILLAGE' TO REMAIN SHUT SUNDAYS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Shillong, Jan 29: Mawlynnong in Meghalaya's East Khasi district, widely known as Asia's cleanest village, will remain closed to single-day tourists Sundays from now on, as the local authorities decided to suspend all visitor-related activities on that day.

Noting that Sunday is a day of religious observance for most residents, the 'Dorbar' or the village council, said Mawlynnong will remain open to visitors from Monday to Saturday.

"From January 2026 onwards, Mawlynnong village would remain closed to all one-day tourists and visitors on Sundays. The place would be open on weekdays only," the Dorbar said in a statement.

All tourist-related services, including restaurants, shops, stalls and public toilets, would also be closed, it said.

"In Mawlynnong, Sunday is when almost everyone has to attend religious services in the churches for most of the day, hence they would not be able to offer or render any kind of services or hospitality to the

visitors," the statement said. The Dorbar said the restriction was also aimed at avoiding inconvenience to visitors, especially elderly tourists, and preventing dissatisfaction that could harm the village's reputation.

However, tourists staying overnight in guest houses or homestays during weekdays and extending their stay till Sunday, as well as those checking in on Sunday nights, will be exempted from this restriction, it said, adding that in such cases, the responsibility of providing services will rest with the respective accommodation owners.

Several other tourist locations in Meghalaya, including Nongjriong sunrise village, have also adopted similar measures by discouraging or banning one-day visits on Sundays, following local community decisions, officials said.

Manipur aims to resettle over 40k IDPs by March 31

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Jan 29: Manipur Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel Thursday said the state government aims to resettle over 40,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) by March 31.

He said 16,500 IDPs have so far been resettled in the north-eastern state.

At least 260 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic clashes between Meitei and Kuki communities since May 2023 in Manipur. The state has been under President's Rule since February 2025.

Goel said a state level committee is monitoring the rehabilitation process.

"The primary aim of the government is to gradually and securely rehabilitate IDPs, restore stable living conditions, and enable resumption of livelihoods, education and normal community life," he said. "The government's vi-

sion extends beyond mere relocation of IDPs from camps to their homes... with focus on livelihood, education and overall wellness of the IDPs," the chief secretary said in a statement.

Around 7,000 houses have been sanctioned under the Special PMAY-G (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin) for the reconstruction of fully

damaged houses, and these units are in various stages of completion, he said.

The Manipur government has so far released about ₹124 crore for the resettlement of IDPs at various locations.

"The government aims to resettle more than 10,000 displaced IDP families consisting of more than 40,000 IDPs by March 31, 2026," he added.



Tripura set to become data storage hub: CM Manik Saha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

timely intervention.

The move will develop an ecosystem for setting up IT and IT-enabled industries in the state, he said.

"Tripura has several advantages to become a hub of the data storage industry with the state receiving substantial investment proposals and speedy business reforms," he said.

The three existing data centres' storage capacity stands at 1800 terabytes, which often fails to meet the growing demand for data storage.

The CM laid the foundation stone for Airtel's data centre

worth ₹200 crore with 5 megawatt storage capacity at Chandamari in West Tripura district and termed the initiative as a

CUTTACK DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Arunodaya Bhawan, Link Road, Cuttack-12

NOTICE

This is to inform all landowners of village Ratagarh Lenkasahi and Chandiprasad, Cuttack, that a public meeting is proposed to be held in connection with the Proposed Town Planning (TP) Scheme-1.

The meeting has been scheduled:

Date: 31st January 2026 Time: 10 AM,

Venue: Block Office, Baranga

The objective of the meeting is to discuss matters related to land, planning proposals, development provisions and allotment policy. All landowners are requested to be present at the meeting.

Vice-Chairman, Cuttack Development Authority, Cuttack

AI-POWERED ROBOTIC CANAL-CLEANING SYSTEM

Thiruvananthapuram attempts to eliminate manual scavenging

Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), Jan 29: In a major step to phase out manual scavenging and ensure the safety of sanitation workers, the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation commissioned G-Spider, an AI-powered robotic canal-cleaning system, at the Amayizhanchan canal near the railway station premises at Thampanoor here, officials said Thursday.

The system was launched by Minister for Local Self-Governments MB Rajesh at a function presided over by Thiruvananthapuram Corporation Mayor VV Rajesh Wednesday.

The AI-powered canal cleaning project is a joint initiative of the city corporation and Technopark-based



Genrobotics Innovations, which developed Bandicoot, a robotic scavenger. As per the agreement, Genrobotics will bear the full cost of deploying the robotic system, while the corporation will supervise its operation and maintenance.

Speaking at the event, the minister said Genrobotics has set an example of how innovative ideas can be transformed into impactful entrepreneurship. He said that of the seven compressed biogas (CBG) plants to be commissioned in the state for solid waste management, one will be set up in the state capital.

Rajesh said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate the ₹100-crore CBG plant at Brahmapuram in Kochi February 28, adding that 90 per cent of the nine lakh met-

ric tonne of accumulated waste at the site has already been removed.

He further said work on the Palakkad plant will be completed in February, while construction of another plant in Thirissur is progressing, and a plant at Changanassery is in the pipeline.

The minister added that the construction of four sanitary plants will be inaugurated next week.

In his address, the mayor reiterated the corporation's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge technologies for waste management and lauded the Genrobotics team, stating that the civic body would explore all possible ways to utilise the company's technology.

Repeated manual cleaning efforts in the area had led to serious safety incidents, including the death of sanitation worker Joy in 2024.

In this backdrop, the corporation initiated the deployment of robotic cleaning technology in strict compliance with the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, with the aim of eliminating human entry into hazardous canal-cleaning operations, officials said.

Bank of India

Zonal Office: Bhubaneswar Zone, 1/1D, Star House, Jayadev Vihar, Nayapalli, Bhubaneswar-751015, Mob.: 7008973027

BOI

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of the
day quote

Those who are attacking me for my remarks on 'Miya' -- a word used in Assam in the context of Bangladeshi Muslim illegal migration -- should pause and read what the Supreme Court of India itself has said about Assam



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CHIEF MINISTER, ASSAM

Gujarat is the first state in the country to take strong initiatives in renewable energy and therefore the state ranks number one nationwide in renewable energy



HARSH SANGHVI | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, GUJARAT

The proposal to increase liquor sale hours is extremely worrying and anti-people. We strongly oppose such decisions taken by ignoring morality and social concerns



ASHOK GEHLOT | FORMER CHIEF MINISTER, RAJASTHAN

SHORT TAKES

2 Naxalites killed in encounter

Bijapur: Two "dreaded" Naxalites involved in several incidents of violence and carrying a collective reward of Rs 7 lakh were killed in an encounter with security forces in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh Thursday, police said. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai praised the security forces for the success, describing the slain Naxalites as "notorious". The exchange of fire broke out at 7 am in the forest near Kavargutta village in Pamed area in the southern part of the district, Bijapur Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said. The operation had been launched Wednesday evening based on the inputs about the presence of armed cadres from the 'Pamed Area Committee' of the Maoists in forested hills of Kavargatta-Gundarajudem, he said. After the firing ceased, the bodies of Pradeep alias Joga and Bheema Veko, who carried rewards of Rs 5 lakh and Rs 2 lakh on their heads, were recovered.

Delhi court acquits LG VK Saxena

New Delhi: In a relief to Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, a court here Thursday acquitted him in a 25-year-old defamation case filed by activist Medha Patkar, stating that the complainant failed to prove her charges against him. Patkar and Saxena had been locked in a legal tussle since 2000 after she filed a suit against him for publishing an advertisement against her under the headline 'The True Face of Medha Patkar and her Narmada Bachao Andolan' in The Indian Express. The complaint was originally filed in Ahmedabad and was transferred to Delhi in 2010 on the directions of the Supreme Court.

42 kg heroin, 4 hand grenades seized

Chandigarh: Punjab Police recovered 42.9 kg of heroin, four hand grenades and other ammunition in Amritsar, which could be linked to cross-border narco-terror networks, police here said Thursday. The operation is a direct outcome of actionable and credible intelligence generated through the Village Defence Committees (VDCs), a flagship initiative of the state government, aimed at institutionalising community participation in internal security and anti-drug efforts, they said.



An expert committee has been appointed to study the feasibility of a tunnel as an alternative to the Bandipur forest route to solve the night travel ban

NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

B'DESH REPATRIATES 23 INDIAN FISHERMEN

Bangladesh Thursday repatriated 23 Indian fishermen while New Delhi released 128 Bangladeshi fishermen. The mutual exchange of fishermen and their vessels has been worked out keeping in mind the humanitarian and livelihood concerns of fishing communities on both sides, according to an Indian readout



BARAMATI PLANE CRASH

BLACK BOX RECOVERED

Naidu seeks Maha govt support for expeditious probe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 29: The black box of the ill-fated Learjet 45 plane that crashed near the Baramati airstrip Wednesday morning has been recovered, while Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu sought the state government's support for expediting the probe into the accident.

A day after Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others died in the plane crash, the civil aviation ministry said that ensuring a thorough, transparent and time-bound inquiry remains its top priority.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is probing the crash that happened during the aircraft's second attempt to land at the Baramati tabletop air strip.

Naidu wrote to Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis Thursday, seeking the state government's cooperation for expeditious conduct of the probe into the plane crash.

In a letter to the chief minister, Naidu sought the government's support for accessing the crash site, local administrative assistance and coordination with ground agencies, among other steps.

The civil aviation minister also said that the key outcomes of the investigation will be shared with the state government.



ment. Earlier, Fadnavis had urged the minister to order a detailed inquiry to find out the exact cause of the crash and also requested immediate steps to prevent such accidents in the future. In a statement, the ministry said that all requisite response and investigative mechanisms were activated immediately after the accident.

The investigation is progressing expeditiously, and the black box of the ill-fated aircraft has been recovered," the ministry said.

A black box is a small device that records information about an aircraft during its flight. It helps in the investigation of aviation accidents.

The ministry also said that it remains fully committed to completing the investigation within a defined timeframe in accordance with established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and laid-down guidelines. Canadian aircraft maker Bombardier

manufactures the Learjet 45.

The aircraft, operated by Delhi-based VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd, was trying to land in poor visibility conditions when the crash happened. Baramati has an 'uncontrolled airfield' (which generally means it lacks a proper instrument landing system to guide aircraft during low-visibility operations), and traffic information is provided by the instructors/pilots from the Flying Training Organisations.

Pawar (66), along with four others, had taken off from Mumbai in the aircraft, which crashed barely 200 metres from the edge of the tabletop airstrip at Baramati, his hometown.

Pilot-In-Command Sumit Kapur, Co-Pilot Captain Shambhavi Pathak, flight attendant Pinky Mali and Pawar's Personal Security Officer Vidip Jadhav also died in the crash.

The last rites of Ajit Pawar were held with full state honours at Baramati in Pune district on Thursday.

India flags minority attacks in Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: India continues to monitor reports of incidents of attacks against minorities in Bangladesh including on their homes and places of worship, and New Delhi has "consistently raised" the issue with the authorities in Dhaka, the government informed Rajya Sabha Thursday.

In a written response to a query, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh also said it is the expectation of India that the interim government of Bangladesh will discharge its responsibilities by "thoroughly investigating" these incidents and "bring all perpetrators of killings, arson and violence against minorities to justice without excuses".

CPI(M) member John Brittas asked the Ministry of External Affairs whether the government has taken cognisance of reports of attacks, killings, arson and intimidation targeting minorities in Bangladesh and the deterioration of law and order; and details of formal representations made by India to the government of Bangladesh on protection of minorities during the last two years.

"The government of India continues to monitor reports of incidents of attacks against minorities in Bangladesh, including on their homes, properties, businesses and places of worship. India has consistently raised the matter of safety and security of the minorities with the authorities in Bangladesh, at both political and diplomatic levels on several occasions," Singh said in his response.

Display names on 'logical discrepancies' list: SC to EC

After the completion of the revision in Bihar, the second phase of the exercise is being carried out across nine states and three Union territories



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Supreme Court Thursday asked the Election Commission to display the names of those on the "logical discrepancies" list at gram panchayat bhanavans and block offices, where documents and objections will also be submitted, during the ongoing special intensive revision of electoral rolls in various states.

After the completion of the revision in Bihar, the second phase of the exercise is being carried out across nine states - Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal and three Union territories - Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing the submissions of senior advocates Kapil Sibal, Amit Anand Tiwari and lawyer Vivek Singh, on behalf of the DMK, that the electors, who have been put in the "logical discrepancies" list, be given adequate time and opportunity to claim inclusion in the electoral rolls in poll-bound Tamil Nadu.

The apex court was hearing pleas alleging arbitrariness and procedural irregularities in the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in Tamil Nadu, including those related to the "logical discrepancies" category.

Passing general directions for the states where SIR is underway, the bench noted that EC notices have been issued and they are broadly classified in three categories - mapped, unmapped and logical discrepancy.

The top court added that under the 'logical discrepancy' category, mismatches in father's name or parents' age, and a difference in the age of the grandparents were noticed by the authorities.

"The documents brought on record by the parties indicate that, within the category of logical discrepancies include, inter alia, a mismatch of the father's name, a mismatch of parents' ages, a difference in parents' ages of more than 50 years, a difference in grandparents' ages of less than 40 years, and those having more than six progeny," the bench noted.

With a view to enabling the persons who are as of now included in the category of logical discrepancies, the bench issued certain directions.

"The names of the persons figuring in the logical discrepancies may be displayed at the Gram Panchayat Bhawan, public places in every Taluka (Sub-Division), as well as in the Ward Offices in the cities of the urban areas," it ordered.

People likely to be affected are permitted to submit their documents or objections through their authorized representative, it said.



Mortal remains of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar being brought to Vidya Pratishthan college ground for his funeral, at Baramati in Pune district, Thursday

PTI PHOTO

5 more burnt body parts found; death toll 21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Jan 29: The police Thursday recovered five more body parts, including partially burnt and skeletal remains, from the site of a massive fire near Kolkata, taking the total number of missing persons reports to 27," Baruipur Police District Superintendent Shubhendra Kumar said when contacted.

According to him, out of the 21 body parts, 16 have already been sent for DNA testing.

The police have received missing complaints for 27 people, of whom 21 are from Purba Medinipur district.

"We recovered five body

parts from the charred remains of the gutted buildings today. So far, 21 body parts, including partially burnt and skeletal remains, have been recovered from the site. The total number of missing persons reports is 27," Baruipur Police District Superintendent Shubhendra Kumar said when contacted.

Earlier, based on inputs from the local Narendrapur police stations, it was reported that 13 more bodies were found at the site, taking the death toll to 21, while 28 others are missing.

"We cannot say now the ex-

act death toll, as what we have recovered are body parts, which may belong to a single or different individuals. This can be confirmed only after the DNA test reports," a police officer said.

The devastating blaze, which broke out on the night of January 26, reduced two godowns and a momo manufacturing unit at Anandapur in South 24 Parganas district, on the outskirts of Kolkata, to ashes.

Of the remains recovered so far, one was a partially burnt body, while the rest were skeletal remains, making identifi-

cation through conventional means difficult.

Blood samples of family members were collected at Baruipur Hospital Wednesday to establish the identities of the deceased, in accordance with standard procedure. DNA profiling of the recovered bodies and body parts will be conducted next, the SP said.

"None of the bodies can be identified individually. We have to rely on DNA analysis. All the recovered parts have been sent for DNA mapping," he added.

According to police sour-

ces, eyewitnesses have told investigators that a picnic had been organised at the decorator's godown on the night of January 25, with at least 28 people present.

"After dinner, most of the workers went to sleep," they said, adding that the fire broke out thereafter. "We are examining whether the blaze was triggered by a cigarette or similar combustible material," the SP said. The blaze reduced the warehouses and the manufacturing unit to rubble, leaving behind charred buildings and the bodies of workers.

All is good, we are on same page: Tharoor after meeting Kharge, Rahul

THE MEETING IN KHARGE'S CHAMBER IN THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE COMPLEX LASTED FOR OVER AN HOUR AND FORTY-FIVE MINUTES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

had a very good, constructive, positive discussion," Tharoor said.

"All is good and we are moving together on the same page. What more can I say," he told reporters in Parliament premises after the meeting.

Asked if the issue of chief ministerial face for Kerala polls was discussed, Tharoor said that was never the issue.

"I am not interested in being the candidate for anything. At the moment I am already an MP, I have the trust of my voters from Thiruvananthapuram. I have their interest to look after in Parliament, that is my job," he said.



Tharoor said he was very satisfied with his meeting with the top Congress brass. In a post on X, Tharoor said,

on a wide range of subjects. We are all on the same page as we move forward in the service of the people of India."

He also posted a picture from the meeting in which the three of them are seen smiling and posing for a picture at Kharge's chamber in Parliament House complex.

Sources said it was a "comprehensive" meeting during which a wide array of subjects were covered.

Kharge and Gandhi made "the time necessary for a thorough discussion", a source close to Tharoor said, adding that all were on the "same page" and resolved to move forward together.

Tharoor had been upset over the treatment meted out to him at a Kochi event recently and attempts by some leaders to sideline him in Kerala.

Congress sources said the "proof of the pudding will be in the eating" and the next few weeks will demonstrate how well everything works in practice.

The meeting comes ahead of the Kerala Assembly polls which are very crucial for the Congress as it seeks to wrest power from the Left after 10 years in the opposition and is going all out to secure a victory in the southern state.

national

of the day quote

This has been accompanied by repeated attacks and harassment targeting students from south India, Kashmir, and minority communities. In this context, equity safeguards are not a matter of choice but an unavoidable necessity



True justice does not involve injustice to anyone, and the honourable court ensures precisely this. The language of the law must also be clear, and so must the intent. It's not just about rules, but also about intention



It is shocking that Rajasthani's lifeline, the Aravalli, is being repeatedly destroyed and there is no concrete action from the government to stop indiscriminate tree felling



POST OF THE DAY

Jewellers have no clue right now, even big jewellers are feeling the heat. I am getting messages from several large jewellers asking what will happen to gold, because at current market prices they are unable to take orders.

This run has changed the way jewellers have been operating till now.

160,000 yesterday, 175,000 today. There is no way jewellers can manage orders in this level of volatility.

@Nishant_Bliss

SHORT TAKES

Farmer kills leopard with sickle, spear

Veraval (Gujarat): A 60-year-old farmer killed a leopard with a sickle and a spear to save himself and his son after the wild animal attacked them in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district, officials said Thursday. While the farmer, Babu Vaja, and his son were hospitalised following the attack, forest officials have registered a case against the man for killing the big cat. The deadly encounter took place Wednesday night when Vaja was resting on the verandah of his house situated on the outskirts of Gangda village, nearly 100 km from Veraval, the district headquarters. A leopard emerged from the nearby fields and jumped on Vaja without any provocation, said Range Forest Officer L B Bharwad. According to Vaja, the big cat grabbed his arm and started pulling him.

Multiple Delhi schools receive bomb threats

New Delhi: Multiple schools in the national capital received bomb threats via email Thursday morning. It was later declared a hoax following sweeping searches by security agencies. According to the Delhi Fire Services (DFS), a call about the threats was received around 8.30 am, which led to a thorough checking of the premises by multiple security agencies. The DFS confirmed that Loreto Convent in Delhi Cantonment, Don Bosco in Chittaranjan Park, and Carmel Convent campuses in Anand Niketan and Dwarka have received threats. Police sources added the names of Sardar Patel Vidyalaya in Lodhi Estate, Delhi Public School in RK Puram, Modern School in Barakhamba Road and Sanskriti School in Sanskriti.



We are working closely with the Centre to ensure that J&K receives a substantial and effective industrial incentives package for the development of the industrial sector

OMAR ABBUDDAH | CHIEF MINISTER, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

ANDHRA TO IMPLEMENT FREE POWER FOR WEAVERS

The Andhra Pradesh government Thursday approved free power for weavers, an initiative which will be implemented from April 1 at a cost of nearly ₹85 crore per month. As many as 93,000 families will benefit with 200 units of power per weaver's beam while power looms will receive 500 units, benefiting 10,534 families, an official press release said



UGC EQUITY REGULATIONS

Oppn welcomes SC's stay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: The Supreme Court's stay on the recent UGC equity regulations to prevent caste-based discrimination on campuses was welcomed by opposition parties Thursday, even as a Congress leader accused the ruling BJP of creating conflicts to divert attention from real issues.

Leaders from parties, such as the Congress, SP, BSP and TMC, lauded the apex court's decision. However, the CPI(ML) Liberation said it is "deeply appalled" by the observations made by the judges.

In a post on X, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati said the court's order is appropriate in view of the current situation, as the regulations had led to an atmosphere of social tension.

"The University Grants Commission has implemented new rules to prevent caste-based incidents in government and private universities across the country, which has led to an atmosphere of social tension. In view of the current situation, today's decision of the Honourable Supreme Court to stay the UGC's new rules is appropriate," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said in a post on X.

She asserted that this would not have happened had the UGC taken all stakeholders into confidence. "However, such an atmosphere of social tension would not have arisen in the country, if the UGC had taken all stakeholders into confidence before implementing the new rules and had also provided proper representation to the upper-caste community in in-



The court sought responses by March 19 from the Centre and the UGC on three pleas against the University Grants Commission Regulations, 2026, on the grounds that caste-based discrimination has strictly been defined as discrimination against members of the SC, ST and OBC

vestigation committees, in accordance with the principles of natural justice," Mayawati said in her post in Hindi.

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav also welcomed the top court's stay on the regulations.

Reacting to the court's observations that the rules were prima facie "vague" and "open to misuse", Yadav stressed that both the language of a law and the intent behind it must be clear to prevent injustice and social division. "True justice

does not involve injustice to anyone, and the honourable court ensures precisely this. The language of the law must also be clear, and so must the intent. It's not just about rules, but also about intention," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said in a post on X. "May no one be oppressed, nor injustice done to anyone, may no tyranny or excess be inflicted on anyone, nor unfairness to anyone," he added.

Congress leader Pramod Tiwari welcomed the top court's decision and accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of creating conflicts to divert attention from real issues.

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Kalyan Banerjee also welcomed the apex court's decision.

"The Supreme Court has done the right thing, the UGC guidelines were unconstitutional," he told reporters.

The CPI(ML) Liberation, however, said the apex court's observations reflected a "myopic attitude" and also referred to its observations on another public interest litigation (PIL) matter on the rights of domestic workers.

Air India to buy 15 A321XLR planes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

main as originally structured, Air India said.

"The strategic conversion of a portion of our single-aisle Airbus aircraft orders to the A321XLR is in line with our effort of positioning Air India for the future," said Campbell Wilson, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Air India.

While Air India has been transforming its current fleet at an accelerated pace with new and retrofitted aircraft, Campbell said, "We are also carefully building our future fleet that, with scale and versatility, serves the rapidly evolving needs of travellers from and to India." Air India said it has to take deliveries of 542 new aircraft, including 344 with Airbus, of its total firm orders for 600 aircraft.

Air India has placed orders for a total of 350 planes with Airbus (300 in 2023 and another 50 in 2024), comprising 50 wide-body A350 and 300 single-aisle A320 family aircraft, including 210 A321 neo and 90 A320 neo.

Of the 210 A321neo on order, 15 aircraft order is now being converted to A321XLR, while the remainder 90 A320neo re-

constructed at an estimated cost of 247.28 crore. Another major project in the same district is the Nandigram-Balaipanda New Line, covering 28 kilometres at a cost of approximately 275.14 crore. Additionally, the Nandigram-Kandiamari (Nayachar) New Line, a 7-kilometre stretch, will be built at a cost of 75.62 crore, providing fresh rail access to the area.

In central West Bengal, the Bowaichandi-Arambagh New Line, extending 31 kilometres across East Bardhaman and Hooghly districts, will be constructed at a cost of around 267.37 crore. This line will reduce the rail distance between

the new railway lines will be executed by South Eastern Railway and will cover key areas in East Medinipur, East Bardhaman, Hooghly, Bankura and Purulia districts. Once completed, the projects are expected to reduce travel distances, improve mobility, and bring long-awaited rail communication to several underserved regions.

Among the proposed projects is the Kanthi-Egra New Line, spanning 26.2 kilometres in East Medinipur district, to be

constructed at an estimated cost of 247.28 crore. Another major project in the same district is the Nandigram-Balaipanda New Line, covering 28 kilometres at a cost of approximately 275.14 crore. Additionally, the Nandigram-Kandiamari (Nayachar) New Line, a 7-kilometre stretch, will be built at a cost of 75.62 crore, providing fresh rail access to the area.

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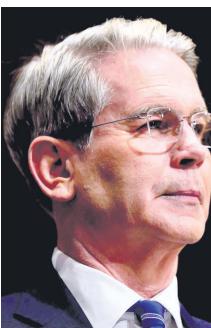
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international



India started buying sanctioned Russian oil, and guess who was buying the refined products? The Europeans. So, the Europeans have been funding the war against themselves and like something that you couldn't have made up

SCOTT BESSENT | TREASURY SECRETARY, US

NIPAH SCARE REACHES CHINA

China has started screening of travellers arriving on flights from areas where the Nipah virus outbreak has been reported, including India. Swab tests were being conducted on passengers, said some of the Indian travellers arriving in Beijing

**EU adds IRGC to terrorist list**

The decision by the 27-nation bloc marks the latest Western response over the violence, which activists say has killed over 6,300 people

ASSOCIATED PRESS



This will put them on the same footing with al-Qaeda, Hamas, Daesh. If you act as a terrorist, you should also be treated as a terrorist

KAJA KALLAS | FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF, EU

Brussels, Jan 29: The European Union has listed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organisation in the aftermath of Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests, the bloc's top diplomat said in a post on X Thursday.

Kaja Kallas, the EU's foreign policy chief, said that foreign ministers unanimously agreed on the designation. She said that "any regime that kills thousands of its own people is working toward its own demise."

The listing came after the 27-nation bloc sanctioned 15 Iranian officials, including top commanders in its Revolutionary Guard, over the violent crackdown on protesters.

Six Iranian organisations, including bodies responsible for monitoring online content in Iran, were also included in the sanctions list.

The decision by the 27-nation bloc marks the latest Western response over the violence, which activists say has killed over 6,300 people.

The measures add to international pressure on the Islamic Republic as it faced US threats to potentially launch a military strike against it.

US forces have moved the USS Abraham Lincoln and several guided-missile destroyers into the Mideast that can be used to launch attacks from the sea. It remains unclear whether President Donald Trump will use force against Iran, after he threatened military action in response to the killing of peaceful demonstrators and over possible mass executions. At least 6,373 people have been killed in Iran's protests, activists said.

For its part, Iran has said it could launch a pre-emptive strike or broadly target the Mideast, including American military bases in the region and Israel. Iran issued a warning to ships at sea Thursday that it planned to run a drill next week that would include live firing in the Strait of Hormuz, potentially disrupting traffic through a waterway that sees 20 per cent of all the world's oil pass through it.

Iran had no immediate comment, but it has been criticising Europe in recent days as it considered the move, which follows the US sanctioning the Guard in 2019.

France had objected to listing the Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist organisation over fears it would endanger French citizens detained in Iran, as well as diplomatic missions, which provide some of the few communication channels between the Islamic

Republic and Europe and its allies. However, the office of President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday signalled Paris backed the decision.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Thursday before the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels that France supports more sanctions in Iran and the listing "because there can be no impunity for the crimes committed."

"In Iran, the unbearable repression that has engulfed the peaceful revolt of the Iranian people cannot go unanswered," he said.

A notice to mariners sent by VHF radio from Iran on Thursday warned that it planned to conduct "naval shooting" in the Strait of Hormuz Sunday and Monday. The Associated Press saw a copy of the message, which was initially reported by the firm EOS Risk Group.

"Today, Iran and its allies have their finger on a trigger that, at the first enemy mistake, will sever the world's energy artery in the Strait of Hormuz and bury the hollow prestige of billion-dollar Yankee warships in the depths of the Persian Gulf," the newspaper said.

RIGHTS CONCERN**UK, 23 other OSCE members launch probe into Georgia**

REUTERS

London, Jan 29: Britain, Canada, Germany and 21 other OSCE members Thursday said they would launch an expert mission to examine the deteriorating human rights situation in Georgia, amid concerns in Europe of democratic backsliding in the EU candidate country.

Once among the most democratic and pro-Western of the successor states to emerge from the Soviet Union, Georgia has turned increasingly authoritarian since the outbreak of war in Ukraine and has deepened economic ties with neighbouring Russia.

In a joint statement, the countries said that in December 2024, 38 participating states invoked the OSCE's Vienna Mechanism to express concern about developments in Georgia and to request further information from the authorities. The statement, published on the British government's website, said their concerns over the authorities' implementation of international human rights obligations had increased.

It lists restrictions on freedom of expression, legislative reforms constricting civil society and legal actions against opposition groups among areas of concern. The South Caucasus country secured EU candidate status in December 2023, but Brussels has accused Georgia of "serious democratic backsliding" and said in November it was now considered a candidate nation "in name only".

Georgia has since abolished an anti-corruption body established on the EU's recommendation amid a crackdown on opposition politicians that has seen several of the most prominent ones jailed. The ruling Georgian Dream party, in power since 2012, has signalled it will try to ban the main opposition group outright on the grounds they pose a "real threat to the constitutional order". The opposition groups say the effort is politically motivated.

Bangladesh EC issues referendum warning

The poll body orders govt officials to refrain from 'yes' vote campaign in referendum



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Yunus' principal secretary, all ministries and law enforcement agencies, including Bangladesh police.

The government apparatus earlier was engaged to spearhead a campaign for the 'yes' vote in the plebiscite while the EC order came amid growing criticism and questions if the interim government could conduct such a campaign.

In line with a Bangladesh Bank order, the commercial banks too display 'yes' vote banners alongside the government offices while the central bank also asked the banks to use their CSR funds to support NGO campaigns for the plebiscite.

Several legal experts said since the referendum asks voters to choose either "yes" or "no", the interim government was expected to maintain an impartial position instead of adopting an openly partisan role, when doing so involved spending a considerable amount of public money.

Some jurists also questioned the legitimacy of the referendum itself since the Bangladesh Constitution kept no provision for such a plebiscite while the government got the proposal signed by President Mohammed Shahabuddin and subsequently issued an official gazette.

The referendum is set to be held to elicit public consent on a Yunus announced 84-point reform proposal called "July National Charter-2025".

SHORT TAKES**China relaxes visa rules for UK citizens**

Beijing: China agreed to relax rules to allow some visa-free travel for British citizens Thursday during a visit by Prime Minister Keir Starmer to Beijing, as part of a partnership deal which London hopes will help expand its service sector. British citizens will be allowed to visit China without a visa if they are travelling for under 30 days, Starmer said following his talks with President Xi Jinping, in what he cast as a win for business. Companies had been "crying out for ways to grow their footprints in China", a statement from Starmer said, adding that visa-free travel would help facilitate expansion in that market, boosting jobs at home. Injecting growth into Britain's relatively sluggish economy is one of the main aims of his four-day trip.

Dhaka-Karachi flight resumes after 14 yrs

Karachi: A special ceremony will be held Thursday night at the Karachi airport to celebrate a direct flight between Pakistan and Bangladesh, restoring non-stop air connectivity between the two countries after over a decade. A state-run Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight G-341 from Dhaka will land at the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi at 11 pm, aviation sources said. This would be the first direct Dhaka-Karachi flight since 2012. The development comes amid growing bonhomie between Bangladesh and Pakistan after prime minister Sheikh Hasina was ousted following massive student-led protests in Bangladesh August 5, 2024.

China executes 11 in cross-border crime case

Bangkok: China executed 11 members of a Myanmar-based family crime syndicate that killed 14 Chinese citizens and ran scam and gambling operations worth more than \$1 billion, authorities said. The Wenzhou city Intermediate People's Court announced the execution in a statement Thursday morning. It sentenced the 11 people to death in September. They included Ming Guoping and Ming Zhenzhen, who the court found led the scam and gambling operations, as well as key group members Zhou Weichang, Wu Hongming and Luo Jianzhang. The group filed an appeal that was rejected by the court in November.

Plane crash in Colombia kills 15, including politician

REUTERS

the flight, the carrier added.

Satena did not say what caused the crash and said the plane's emergency beacon had not been activated.

Lawmaker Diogenes Quintero and members of his team were aboard the plane, as well as Carlos Salcedo, a candidate for Congress ahead of elections in March, according to a passenger list released by the airline.

Images released by local media showed the crashed plane, including what appeared to be significant damage to the fuselage.

The area where the plane crashed is a mountainous region planted with coca leaves, the raw material for cocaine, and where illegal armed groups such as the National Liberation Army and a dissident faction of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia operate.

Air traffic control lost contact with the plane 12 minutes into



This image taken from video by Max Shapiro shows Alex Petti, left, scuffling with federal immigration officers in Minneapolis Thursday

PTI PHOTO

Aid cuts threaten Ghana's malaria vaccine success

REUTERS

insecticides and improving access to both preventive drugs and prompt treatment.

Two new vaccines - one developed by British drugmaker GSK, the other by Oxford University and the Serum Institute of India - are helping close the remaining gap, said Dr Selorm Kutoati, who heads Ghana's immunisation programme.

"For me, the malaria vaccine is a gamechanger," she told Reuters.

Gavi is currently the only organisation purchasing malaria shots for African nations. It anticipates it will be able to spend just over \$800 million on the programme over the next five years - 28% less than the expected need - after falling \$2.9 billion short of its overall funding goal for the period, according to internal estimates prepared for



its board of directors in December, seen by Reuters.

An additional 19,000 lives could be lost as a result due to lower vaccination rates, the documents say. The estimate, which has not previously been

reported, is based on modelling of the vaccines' impact by researchers at Imperial College London and the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute.

"It is the gap between the promise and the need for the

agenda. The United States was previously one of the group's top donors, contributing some \$1.3 billion between 2020 and 2024. Other donors have also been scaling back support.

Britain, Gavi's biggest donor, has pledged 1.25 billion pounds (\$1.72 billion) over the next five years, more than 20% less than for 2020-25.

Some regions managed to eliminate malaria without a vaccine, but countries in sub-Saharan Africa face particular challenges, disease experts say. Many are among the world's poorest, with poorly-resourced health systems. The prevailing strain is particularly deadly, and there is growing resistance to preventive and curative drugs. Control efforts have been disrupted by conflicts and natural disasters.

business



Excessive regulatory burdens impede the competitiveness of enterprises and slow down industrial growth. MSME-related reforms need to cut across multiple departments and levels of government-Centre, State, and local bodies

K SANJAY MURTHY | COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL OF INDIA

INFRA PROJECTS SEE COST OVERRUN

Several infrastructure projects worth above ₹150 crore each registered a cumulative cost overrun of ₹5.42 lakh crore, according to a monthly government report for December 2025. The 'Flash Report on Central Sector Infrastructure Projects' (worth ₹150 crore or more) for December last year showed that the revised cost of these 1,392 projects monitored by the statistics ministry stood at ₹35,10,920 crore compared to their original cost of ₹29,68,248 crore



₹ breaches 92 barrier against \$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

of the day quote

Some services in aerospace will now benefit from the reduction in tariffs after the India-EU trade agreement

JÜRGEN WESTERMEIER | PRESIDENT AND MD FOR INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA, AIRBUS

India's urban rental housing market is at an inflection point, shaped by a young and mobile population, and rental housing is essential to enhance mobility, particularly for students, young professionals, and migrant workers

VIPUL ROONGTA | CEO, HDFC CAPITAL

The rate at which we are growing, I think it appears that the industry volumes for the entire year are likely to cross the earlier peak of FY19 in absolute numbers

GRISH WAGH | MD & CEO, TATA MOTORS

Q3 RESULTS

Vedanta PAT surges

New Delhi: Mining major Vedanta Ltd Thursday reported a 60 per cent jump in consolidated Profit After Tax (PAT) at ₹7,807 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2025 on the back of strong base metal prices. The company had posted a consolidated PAT of ₹4,876 crore in the year-ago period. The consolidated revenue from operations of the company during the quarter rose 19 per cent to ₹45,899 crore over ₹38,526 crore in the year-ago period.

Canara Bank profit up

Mumbai: State-owned Canara Bank reported a 25 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit for the December 2025 quarter at ₹5,254 crore. The bank had reported a net profit of ₹4,214 crore in the year-ago period. On a standalone basis, its net profit for the quarter grew to ₹5,155 crore from ₹4,104 crore a year ago, as per an exchange filing. The core net interest income increased by just 1.13 per cent to ₹9,252 crore despite a 13.59 per cent growth in the global advances, but was impacted by a 0.33 per cent narrowing in the net interest margin.

Tata Motors net dips

New Delhi: Tata Motors Thursday said its consolidated net profit declined 48 per cent to ₹705 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025, hit by one-time provisions for the new labour code and the demerger process. The commercial vehicle maker had reported a net profit of ₹1,355 crore in the October-December quarter of the last year. Its total revenue from operations stood at ₹21,847 crore for the third quarter against ₹18,819 crore in the year-ago period, Tata Motors said in a statement.

Swiggy loss widens

New Delhi: Food delivery and quick commerce major Swiggy, which owns Instamart, Thursday reported a widening of its losses for the third quarter ended December at ₹1,065 crore, on continuing losses from the quick commerce segment and rising advertising and sales promotion expenses. The company had reported a loss of ₹799 crore on a consolidated basis for the corresponding October-December period of the previous financial year. Swiggy's losses from the quick commerce business Instamart increased to ₹1,065 crore in the third quarter, from ₹528 crore a year ago.

Survey pegs marathon-sprint strategy

India sees 6.8%-7.2% growth next year, flags risks from geopolitics, weak exports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: In a world of geopolitical turbulence, India must run a 'marathon and sprint' simultaneously, or run a marathon as if it were a sprint, the Economic Survey 2025-26 said Thursday.

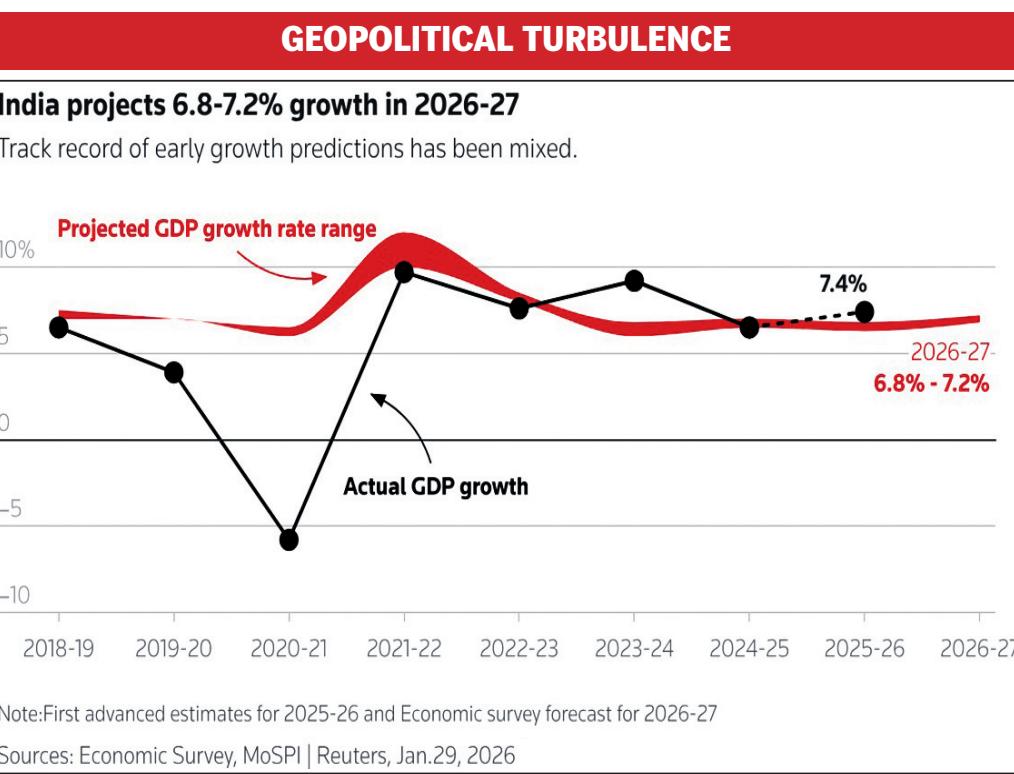
The pre-Budget document tabled in parliament by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman further said that the global environment is being reshaped by geopolitical realignments that will influence investment, supply chains and growth prospects for years to come.

"Against today's global churn, India must choose to build resilience, innovate relentlessly, and stay the course toward Viksit Bharat, rather than seek quick fixes to visible, short-term pressures," it said.

The Survey said 2026 may mark the point at which policy credibility, predictability and administrative discipline cease to be mere virtues and instead become strategic assets in their own right, with lasting relevance.

"Put differently, India must run a marathon and sprint simultaneously, or run a marathon as if it were a sprint," the document said.

According to the Survey, the



appropriate stance for 2026 is therefore one of strategic sobriety rather than defensive pessimism.

"The external environment will require India to prioritise both domestic growth maximisation and shock absorption, with a greater emphasis on buffers, redundancy, and liquidity," it said.

In a world of geopolitical turbulence, the Survey said, this may not be confined to a year but could be a more enduring feature.

"In response, India needs to generate sufficient investor in-

CII concurs with the survey's assessment of India's growth outlook, with the projected growth rate of 6.8-7.2 per cent in FY27 appearing realistic amid global uncertainties and external headwinds

CHANDRAJIT BANERJEE | DIRECTOR GENERAL, CII

terest and export earnings in foreign currency to cover its rising import bill, as, regardless of the success of indigenisation efforts, rising imports

will invariably accompany rising incomes," it said, adding that this has been the historical global experience.

The Survey pointed out that India is relatively better off than most other countries due to its strong macroeconomic fundamentals, but this does not guarantee insulation.

While noting that the country benefits from a large domestic market, a less financialised growth model, strong foreign exchange reserves and a credible degree of strategic autonomy, it said these features provide buffers in an environ-

CM inaugurates Energy department pavilion at CII Enterprise Odisha Conclave

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Jan 29: The Energy department, Government of Odisha, has set up a pavilion at the ongoing CII Enterprise Odisha Conclave in Rourkela to showcase Odisha's energy vision Wednesday.

Through its presence at the pavilion, TPCODL is sensitising consumers and promote important government schemes and in-house initiatives.

The pavilion was inaugurated by the Mohan Charan Majhi, Chief Minister of Odisha in the presence of Bhawani Shankar Bhoi, Deputy Speaker, Odisha Legislative Assembly; Sampad Chandra Swain, Minister for Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education; Durgacharan Tanti, MLA, Raghunathpal; Hemant Sharma, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Odisha, along with other senior officials, industry leaders and stakeholders.

Through interactive displays and awareness sessions, TPCODL highlighted the benefits of Smart Metering and the PM Solar ULA Model, focusing on consumer empowerment, energy efficiency and sustainable power solutions. The initiatives aim to en-



hance transparency, improve service delivery and encourage the adoption of renewable energy among consumers.

The Enterprise Odisha Conclave, now in its 25th edition, stands as a landmark platform celebrating Odisha's journey in industrial growth, entrepreneurship, innovation and investment. Over the past two and a half decades, this flagship initiative has played a pivotal role in shaping policy dialogue, fostering collaborations, empowering MSMEs and start-ups and attracting new business opportunities across the state.

Speaking on the occasion, Arvind Singh, CEO, TPCODL, said, "The CII Enterprise

Odisha Conclave is a significant platform to engage with industry leaders and policy-makers. Our participation in the Energy Department pavilion reflects TPCODL's strong commitment to consumer awareness and sustainable development. By showcasing initiatives such as Smart Metering and the PM Solar ULA Model, we aim to empower consumers through greater transparency, improved service delivery and the adoption of clean energy solutions. TPCODL will continue to work closely with the Government of Odisha to build a resilient, efficient and future-ready power distribution ecosystem for the state."

Markets advance for 3rd day on trot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Jan 29: Rising for the third consecutive day, benchmark stock index Sensex advanced 221 points and Nifty settled above 25,400 Thursday following a rally in Larsen & Toubro and the Economic Survey projecting the GDP growth of 6.8-7.2 per cent for the next fiscal.

Erasing its early losses, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 221.69 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 82,566.37. During the morning trade, it tanked 636.74 points or 0.77 per cent to 81,707.94.

The 50-share NSE Nifty edged higher by 76.15 points or 0.30 per cent to end at 25,418.90. The broader index fell 182.95 points or 0.72 per cent to a low of 25,159.80 in early trade.

A rally in global markets and fresh foreign fund inflows helped key indices recover from lows, analysts said.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Tata Steel jumped the most by 4.41 per cent. Larsen & Toubro climbed 3.66 per cent after its consolidated revenue from operations in the October-December quarter rose by 10 per cent to ₹71,450 crore from ₹64,668 crore in the year-ago period.

Axis Bank, Eterna, NTPC, Adani Ports and ICICI Bank were also among the gainers. However, Asian Paints, InterGlobe Aviation, Maruti and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.



India's gold market in Q4 2025 clearly reflected the dual impact of record-high prices and shifting consumer behavior

SACHIN JAIN | REGIONAL CEO, WGC

tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

However, demand value surged by 49 per cent to ₹3,03,470 crores from ₹2,03,070 crores in the same period of 2024.

Total Jewellery demand in India for the whole of 2025 decreased by 24 per cent to 430.5 tonne compared to 563.4 tonne in 2024. The value of jewellery demand increased by 12 per cent at ₹4,54,390 crore, compared to ₹4,04,510 crore recorded in 2024.

In contrast, investment demand emerged as a clear bright spot during the quarter. Total investment demand rose 26 per cent year-on-year to 96 tonnes, while its value more than doubled to ₹120,700 crore, up 108 per cent compared to the fourth quarter (Q4) 2024, he said.

January inflation data to be based on new CPI series

New CPI series to use 2024 as base year instead of 2012

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 29: The January retail inflation data will reflect price movements in airfares, e-commerce platforms and subscription rates of OTT channels like Amazon Prime, with the statistics ministry expanding constituents of the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The new CPI series, which will also have the base year as 2024 instead of 2012, is being introduced with an aim to look at the key macroeconomic



indicators more accurately and assess the broader consumption pattern of households in the country.

The first set of inflation data

2023-24, and use of the latest technology for price data collection and compilation.

Other recommendations include the inclusion of administrative and online/e-commerce data, methodological improvements in index compilation, including the house rent index and more granular data dissemination.

In the existing CPI having base year of 2012, all data are collected from physical or brick-and-mortar shops. To improve the quality of data, enhance the robustness of CPI and reduce burden on the data collector, price collection mechanisms for several items were explored by Price Statistics Division (PSD) in collaboration with State Regional Of-

fices (ROs) of FOD, in CPI 2024.

Further, it was also noted that the share of expenditure by households, through online platforms, was 4 per cent in rural and 10.5 per cent in urban areas, the report said.

"In view of this, 12 online markets are added across the towns having more than 2.5 million population. All items of CPI basket are mapped to the most popular platform available in the town," it said.

Airfare will be collected from online/e-commerce platforms, and prices of online media service providers/streaming services form websites of major service providers (Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Jio Hotstar, SonyLiv, YouTube Premium, and Zee5).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Real Madrid, PSG drop into playoffs

Dramatic, last-gasp header by a goalkeeper caps a climactic Champions League opening round



INTO ROUND OF 16:

Arsenal, Bayern Munich, Liverpool, Tottenham, Barcelona, Chelsea, Sporting Lisbon, Manchester City

English clubs are in the last 16 and could yet be joined by Newcastle.

DRAMA GALORE

Portugal's Sporting grabbed a last-gasp 3-2 win at Athletic Bilbao thanks to a goal by Alison Santos to snatch a top-eight spot and effectively relegate Real Madrid to the playoffs.

Manchester City beat Galatasaray 2-0 at home to jump from 11th to eighth and spare themselves a repeat of last season when they failed to reach the last-16 after losing to Real Madrid in the playoffs.

Holders Paris St Germain also slipped out of the top eight as they could only draw 1-1 at home to Newcastle United: a result that left both sides facing a playoff despite starting the final night in the automatic places.

Liverpool thrashed Qarabag 6-0 to end their group campaign in style and finish in third place – Alexis Mac Allister scoring twice and Mohamed Salah also among the goals.

Barcelona began the evening in ninth spot but spared themselves a play-off tie as they came from a goal down to beat Copenhagen 4-1. Goals from Robert Lewandowski, Lamine Yamal, Raphinha and Marcus Rashford ensured they finished fifth, one place behind surprise package Tottenham Hotspur who won 2-0 at Eintracht Frankfurt.

Chelsea trailed 2-1 at Napoli but two goals by Joao Pedro earned them a 3-2 win to clinch sixth spot while defeat left Napoli down and out in 30th place.

That meant five of the six

the last 16.

Several who started outside the top eight needed wins and other results to go in their favour with Barcelona, Manchester City and Sporting seizing their chance.

Erling Haaland and Rayan Cherki were on target for City.

Inter Milan got the win they required, beating Borussia Dortmund 2-0 away but, like fellow Italians Juventus, will have to take their chances in the playoffs.

Juventus could only draw 0-0 at Monaco. Dortmund missed out on being seeded for the playoffs, ending 17th.

Nowhere was the drama more compelling than at Atletico Madrid's Metropolitano Stadium where Diego Simeone's side hosted Norway's Bodo/Glimt. Atletico led through Alexander Sorloth's goal and at one point were into the top eight but Bodo, who stunned Manchester City last week, hit back with goals by Fredrik Sjovold and Kasper Høgh for a remarkable 2-1 win to put the Arctic Circle debutants in 23rd and into the playoffs.

Atletico ended 14th and will have to be content with being one of the seeded teams in the two-legged playoffs.

Napoli and PSV Eindhoven were not the only illustrious clubs to finish below the elimination trapdoor. Marseille had eyes on a top-16 place and a seeded play-off berth, but a 3-0 hammering at Club Brugge meant they finished 25th with Brugge grabbing a play-off spot at their expense.

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