





# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
A tough, action-packed day ahead! There may be difference of opinions with friends over trivial matters, but you will thrive on it. But all pending work will be completed, much to your relief. It's a promising and optimistic day, says Ganesha!

**TAURUS**  
Today, you may have something at the back of your mind that will grip you with its complexity, says Ganesha. Speak freely as your words are capable of making a great impact on others. You may not be willing to confront unpleasant situations today. Don't worry, the stars seem in your favour, predicts Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
Today, you would love to spend as much time alone as possible with your sweetheart, says Ganesha. A casual conversation between the two of you may culminate into a sensuous consummation. In the evening, you will keep people charmed with your wit and wisdom, feels Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
If you are a stockbroker, you may feel that things are not going too well for you. Today, you may regret being a stockbroker. Manufacturers must delay the launch of a new product. However, after a waiting game, you may go on to launch the product with a fanfare. Ganesha wishes you a good luck.

**LEO**  
The travel bug inside you is itching to be let loose, but things are not so simple when it comes to finding new destinations, says Ganesha. With you, holidaying goes hand in hand with delays. So, although you might be excited at the prospect of going to new places, this excitement will be somewhat curtailed thanks to postponements of travel plans. Well, such is life, so don't go about taking it to heart and getting all upset.

**VIRGO**  
Motivation will remain high today, says Ganesha. Your talents and skills make you stand out as a superb artist. Words will glow if you let your creativity flow, and should you decide to dance or sing, you'll set the stage on fire today. Cultivate hobbies in performing arts and literature, advises Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
Being in charge was never easy, but it's not for nothing that leaders are made of sterner stuff. As a person in charge, you are expected to give directions in a manner that gets the best efforts out of your juniors. Move away from traditional dictatorial style, and build a consensus that enables you to pull off the spectacular, says Ganesha.

**SCORPIO**  
You shall follow all things to the dot today. Your approach will be methodical and robotic. It is likely that you shall symbolise the saying, 'Actions speak louder than words'. Your powers of persuasion will help you amass the confidences of many, predicts Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Cupid is hunting and you are the game today. Cupid's arrows will have you adrift on the ocean of love and turbulent emotions. Your rescue is imminent, when a member of the opposite sex answers your SOS calls. But use your discretion as to which boat you hitch a ride back home, says Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**  
The work load may take away all your vigour, leaving you lethargic and dull, but you will come out of the sluggish phase before it can do any harm to your reputation, says Ganesha. Being observant and attentive while in meetings will help you in the long run, and in more ways than you can imagine. As you may have already guessed, it won't be a very productive day, it but won't be a very bad one either.

**AQUARIUS**  
You get a pat on the back due to your brilliant academic standing. People will admire your business acumen and may imitate your choices. But this doesn't mean you become haughty and unapproachable. Carry on the good work with a humble attitude, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
Anticipation is all the fun. Sadly, this only alludes to your months-in-preparation travel plans that are most likely to be delayed today on one count or the other. Though, if this is any consolation, your trip, when it finally occurs, will bring you as much pleasure and satisfaction that you expected out of it, if not more, says Ganesha.



## SWEENEY ADDRESSES 'MAGA BARBIE' TAG

Sydney Sweeney recently addressed the "MAGA Barbie" label, saying she ignores it because she cannot control public assumptions about her politics. The *Euphoria* and *The Housemaid* star adds that social media often tries to turn her into a political pawn, but she has no interest in discussing how she votes

## HELENA BONHAM CARTER BOARDS CAST OF THE WHITE LOTUS S04

British star Helena Bonham Carter has joined the cast for season four of HBO's acclaimed dark comedy show *The White Lotus*. According to *Variety*, the new season will take place in France, including Paris and multiple locations along the French Riviera



# SHRIYA rejects labels

**MUMBAI:** Actor Shriya Saran has never believed in being confined to neatly defined boxes. In a candid conversation, she spoke about why labels, especially being termed a 'South star', do not define her identity, even as she deeply values the love and acceptance she has received from Southern cinema.

Tracing her journey, Shriya reflected on growing up in Haridwar before moving to Delhi to train in Kathak under Shovana Narayan. Each transition, she said, pushed her beyond comfort zones and shaped her outlook. Starting her acting career at just 17 was another unconventional choice, especially given her family's academic background, but one that reinforced her belief in charting her own path.

Often associated with Telugu and Tamil cinema due to her extensive body

of work, Shriya acknowledges the affection she enjoys in the South, even saying her heart feels deeply connected there. However, she firmly believes labels stem from perception rather than limitation. According to her, an actor becomes boxed only when they internalise how others see them.

Shriya views such categorisation as a by-product of visibility and success. For her, being labelled is not a barrier but a temporary identity others project. Growth, she believes, comes from learning, evolving and allowing life to redefine you beyond tags.



## HOW CAMERA CHANGED SHARVARI'S PERSPECTIVE

light and fleet-ments. Devel-felt magical, her respect for and the power of a

A second-hand Nikon FM10 later became her constant companion, especially while travelling. Handling the light meter and loading film made photography feel immersive, shaping her belief that it is less about equipment and more about perception. For Sharvari, photography is about recognising what feels lasting, whether it is a face, a building or the soul of a city.

While shooting in Punjab for Imtiaz Ali's upcoming film, she carried her camera everywhere. Exploring Amritsar through the lens helped her notice warmth, kindness and quiet serenity in everyday life. She began documenting landscapes, dawn hours and people on set, creating visual diaries for each project.

Photography has altered how she travels and works. She now observes architecture, urban design, moods and human connections more deeply.

**MUMBAI:** Sharvari's relationship with photography began years ago with a broken, old-school film camera, but it has since transformed the way she sees the world. Learning to shoot on film taught her patience and presence. With limited frames, every click demanded intention, forcing her to truly observe emotions, ing mo-ping film deepening the process single image.

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# Sara's euphoric moment

**MUMBAI:** Sara Arjun is basking in widespread appreciation after the success of *Dhurandhar*. The 20-year-old actor, who played Yalina Jamali opposite Ranveer Singh, has been praised for her poise and emotional depth. Even as the film continues to dominate conversations, Sara has turned her attention to promoting her upcoming Telugu film *Euphoria*, directed by Gunashekhar.

In a recent interview, Sara revealed what she calls the most 'euphoric' day of her life. The actress shared that it was the moment her parents watched her performance in *Dhurandhar* and were overwhelmed with emotion. Seeing both her parents cry tears of joy, she said, was deeply meaningful and remains her most cherished memory.

When asked if the moment was related to academics, Sara denied it, later con-

firming it was indeed connected to *Dhurandhar*. The interview clip has since gone viral on social media.

Sara also reflected on her career journey, revealing she once planned to study film and acting abroad after boarding school. However projects like *Magic, Euphoria* and eventually *Dhurandhar* altered her path.

Sara will next appear in *Euphoria*, featuring Gautham Menon, Nassar and others, releasing February 6, 2026. A sequel is already confirmed.



## FILM REVIEW

# Mardaani 3: Film struggles with familiarity

**MUMBAI:** If comedies and spy thrillers can expand into full-fledged universes, there's little reason a woman in uniform should remain a one-film idea. *Mardaani 3* arrives with that quiet certainty, reaffirming that grit, moral authority and myth-making aren't reserved for men. Fronted once again by Rani Mukerji, the third chapter cements Shivani Shivaji Roy as less a character and more a conscience.

Directed by Abhiraj Minawala, the film places Shivani on the streets of Delhi, investigating the disappearance of two young girls, one of whom is a bureaucrat's daughter. What begins as a standard missing persons case soon spirals into a disturbing

expose of an organised human trafficking network targeting pre-pubescent girls. The syndicate is led by Amma, played with unsettling restraint by Mallika Prasad. The rescue mission and its after-math form the emotional and narrative spine of the film. The story is credited to Aayush Gupta, who co-writes the dialogues with Baljeet Singh Marwah and Deepak Kingrani.

On the plus side, Rani doesn't miss a step, slipping back into Shivani's no-nonsense persona with ease. Her authority is established early through a stylised introduction that echoes the grand

hero entries usually reserved for male superstars. The runtime is crisp, the first half taut, and the film wastes little time setting up its central conflict.

Where *Mardaani 3* falters is not intent, but familiarity. Several narrative beats feel predictable, especially following *Delhi Crime Season 3*, which explored similar terrain. The antagonist, while chilling, lacks the psychological complexity that made earlier villains memorable, and the twists don't always land with conviction.

Yet, the film's power lies in its purpose. Anchored by Mukerji's commanding presence, *Mardaani 3* refuses to

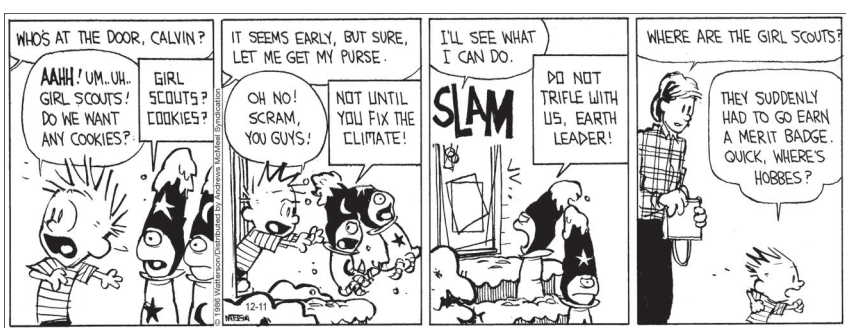


sensationalise violence, treating crimes against women and children as a grim reality demanding accountability. It may not reinvent the franchise, but it reinforces why Shivani's fight and her relevance is far from over.

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

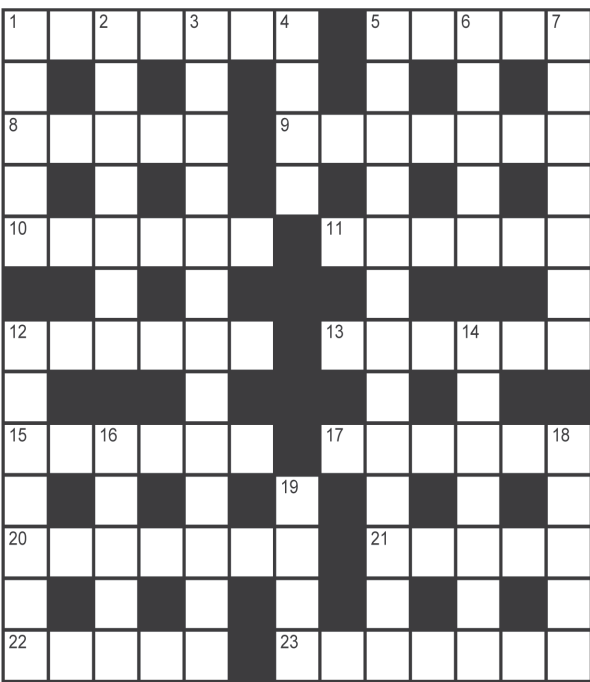


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



- Across**
- Rhone town
  - Feather boa
  - Rhino relative
  - Fierce
  - Easement
  - On fire
  - Literary genre
  - Non-stop splurges
  - Song part
  - Worthy principles
  - Restaurant boast
  - Musical composition
  - Jargon
  - Firmness of purpose
  - Fragrant oil
  - Desire
  - Stressful (5-8)
  - Shade of blue
  - Skier's problem
  - Boxing venue
  - Athlete's aim
  - Places fit for a king
  - Step-by-step
  - Side dish
  - Jacket material
  - Kind of jet

## 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.

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

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

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

### SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW







ACTING ON PIL

Compensate under-utilisation of leased out mines: Orissa HC

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Expressing concern over the under-utilisation of leased out mines resulting in revenue loss to the state exchequer, the Orissa High Court has directed the state government to carry out the mining activities through the National Mineral Development Corporation and further ordered that the expenses incurred in this regard is borne by the lessee.

The Division Bench of Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice M S Raman adjudicating a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Bhubaneswar based Citizens' Action Forum, issued directions in this regard Thursday. "We, therefore, direct the

state government to invoke the provisions contained under Rule 12 (1) of the Concession Rules, 2016 to carry out or perform the statutory obligations in order to ensure the optimum utilisation of the mines through the National Mineral Development Corporation, which is owned and controlled by the Central government," the court said.

"The aforementioned direction shall not only ensure the optimum utilisation of the mines, but also eradicate any burden on the government exchequer," the division bench ruled in the order.

The petition highlighted the discontinuous production, a chronic under-utilisation by the mining lease holders despite the statutory duty cast upon it



under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act and the Concession Rules, 2016 for optimum utilisation in the public interest.

It further highlighted some of the mining blocks to corroborate the factum of under-utilisation not only in one year but continuously for several years resulting in deprivation of a statutory imposition under the statute but also affects the livelihood of a

large number of people.

The PIL pointed out average minimum utilisation of the ores and the huge loss suffered by the state, which would roughly amount to Rs 4,000 crore.

Earlier, the state government in an affidavit stated that almost majority of the mining lease holders have not secured the optimum extraction of the iron ore.

The Concession Rules, 2016 laid conditions that in the event, the mining lessee failed to carry out or perform any of its obligations there under or under the lease deed within the specified time, it is obligatory on the part of the state government to perform or carry out the mining activities and the expenses incurred in this regard shall be borne by the lessee.

ANIL BISWAL

As India approaches Budget 2026, the Union Budget under the Modi government has evolved from an annual tax ritual into a long-term policy document shaping growth, trust and democracy.

When Narendra Modi as prime minister of India took office in 2014, the Union Budget was largely seen as an exercise in fiscal house-keeping—tax changes, subsidy adjustments, and price signals. Over the last eleven budgets, that character has changed decisively. The Union Budget is no longer just a financial statement; it has become a policy roadmap that reflects governance philosophy, economic priorities and political intent.

This transformation did not occur in isolation. In 2014, India was emerging from a phase marked by policy paralysis, stalled infrastructure, investor pessimism and a governance environment scarred by corruption scandals. Growth sentiment was fragile and public trust in institutions had weakened. The budgetary journey since then reflects an effort to address not only fiscal challenges, but institutional credibility itself.

#### Changing the grammar of welfare

The first visible shift was philosophical. Early budgets prioritised financial inclusion and administrative reform—Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar-based identification and mobile connectivity. These measures were not merely welfare initiatives; they created the backbone for direct benefit transfers, reducing leakages and improving targeting.

Budgets began to speak less about entitlements and more about empowerment. Subsidies moved directly into bank accounts, bypassing intermediaries. Technology replaced discretion. This quiet redesign of welfare delivery marked a deeper shift; corruption was addressed by altering systems, not slogans.

#### Structural reform as Fiscal strategy

The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) was a defining mo-

ment. GST unified India into a single market, reshaping Centre-state fiscal relations and altering how revenue was collected. Subsequent budgets focused on stabilising the system, improving compliance and widening the tax base.

Alongside GST, tax administration itself changed. Faceless assessments, transparent auctions of natural resources, and digitised compliance reduced rent-seeking opportunities. For businesses, budgets increasingly signalled predictability rather than surprise. That predictability, in itself, became a tool of cleaner governance.

#### Infrastructure takes centre stage

From the late 2014 onwards, budgets placed public capital expenditure at the heart of growth strategy. Roads, railways, ports, airports, digital infrastructure and urban connectivity became recurring priorities. This was not just counter-cyclical spending, it was a deliberate attempt to create long-term economic capacity.

Infrastructure investment also carried a social dimension. Improved connectivity brought tribal regions, aspirational districts and remote areas closer to markets and services. Budgets reflected an understanding that inclusion is most durable when it is built on physical and digital access.

#### Crisis, continuity and confidence

The COVID-19 shock tested fiscal resilience. Post-pandemic budgets avoided short-term populism and instead doubled down on capital expenditure, manufacturing incentives and credit support. Production-linked incentive schemes, MSME backing and startup facilitation signalled confidence in India's medium-term growth prospects even amid global uncertainty.

As a result, India repositioned itself among the world's fastest-growing major economies. Formalisation expanded the tax base, compliance improved and fiscal capacity strengthened. Growth became increasingly investment-led rather than purely consumption-driven.

#### Who benefited from the shift?

For the poor, targeted transfers reduced exclusion

and improved access to state support. Women emerged as central economic agents—through direct transfers, LPG access, financial inclusion and credit linkages. Youth benefited from a growing start up ecosystem enabled by digital infrastructure and policy support. Tribal and marginalised communities saw gains through connectivity, housing and welfare penetration.

The middle class and economically privileged also gained—from better infrastructure, simplified compliance and macroeconomic stability. The budget narrative moved away from zero-sum politics toward shared growth.

#### From corruption to credibility

Perhaps the most consequential change lies in governance itself. The Modi-era budget journey reflects a shift from discretion-based administration to rule-based systems. From scandal-driven cynicism to performance-linked legitimacy.

This transformation did not eliminate debate or criticism—and it should not. Democracies require scrutiny. But the direction is clear; budgets today are read as policy signals and governance commitments, not merely revenue-and-expenditure tables.

#### The democratic dividend

As India awaits the 2026 Budget, the real question extends beyond tax rates or allocations. Can high growth be sustained while strengthening trust in institutions? Can economic expansion deepen democracy rather than weaken it?

The experience of the last decade suggests that growth, trust and democracy are not competing goals. When public finance is transparent, predictable and purposeful, it builds credibility. And credibility is the foundation on which durable democracies grow.

In today's India, the Union Budget does more than balance books.

It balances growth with trust, power with accountability, and economics with democracy.

*The author is advisor at Lokatantra Research & Policy Foundation.*

## CLASSIFIED

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Itishree Balabantaray, (Aadhaar No. xxxx xxxx 8059), W/o. Bibhash Chandra Malla, At: Plot No. 328/1894/3075, Omfed Backside, P.O. Mancheswar Rly. Colony, P.S.: Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khordha, Odisha - 751017, declare by affidavit No. 3374, Dt.17.01.26, now onwards I will be known as Itishree Balabantaray instead of Itishree Malla in my R.C. Book bearing Regd. No. OD02E7729 & any other documents for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Sonapur, Dt.21.01.26, I Jyotirmayee Tripathy, D/o. Dharendra Tripathy, R/o. P.O.: Jaloe, P.S.: Birmaharajpur, Dist.: Subarnapur declare that, I have changed my name and DOB from JYOTRIMAYEE TRIPATHI, DOB- 14.06.2001 to JYOTIRMAYEE TRIPATHY, DOB- 10.01.2001. Henceforth I shall be known as JYOTIRMAYEE TRIPATHY, DOB- 10.01.2001 for all purposes. JYOTIRMAYEE TRIPATHY

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Bhawanipatna, dated 29.01.2026, I, Priya Sankar Sahu, At- Gosal Pada, At/PO./P.S.- Bhawanipatna, Dist.- Kalahandi, Odisha declare that I, want the change my name in my daughter Arushi Sahu's passport from Priyan Sankar Sahu to Priya Sankar Sahu. That the names Priya Sankar Sahu and Priyan Sankar Sahu is one and same person i.e. myself@ Arushi Sahu's father.

### LOST

ICSE Matriculation Pass Certificate and marksheet of Prateek Chandra Sagar, Index No.1245068/020 issued in year 2024 has been damaged due to white ant infestation. Prateek Chandra Sagar, Contact - 7328067138.

## LEPROSY ERADICATION DAY

### ‘Community participation, awareness can cure leprosy’



POST NEW NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Leprosy is no longer a difficult disease to manage. If detected early, it can be completely cured with community participation and awareness, said Health and Family Welfare department Secretary and Commissioner Aswathy S, while addressing a programme at the Joint Directorate of Health Services conference hall here Friday.

The state marked Leprosy Eradication Day 2026 with renewed emphasis on early detection, timely treatment, and elimination of social stigma associated with the disease, as health officials highlighted a steady decline in new leprosy cases across the state.

As part of the observance, the 'Sparsht'—Leprosy Awareness Pledge was administered, urging people to reject social discrimination against those

affected by the disease.

Three doctors and five ASHA workers were felicitated for their exceptional contribution to leprosy care and community outreach. The honoured doctors included Dr Divyendu Kumar Sahu of Sri-pura PHC, Dr Manish Kumar Sahu of Danagadi CHC, and Dr Tapaswini Mishra of Khajuriakata CHC. ASHA workers Pratima Mallick, Rajani Bhoi, Manjulata Lenka, Y Manju, and Manoroma Mallick were also recognised for their grassroots efforts.

Health officials revealed that 7,349 leprosy cases were detected in Odisha during 2024-25, while Grade-2 disability cases have dropped by 92 per cent, reflecting improved early diagnosis and treatment. However, concern remains over 395 reported child leprosy cases, underscoring the need for continued vigilance.

## ‘Redhead’ DSP criticised online, asked to maintain decorum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Odisha Police has found itself in a spot after some of its personnel, including senior officers, were criticised on social media for sporting coloured and unconventional hairstyles.

The latest incident was reported from Jagatsinghpur district, where a DSP-rank officer was trolled online for his red-coloured hair, putting the police administration in an awkward position, a senior officer said.

The officer, identified as Rashmi Ranjan Das, said his hairstyle go viral on social media, drawing criticism from several quarters.

Some users termed the look “unprofessional”, while others questioned whether such an appearance befitted a uniformed officer, alleging it undermined the authority and seriousness associated with the khaki.

“After finding the DSP being trolled on social media, I have instructed the Jagatsinghpur SP to tell the officer to maintain decorum and keep his hairstyle

decent, befitting a man in uniform,” Inspector General of Police (Central Range) Satyajit Naik said.

Naik, however, said the police department has not yet issued any circular or order in this regard.

“We have told the officer to maintain decency. Everything cannot go by written orders. From constables to senior officers, everyone in the police service should respect the uniform and give utmost priority to decency,” he said.

Another senior police officer

said women police personnel across the country, including Odisha, are also seen colouring their hair in shades such as coffee, chocolate, ash, auburn, caramel and golden.

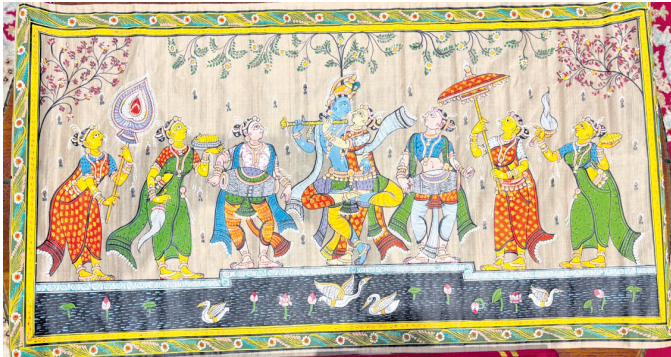
“One cannot issue an order to keep hair black always. There are people who have natural brown hair. This apart, greying is also a natural phenomenon. What can be done in these cases? Therefore, no order can be issued with regard to hair colour,” the officer said, adding that it depends on individual police officers.

## Odisha’s Pattachitra showcased on global stage

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Odisha's rich artistic and cultural heritage received global recognition at the India International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM-2026), where the state's iconic Pattachitra art was showcased as a special cultural offering.

Organised by Election Commission of India (ECI) at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, the international conference was held from January 21 to 23 and witnessed participation from delegations representing over 70 countries. As part of an international cultural exchange initiative, Pattachitra paintings from the state were presented to representatives of more than 40 countries as a symbol of India's rich and ancient heritage. The artworks beautifully



depicted scenes from Lord Krishna's divine Ras Leela as well as various revered forms of Lord Jagannath, reflecting the distinctive style, intricate detailing and mythological narratives that define the traditional Pattachitra art form.

Officials said the initiative was inspired by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's visit to Odisha in

December 2025, during which he was deeply impressed by the craftsmanship of artisans from Raghurajpur village in Puri district. While returning after visits to the Jagannath Temple in Puri and the Sun Temple at Konark, the Kumar interacted with local artistes, moved by their exceptional skill and decided to showcase Pattachitra at a

global democratic platform like IICDEM-2026.

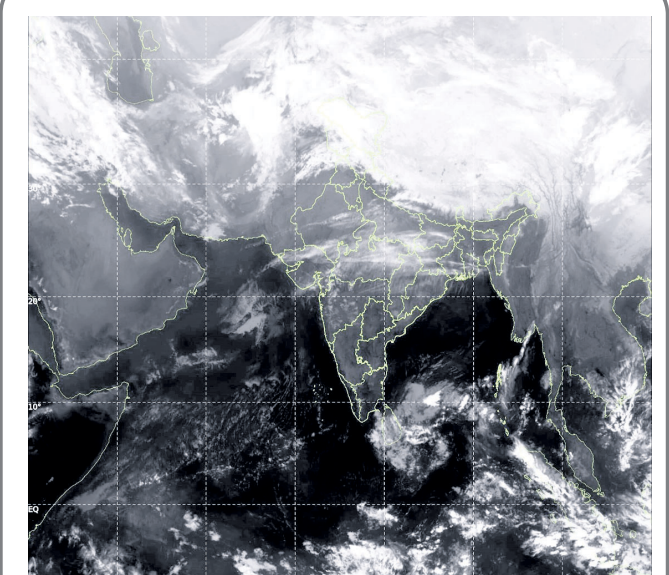
Pattachitra, a classical scroll-painting tradition dating back to the 10th century, continues to thrive in Odisha. Created using natural colours on cloth, the art form has earned international acclaim for its aesthetic finesse and cultural depth. Its presentation at the International Conference on Democracy and Election Management (IICDEM-2026) has further enhanced Odisha's cultural pride on the world stage, officials from the CEO office said.

The conference was attended by senior officials from Odisha, including State CEO R S Gopalan, Additional CEO Su-shant Kumar Mishra, Deputy CEOs Laxmiprasad Sahu and Anamika Singh and Financial Advisor Sanjay Kumar Lugun among others.

### BMC allots houses to 167 slum dwellers

**BHUBANESWAR:** In a significant step towards inclusive urban development and housing security, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Friday allotted permanent houses to 167 eligible families through a transparent lottery system. The houses were allotted under the Buddha Vihar Housing Project at Chandrasekharpur, benefiting families from more than 10 slum settlements across the City. The allotment ceremony was attended by Housing and Urban Development and Public Enterprises Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, who distributed the allotment letters as the chief guest. Among those present on the occasion were BMC Mayor Sulochana Das and BMC Commissioner and BDA Vice-Chairman Chanchal Rana.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	92.04 ▼ 0.12	SENSEX	82269.78 ▼ 296.59	GOLD ₹159,900	▼ ₹10,503
EURO	109.87 ▼ 0.30	NIFTY	25320.65 ▼ 98.25	SILVER ₹329,769	▼ ₹70,124



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	30.0°	27.8°	Dry weather
Min Temp	17.1°	15.6°	
Humidity	93%	91%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



# CBI raids MCL coal mines, CM launches ₹492cr projects for Ganjam

## rly siding in Sundargarh



« The raids are reportedly linked to allegations of discrepancies in accounts related to thousands of tonnes of coal transported from MCL mines to the railway siding

« The detection of more than 10 illegal coal mines in various forest areas of Hemgir tehsil triggered a major controversy last year

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sundargarh/Hemgir, Jan 30:** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Friday conducted raids at Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. (MCL) owned coal mines under Hemgir block of Sundargarh district, official sources said.

Three special CBI teams carried out simultaneous searches at the Garjanbahal and Kulda coal mines and the Kanika railway siding. The raids are reportedly linked to allegations of discrepancies in accounts related to thousands of tonnes

of coal transported from MCL mines to the railway siding.

The CBI has not issued any official statement on the operation. However, reliable sources said the agency is probing allegations of illegal coal diversion and theft. Three teams from the CBI's Delhi unit are said to be conducting a coordinated investigation.

Sources said Kanika railway siding in-charge Sarada Prasanna Sethi was brought from his company residence, along with some employees of the Garjanbahal mine, for

questioning at the Kanika railway siding. Investigators are examining how the coal moved through the siding, who received it and where it was ultimately transported.

The raids follow allegations that some unscrupulous MCL officials and employees colluded with coal smugglers, resulting in financial irregularities running into crores of rupees. The CBI teams reportedly include 13 officers, including women officials. The raids were continuing at the time of filing of this report.

Meanwhile, the detection of more than 10 illegal coal mines in various forest areas of Hemgir tehsil triggered a major controversy last year. After reports were published in various media outlets, the state government ordered an investigation into the matter. A special enforcement team from the Mines department visited the area and conducted inquiries.

Local MLA Yogesh Kumar Singh wrote to the Chief Minister and the CBI director in New Delhi, demanding a CBI probe into the alleged illegal mining. Former MLA Kusum Tete and the opposition Congress party also demanded a thorough investigation into the issue.

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday launched developmental projects worth Rs 492 crore for Ganjam district and announced that the birth anniversary of renowned poet Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja would be celebrated as a state festival.

Majhi launched the projects while attending the valedictory session of the annual Gopalpur Beach Festival.

“This festival is a beautiful combination of history, tradition, culture and nature. Through this festival, we are celebrating the uniqueness of Odisha, the glory of Ganjam and the living heritage of our culture,” Majhi said.

Of the Rs 492 crore projects launched by the CM for Ganjam district, 15 projects worth more than Rs 50 crore were inaugurated, and the foundation stone of 64 projects worth Rs



442 crore was laid.

These projects include health infrastructure, hostel facilities, and road construction. These projects also include the improvement and beautification of Gopalpur beach with an investment of Rs 32 crore.

In recognition of the invaluable contribution of Kabi Samrat Upendra Bhanja to Odia literature and culture, the CM has directed the department to restore the prestigious ‘Upendra Bhanja Chair’ at Berhampur University. Although this chair was established long ago, it was dormant for many years.

Majhi also declared Bhanja's birth anniversary to be celebrated as a state festival from this year. The CM said that the birth anniversary of the poet will be celebrated as a 7-day festival from May 16.

Before addressing the gathering, Majhi performed ‘Samudra Arati’.

He said the people of Ganjam district have cleaned major beaches of the district through Beach Cleanup Festival walk and given the message of clean beaches and beautiful Odisha to the state.

He further said that the Pa-

tisonpur beach in the district is a matter of pride for Odisha, which has earned the Blue Flag certificate for the third time in a row. He said that efforts are underway to get the Blue Flag certificate for Gopalpur and Nolia Nuagaon beaches as well.

The CM said that the expansion and improvement work of Gopalpur port will be done with an investment of Rs 16,554 crore. This will increase the cargo handling capacity of the port to 50 million metric tonne and ensure employment for 5,000 youth.

Stating that the Prime Minister has announced construction of a mega port at Bahuda in the district at an investment of Rs 21,500 crore, Majhi said that this will further strengthen our port-based economy.

On the occasion, Majhi also released the festival souvenir ‘Shamuka’, a coffee table book on Ganjam, and launched the Ganjam-360 mobile application.

## 3 Bangladeshi nationals deported from Kendrapara

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kendrapara, Jan 30:** In the first such action in 21 years, the district administration in Kendrapara deported three Bangladeshi nationals for illegal entry and stay in the district, officials said Friday.

The deported persons were identified as Amina Biwi, Inshan Khan and Muntaz Khan. They were among 12 members of a family who had been liv-

ing at different locations in the district and detained by police November 27, 2025, on suspicion of being illegal immigrants.

During verification conducted over seven days, police collected identity documents from the detainees and released nine of them. The remaining three failed to produce valid identification pa-

pers and were kept in custody before they were deported, officials said.

According to preliminary information, the family had entered India from Bangladesh in 1987. In 2004, the district administration had identified 1,649 people in Kendrapara as illegal immigrants. Of them, 1,551 identified in Kendrapara block were served deportation

notices. However, deportation could not be carried out as the cases were challenged in court. Official records also show that 1,237 Bangladeshi nationals settled in Kendrapara district during the partition period. As per the 2011 Census, the Bengali-speaking population in the district exceeded 76,000. Officials said the number has since risen to more than 1 lakh.

# 5 sentenced to life for murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Jan 30:** A local court here Friday sentenced five persons to life imprisonment in connection with the murder of a milk trader in Hillpatna area under Gosaninuagaon police limits in Berhampur.

Additional District Judge-III, Berhampur, Bibaswat Gautam held all five accused guilty in the murder of milk trader Lambodar Muni and awarded them life imprisonment. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 13,000 on each of the convicts. In default of payment of the fine, they will have to undergo an additional 18 months of imprisonment, the judge ordered.

The convicts were identified as Rupesh Padhi (30) and Srinu Patra (38) of Gosaninuagaon PS area; Ran-

jit Kumar Sahu alias Naka (29) and Shiba Mahakud (29) of Bhismagiri Bandhasahi under Digapahandi police limits; and Shankar Sahu (31) of Bedhabandha Sahi under Gosaninuagaon police limits, who is currently lodged in Dhenkanal jail in another case.


According to the prosecution, the incident took place on the intervening night of June 12, 2020, when Lambodar, a milk trader associated with Heritage Dairy, was murdered inside his godown at Hillpatna. The accused had allegedly entered the premises with the intention of committing robbery.

Police said Lambodar woke up after hearing noises and was attacked by the accused, who feared being caught. He was subsequently killed.

Following the incident, godown manager V Binay lodged a complaint at Gosaninuagaon police station. A case (87/20) was registered and an investigation launched.

Police investigation revealed that the accused had prior knowledge of cash and gold kept in the godown, where Lambodar used to sleep alone. They had allegedly planned the robbery at a nearby hotel before executing the crime.

During the trial, statements of 41 witnesses were recorded. Four accused, who were lodged as under-trial prisoners at Berhampur Circle Jail, were produced before the court, while the prime accused was presented through video conferencing from Dhenkanal jail, said the Cadre Public Prosecutor, Biswajit Baral.



**ODISHA GRAMEEN BANK**  
REGIONAL OFFICE: PIPLI, AT/PO: PIPLI, DIST.: PURI,  
PIN-752104, Email: ropipli@odishabank.in

**DEMAND NOTICE**

1. Under section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with Rule 3(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule 2002.(Rules)

2. Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of **Odisha Grameen Bank** under **SARFAESI Act** and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of Rules, issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act, calling upon the Borrowers / Mortgagors / Guarantors listed hereunder (Hereinafter referred to as the "said Borrowers") to repay the amounts mentioned in the Notice, within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the Notice, as per details given below.

The said notices have returned undelivered by the postal authorities or have not been acknowledged by the under mentioned Borrowers / Mortgagors / Guarantors (being not known, not found, not found & always absent respectively). Hence the Bank by the way of abundant caution is effecting this publication of the Demand Notice. Copies of the said Notices are available with the undersigned and the said Borrowers/ Mortgagors/ Guarantors, May, if they so desire, collect the said copies from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.

3. Against the above background, Notice is hereby given, once again, to said Borrowers / Mortgagors/ Guarantors to pay to **Odisha Grameen Bank** within **60 days** from the date of publication of this Notice, the amount indicated herein below together with future interest at contractual rates and rests from the date mentioned below till the date of payment under the loan & other documents. As security for due repayment of the loan, the following assets have been mortgaged to **Odisha Grameen Bank** by the respective Borrowers.

BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrowers / Mortgagors / Guarantors	Date of Notice Outstanding dues*	Description of the Properties
<b>PURI BRANCH /</b> <b>Borrower: M/s. Chakrabarty, Prop.: Mr. Bhabani Sankar Chakrabarty, S/o: Kali Charan Chakrabarty / Borrower / Mortgagor: Mr. Bhabani Sankar Chakrabarty, S/o: Kali Charan Chakrabarty/ Borrower: Mrs. Ipsita Goswami, S/o: Bhabani Sankar Chakrabarty, All are At: Plot No.: 82/876, Katakapada, PO: Bentapur, Via: Brahmagiri, Dist.: Puri, PIN-752011 / Guarantors: 1) Mrs. Masum Chakrabarty, D/o: Kali Charan Chakrabarty, At: Katakapada, Bentapur, PO: Brahmagiri, Via: Brahmagiri, Dist.: Puri, PIN-752011, 2) Mr. Alok Chakrabarty, S/o: Santosh Chakrabarty, At: Ayodhyapur, PO: Raghunathpur, Dist.: Jagatsinghpur, PIN-754132</b>	<b>15.01.2026</b> <b>₹29,43,977.60</b> as on <b>13.01.2026</b> plus interest, costs & expenses thereon	Mortgage of Land & Building at Mouza: Katakapada, Khata No.: 102/624, Plot No.: 82/876, Area: Ac. 0.10 Dec., standing in the name of <b>Mr. Bhabani Sankar Chakrabarty</b>
<b>BALIGUALI BRANCH /</b> <b>Borrower: Mr. Prasanna Kumar Pradhan, S/o: Laxman Pradhan, At: Beldal, PO: Baliguali, Via/ Dist.: Puri - 752002 / Guarantor / Mortgagor: Mrs. Sanjukta Pradhan, W/o: Prasanna Pradhan, Guarantor: Mr. Ranganidhi Pradhan, S/o: Sadhu Charan Pradhan, Both are At: Beladala, PO: Baliguali, Via/Dist.: Puri - 752002</b>	<b>15.01.2026</b> <b>₹6,19,856/-</b> as on <b>13.01.2026</b> plus interest, costs & expenses thereon	Mortgage of Land & Building at Mouza: Beladala, Khata No.: Sabik-146 (Not final L R Khata- 69), Plot No.: Part of 776, 780, 781 (LR Plot- 780, Gharabari), Area: Ac. 0.04.5 Dec. standing in the name of <b>Mrs. Sanjukta Pradhan</b>
<b>RASULGARH BRANCH /</b> <b>Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Krushna Chandra Nayak, S/o- Anadi Charan Nayak, At/PO: Naharkanta, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, PIN-752101/ Borrower: Mr. Jitendra Kumar Nayak, S/o-Krushna Chandra Nayak, At/PO: Naharkanta, Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khurda, PIN-752101</b>	<b>19.01.2026</b> <b>₹7,98,713.00</b> as on <b>15.01.2026</b> plus interest, costs & expenses thereon	Mortgage of Land & Building at Mouza: Naharkanta, Khata No.: 720/119, Plot No.: 48/2994, Area: Ac.0.10 dec., standing in the name of <b>Krushna Chandra Nayak</b>

\*Payable with further interest of contractual rates/ rests as agreed from the date mentioned above till date of payment.

4. If the said Borrowers / Mortgagors/ Guarantors fail to make payment to **Odisha Grameen Bank** as aforesaid, then Odisha Grameen Bank shall proceed against the above secured assets under section 13(4) of the SARFAESI Act and Rules entirely at the risk of the said borrowers/mortgagors/guarantors as to the costs and consequences.

5. Further, attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of the section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

6. The Borrower/Guarantor/Mortgagor & legal heirs are prohibited under the SARFAESI Act from transferring the secured assets, whether by way of sale, lease or otherwise without the prior written consent of **Odisha Grameen Bank**, any person who contravenes or abets contravention of the provisions of the Act or Rules shall be liable for imprisonment and /or fine as given under Section 29 of the Act.

**Place : Pipli, Date : 30.01.2026** **Sd/- Authorised Officer, Odisha Grameen Bank**

## Man found murdered

**Bissamcuttack:** A man was allegedly murdered with his throat slit in Rayagada district Friday evening, police said. The deceased has been identified as Kalish Chandra Sahu, a resident of Brahmin Sahi under Bissamcuttack town limits. According to sources, Sahu was found in a critically injured and blood-soaked condition and was rushed to Christian Hospital at Bissamcuttack Friday evening. However, doctors declared him dead on arrival. Visible injury marks were found on Sahu's throat and head, raising suspicion of murder. The exact circumstances and motive behind the killing are yet to be ascertained. Following receipt of information, Bissamcuttack police station Officer-in-Charge Surgyachandra Padhi reached the spot and launched an investigation. A scientific team and a sniffer dog squad have also been pressed into service.

## 2 Maoists killed in encounter

**Malkangiri:** Two Maoists were killed in a gunfight between security forces and Maoist cadres in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district bordering this district, police said. The deceased were identified as ACM Pradeep and Bhima of Kavaragatta in Bijapur district. Acting on intelligence inputs about the presence of more than eight Maoists in the forest area, teams of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and the CRPFpersonnel launched a combing operation. During the operation, the Maoists allegedly opened fire on the security forces, who retaliated. Following the exchange of fire, the Maoists dispersed. A subsequent search of the area led to the recovery of the bodies of the two Maoists. Police said a reward of Rs 5 lakh had been announced for Pradeep and Rs 2 lakh for Bhima.



**CENTRAL SILK BOARD**  
(Ministry of Textiles - Govt. of India)  
BTM Layout, Madiwala, Bengaluru - 560 068, Karnataka  
Phone: +91 80 26282699 Fax: +91 80 26681511 E-Mail: estab.csb@nic.in

**ADVT. NO. CSB/ 02/2025** **RECRUITMENT NOTICE** Date: 31.01.2026

Central Silk Board had published the Notification No. CSB/02/2025 dated **22.11.2025** which appeared in the Employment News of **22-28 November, 2025** for filling various posts on deputation basis. It is for information that the last date for receipt of application against various posts has been extended for another 30 days. i.e. upto **20.02.2026**.

For details, refer CSB website: [www.csb.gov.in](http://www.csb.gov.in)

**CBC: 41109/12/0018/2526** **Central Silk Board**



**इंडियन बैंक** **Indian Bank**  
ALLAHABAD

**SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY/IES MORTGAGED TO BANK UNDER SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 (No. 54 OF 2002)**

Whereas, the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank had taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same on **"AS IS WHERE IS BASIS"**, **"AS IS WHAT IS BASIS"** and **"WITHOUT ANY RECOURSE BASIS"** for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. **The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website: <https://www.baanknet.com>.**

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of Borrower/Mortgagor	Description of the Immovable Property	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession Notice/ Outstanding Dues	Reserve Price / EMD / Bid Increment Amount
1.	<b>NUAPADA BRANCH, MOB.: 8457987347 / Borrower/Mortgagor: Mr. Pitambar Behera, S/o- Laxman Behera, At: Runibasapada, PO: Damjhar, PS: Boden, Dist.: Nuapada</b>	1) All that Part and parcel of Land and Building constructed on Khata No.: 521/91, Plot No.: 2765/3928, Mouza: Domjhar, PS: Boden, Tahasil: Khariar, Dist.: Nuapada, Area: Ac.0.06 Dec, Kissam: Gharabari, Bounded by East: Hari Bandhu Behera, West: Hari Bandhu Behera, North: Road, South: Hari Bandhu Behera.	<b>27.04.2018 / 19.09.2018 / ₹16,62,512.03 as on 27.04.2018</b> + further interest, costs, other charges and expenses thereon	<b>₹16,50,000/- / ₹1,65,000/- / ₹10,000/-</b>
	2) All that Part and parcel of Land and Building constructed on Khata No.: 521/538, Plot No.: 492/4293, Mouza: Domjhar, PS: Boden, Tahasil: Khariar, Dist.: Nuapada, Area: Ac.0.14 Dec, Kissam: Bema, Bounded by East: Plot No.: 492(P), West: Road, North: Road, South: 492(P)			

**DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION: 18.02.2026 from 11.00 AM to 5.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 Minutes duration**

**LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS IN THEIR WALLET BY 18.02.2026 I.E. BEFORE E-AUCTION DATE & TIME IN THE PORTAL.**

**Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: 05.02.2026 to 17.02.2026 between 10.00 AM to 4.00 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their own expenses**

**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** 1) For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer to the link: <https://www.baanknet.com> Prospective bidders may also contact the Authorised Officers / Branch as mentioned in above list., 2) This is a statutory **15 days** sale notice to the above mentioned borrowers/mortgagors under Rule 9(1) of the SARFAESI Act. 2002. 3) This is a **15 days** notice to the Borrower / Mortgagor of the above said loan about holding of this sale on the above mentioned date., 4) All expenses relating the stamp duty and registration of Sale Certificate/conveyance, if any, shall be borne by the successful bidder. 5) The Authorized Officer will not be held responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or anybody in respect of the property under sale. 6) The Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/ cancel the sale without assigning any reason thereof. It may be noted that nothing in this notice constitute or deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the bank to sell the property.

**STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 9(1) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002.**

Borrowers/Mortgagors are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/ sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost.

**Place: Sambalpur Date: 30.01.2026** **Sd/-Authorised Officer Indian Bank**



“

We must watch over our thoughts. A bad thought is the most dangerous of thieves.



THE MOTHER

## Strategic Punch

Three hours is barely enough time for a working lunch in New Delhi. Yet when UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed flew in last week at Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s invitation, the visit packed the punch of a far longer engagement. It was his third visit as UAE President, and a reminder that in contemporary diplomacy, duration matters far less than preparation and intent.

The efficiency of the visit owed much to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), which choreographed it with minimal fuss and maximum focus. Indian mandarins kept the optics understated and the agenda tight, signalling a mature, outcome-driven approach. This was quiet, deliberate and effective diplomacy.

The substance reflected how India-UAE ties have steadily evolved into a serious strategic partnership. Behind the scenes, the role of National Security Adviser Ajit Doval has been central in deepening cooperation on defence and counterterrorism, moving the relationship well beyond trade, energy, and diaspora considerations.

The Letter of Intent signed during the visit gives momentum to an emerging India-UAE Strategic Defence Partnership. The defence cooperation that began in 2003 is now entering a more ambitious phase, covering joint production, defence innovation, advanced technologies, cyber capabilities, special operations, and interoperability. The emphasis on co-manufacturing defence hardware is particularly telling, pointing to trust and long-term alignment rather than transactional deals.

Equally significant, though less visible, is the quiet strengthening of counter-terror cooperation, where the UAE’s de-radicalisation experience aligns closely with India’s security priorities.

For India, aspiring to lead the Global South, and for the UAE, keen to project influence beyond its immediate neighbourhood, this partnership feels less like a tactical convergence and more like a long-term strategic bet. That tightly run three-hour visit made one thing clear: both sides know where this relationship is headed and are keen to get there quickly.

### CAPF vs IPS: Why the SC is back in picture

The long-running IPS-CAPF turf war has returned to the Supreme Court, this time as a contempt petition. A group of retired CAPF officers has accused the Union Home Secretary of dragging his feet on a clear judicial directive to reduce IPS deputation in the Central Armed Police Forces. And they may have a point, point out observers.

Last year, the Supreme Court unequivocally recognised the Group-A cadres of the CAPFs as organised services and ordered a phased reduction of IPS deputation up to the rank of Inspector General within two years. The idea was to end the glass ceiling that has kept thousands of career CAPF officers stuck below senior leadership, while officers from another service routinely parachute into top roles.

Yet, months later, not much has changed on the ground. IPS officers continue to occupy senior posts, service rules remain untouched, and cadre reviews are still “under examination”. The contempt plea argues that this isn’t a delay; it’s defiance dressed up as process.

Supporters of the current system argue that IPS officers bring strategic oversight and administrative experience crucial to national security. Fair enough — but that logic collapses when used to permanently deny CAPF officers leadership of their own organisations. The court never asked for an overnight purge, only a calibrated transition.

This isn’t just about service rivalries. It’s about whether court orders mean what they say. If judicial directions can be endlessly stalled through committees and consultations, the message to the system is dangerous: compliance is optional.

### What CAT’s Wankhede order really says

If there was any doubt about how seriously the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) viewed the action against Sameer Wankhede, its language should settle it.

Calling the disciplinary proceedings “malicious” and motivated by vendetta is not judicial understatement. By quashing the charge memorandum and restraining the CBIC from proceeding further, the CAT sent an unambiguous message: discipline cannot be enforced by bending rules or recycling legally untenable material.

This was not a case of minor procedural sloppiness. The tribunal found that the authorities pressed ahead despite clear legal limits on what could form the basis of disciplinary action. In doing so, it concluded, the intent appeared less corrective and more punitive.

The irony is hard to miss. India’s enforcement agencies often speak of the rule of law and institutional credibility. Yet here, the watchdog had to remind the system that fairness applies inward as much as it does outward.

The order does not exonerate Wankhede on every allegation that has swirled around him. What it does do, and this is no small thing, is draw a red line between legitimate oversight and administrative persecution. In today’s charged bureaucratic climate, that distinction is worth defending.

Share a babu experience! Follow [dilipthecherian@twitter.com](#). Let’s multiply the effect

## WISDOM CORNER

“I love the consciousness of life and I want as much of it as I can get.”  
HOMI J BHABHA

“I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.” J ROBERT OPPENHEIMER

“Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding.” ALBERT EINSTEIN

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1943:** German Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus surrendered to the Soviet Red Army at Stalingrad (now Volgograd), his troops surrendering two days later.

■ **1958:** Explorer 1 was the first artificial space satellite orbited by the United States, marking the country’s entry into the space race.

■ **1961:** The American film drama The Misfits, which was directed by John Huston, had its world premiere; it was perhaps best remembered as the final movie of Marilyn Monroe and Clark Gable

## LOL

### CELEBRATING AN EVENT

An aged farmer and his wife were cleaning against the edge of their pig-pen when the old woman wistfully recalled that the next week would mark their golden wedding anniversary.

“Let’s have a party, Homer,” she

suggested.

“Let’s kill a pig.”

The farmer scratched his grizzled head. “Gee, Ethel,” he finally answered, “I don’t see why the pig should take the blame for something that happened fifty years ago.”

Visit the previous joke on this topic!



### SPECTRUM

### INCOME INEQUALITY

## Bridging India’s wealth divide

Income tax payers are keenly going to watch the Union budget presentation on Sunday 1st February in the hope for further tax relief. There is also interest in whether the government will consider Thomas Piketty’s suggestion of imposing wealth and inheritance taxes on India’s super rich, to drive up tax revenue and reduce income inequality—despite opposition from local economists and business leaders.

One argument against Piketty’s suggestion of taxing the rich for grass-root development, is that not just the owners of big corporates but also shareholders benefit from the growth of the companies.

Analysts and the government, tend to prioritise attention on the rich and upper middle-income sections of society focussing on their welfare. Thus, a company having many shareholders who make money by their investment in big corporates happens to be wealth creation and/or distribution. As a result, wealth is created or distributed through investments in large companies with many shareholders, but this often leads to the

neglect of rural areas and the unorganised sector. Similarly, when billionaires, who have long crossed the stage of worrying about financial matters, lecture the young generation on the virtues of extreme work regimes, it rings hollow.

Wealth inequality is worse than income inequality with the wealthiest 10 percent of Indians holding nearly two-thirds of the country’s wealth; the richest 1 percent holds 40 percent of it.

In a baseline scenario, a 2 percent annual tax on net wealth exceeding Rs 10 crore and a 33 percent inheritance tax on estates exceeding Rs 10 crore in value would generate 2.73 percent of India’s GDP in revenues, an inequality report said, adding that explicit redistributive policies could support, for example, doubling expenditure on public education. The report echoed this direction, recommending progressive taxation, including wealth taxes on multimillionaires, as a lever for correcting the concentration of economic power.

These measures would generate extra resources not just for welfare expenditure but for

infrastructure development, keeping in view better connectivity and social infrastructure facilities – more schools and health clinics – in the rural and backward regions of the country, which has been neglected by subsequent Central and state governments. This perspective of development is not far to seek, as it has been pointed out by many economists the world over, including Prof. Michael Lipton, Prof. AmartyaSen, Prof. Michael Todaro and many others.

Thus, the immediate necessity is for more resource allocation to the rural and backward regions of the country rather than modernisation of airports and such other work that facilitate the life of the upper echelons of society. This allocation would obviously develop infrastructure, leading to an increase in the incomes of the rural mass.

The PM Jan DhanYojana, presented as a financial inclusion success story, backfired as the government acknowledged lately that a quarter of all Jan Dhan accounts are inoperative – 15 crore accounts, or 26% of the total 57.07 crore accounts. In such a situation,

as a tool of structural redress. But India does not have any such provisions.

A clearly defined disability budget line—on par with major sectoral budgets, would transform disability from a residual welfare concern into a core development priority. Specifically, such a budget would enable, set measurable and time-bound targets for health coverage, inclusive education, skill development, employment generation, and social protection for persons with disabilities. It would also ensure disaggregated allocation and outcome monitoring, allowing expenditures to be tracked by type of disability, region, gender, and socio-economic status.

Global experience demonstrates that disability budgeting is not an act of charity but a tool of economic governance. Countries that invest systematically in disability inclusion reap dividends in productivity, reduced dependency, and social cohesion. India’s continued failure to institutionalise a dedicated disability budget risks perpetuating a cycle of invisibility, inefficiency, and exclusion. Ultimately, a disability budget is not just about allocating funds—it is about redefining who counts in economic planning. Until persons with disabilities are visible in fiscal policy, India’s development narrative will remain incomplete. A dedicated disability budget, supported by mandatory inclusive health insurance provisions, would mark a historic shift — from welfare-driven compassion to rights-based economic citizenship aligning India’s fiscal priorities with its constitutional values and global development commitments.

*Antarjeeta Nayak is an independent researcher, columnist and author while Ramakrishna Biswal is an Associate Professor, NIT Rourkela, Odisha*



Antarjeeta Nayak  
Ramakrishna Biswal

NEARLY 2.7 CRORE INDIANS WITH DISABILITIES REMAIN OVERLOOKED, FINANCIALLY INVISIBLE, ADMINISTRATIVELY LOST, AND POLITICALLY SIDELINED, AS INDIA LACKS A DEDICATED DISABILITY BUDGET



Dhurjati Mukherjee

THE IMMEDIATE NECESSITY IS FOR MORE RESOURCE ALLOCATION TO THE RURAL AND BACKWARD REGIONS



India continues to treat disability as a residual welfare concern rather than a development priority. Unlike education, health, or agriculture, disability expenditure in India has no consolidated budget statement

comprehensive assessment of whether public spending improves access to education, employment, healthcare, or dignity for PwDs.

Healthcare is both a human right and a critical component of economic security. Yet, over 80% of persons with disabilities in India lack any form of health insurance coverage, whether governmental or private. Over 50% of applicants, who attempt to acquire a policy, face rejection often without transparent reasons. These figures point to deep systemic barriers like- discriminatory underwriting practices, inaccessible digital platforms, high premiums, and pervasive lack of outreach focused on PwDs. Despite legal safeguards in the RPwD Act and directives from the IRDAI, practical exclusion persists. Disability increases household healthcare expenditure by 2–3 times compared to non-disabled households. Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) and other broad health insurance programmes aim to provide coverage for low-income families. However, disability often intersects with chronic health needs, rehabilitation services, and long-term care — needs that exceed episodic hospitalization coverages and demand tailored policy design. It is one thing to cover hospital bills, and it is another to fully

account for the higher out-of-pocket expenses, lifelong assistive technology needs, and routine therapy costs that many PwDs incur.

The absence of a dedicated disability budget reflects a deeper structural failure, where India has not integrated disability into the logic of economic planning. Existing health expenditure patterns are skewed towards episodic and curative interventions, with chronic under-funding of community-based rehabilitation, assistive technologies, mental health services, and lifelong support systems. A dedicated budget would allow for a shift from crisis-driven spending to preventive and life-course-oriented investment. While global best practices increasingly adopt disability-responsive budgeting, India continues to relegate disability to the margins of social justice discourse. Countries like Australia, through its National Disability Insurance Scheme, treat disability spending as long-term social investment. The United Kingdom ensures fiscal transparency through disaggregated disability expenditure, enabling parliamentary scrutiny and evidence-based reform. South Africa embeds disability budgeting within its constitutional mandate for social justice, using fiscal policy

## Letters

### TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: [edit@orissapost.com](#)

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B-15, Rasulgardi Industrial Estate,  
Bhubaneswar-751010



### Time to fix Hasina case

Sir, It is highly condemnable that Hindus are being targeted by fanatics in Bangladesh and that their establishments have been burnt down. The interim government should bring the criminals to book and initiate stern action against them. That said, we should also admit that Hindus are being attacked in Bangladesh due to animosity towards India that has stemmed from our decision to grant asylum to former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has been condemned by Bangladeshi courts on charges of murdering hundreds of her own people. Moreover, refusing to hand her over to Bangladesh despite their requests, and allowing her to issue statements against the interim government while sitting comfortably in India, has further irked Bangladeshis. They are expressing their anger against India by attacking Hindus there. It is time India took a clear decision in Hasina’s case. If it is unwise to hand her over to Bangladesh, we should deport her to a neutral country where she is welcome or hand her over to an organisation like the UN.

Tharcius S Fernando, CHENNAI

### Cultural bias

Sir, The \$200,000 settlement at CU Boulder in the United States exposes a food racism that haunts academic spaces. While an administrative assistant dismissed palak paneer as pungent, the real stench is intolerance for diversity. With 80% of Indian international students reporting microaggressions in Western institutions, especially in the United States and Canada, this is not an isolated microwave spat—it is systemic. Penalising students for their heritage and revoking funding reflects a failure of the very cultural relativism universities claim to teach. United States varsities must move beyond merely tasting diversity to truly respecting the lived experiences that come with it, through inclusive policies, cultural sensitivity training, and institutional accountability that protect international students from subtle yet harmful discrimination. Authorities should also ensure that campuses remain spaces of learning, dignity, and genuine cross-cultural coexistence rather than quiet exclusion.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR



# Pawar crisis may reunite NCP

*Despite the tragedy that claimed Ajit's life Wednesday, negotiators from both the ruling NCP and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) confirm that the process is 'very much on course'*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** The sudden death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar may accelerate the reunification of the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which is likely after the zilla parishad and panchayat samiti election results.

Despite the tragedy that claimed Pawar's life Wednesday, negotiators from both the ruling NCP and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) confirm that the process is "very much on course."

The timeline for reunification had been meticulously planned by Ajit Pawar before his fatal plane crash after having tested the waters by contesting the Pune and Pimpri-Chinchwad civic polls as a joint force.

Sources from both the factions confirmed independently that the two factions were in the "advanced stages" of a permanent union.

"The process of bringing the family and the party back together was already in motion. Ajit dada himself had held several rounds of discussions



**The reunification is seen as a move to reclaim the 'sugar bowl' of Western Maharashtra, where the BJP has made significant inroads during the recent civic polls**

with senior leaders to bridge the gap," sources in the know of developments told PTI.

Sources within the NCP (SP) said both sides had reached an "advanced stage" of negotiations prior to Wednesday's plane crash, with a tentative merger announcement originally planned for February 8, shortly after the conclusion of the upcoming Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti polls.

The Ajit Pawar-led NCP holds 40 seats in the Maharashtra Assembly (excluding the deceased leader's own seat of Baramati, now vacant), while the Sharad Pawar faction has 10. Following a merger, all eyes will be on whether the unified party remains a part of the BJP-led

Mahayuti government.

However, even if the party exits the ruling alliance, the Devendra Fadnavis government would remain secure, maintaining a commanding majority.

The alliance at present has a strength of 235 MLAs including the NCP in the 288-member House.

Despite currently being part of the ruling alliance with the BJP and Shiv Sena, Ajit Pawar consistently maintained that he was a secular leader committed to the progressive ideological legacy of 'Shahu, Phule, and Ambedkar' (Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj, Mahatma Phule and Dr B R Ambedkar).

Ajit Pawar's close associates, including Kiran Gujar, claimed

that the departed leader was determined to reunite the party.

"He was one hundred per cent keen on merging both the factions. He had told me five days ago that the entire process was complete and the merger was imminent in the next few days," Gujar told PTI Thursday at Baramati.

Asked whether he had discussed the issue with Sharad Pawar, Gujar, a close confidant of Ajit Pawar for last four decades, said "positive talks were underway with Pawar saheb, Supriya Tai (Supriya Sule) and other leaders", and there were indications that the senior Pawar would endorse the move.

Just days before the crash, Ajit Pawar met with NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil to finalise organisational unity and power-sharing arrangements.

Amid the merger talks, a section of party workers in the NCP has initiated a debate over the successor of Ajit Pawar.

The section of NCP leadership is keen to nominate his wife Sunetra Pawar, currently a Rajya Sabha MP, for the Deputy Chief Minister post to maintain the family's political lineage.

Political analysts suggest that a reunited NCP would fundamentally shift the balance of power within both the ruling Mahayuti alliance and the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi.

The reunification is seen as a move to reclaim the "sugar bowl" of Western Maharashtra, where the BJP has made significant inroads during the recent civic polls.

# Karnataka Min Reddy, Mohandas Pai spat over public transport



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Jan 30:** Karnataka Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy has defended the state-run public transport system and the government's 'Shakti' scheme amid a social media spat with IT industry veteran T V Mohandas Pai over the role of private operators, asserting that public transport is a right, not a luxury.

The sharp exchange began after former Chief Finance Officer of Infosys, Pai, alleged a shortage of buses and lack of public transport, while urging the minister to allow private buses to provide service.

"All we have got is shortage of buses and lack of public transport for last 3 years. (Earlier too) Please allow private buses to provide service," Pai alleged in a post on 'X'.

The IT industry veteran accused Reddy of having thoughtfully failed to ensure adequate public transport because



of his "dogmatic attitude" saying only PSY works.

"Why? People need public transport irrespective of who provides it," he said, tagging Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar in his post.

Reacting to criticism, Reddy defended the state-run transport corporations and challenged Pai to a public debate.

"Mr @TVMohandasPai, Our BMTD MD is enough to handle a face-to-face debate with you on any platform. Kindly come and discuss the facts with them directly. Are you ready to step up, or will you just keep tweeting?," he said in a post on 'X'.

The transport minister said that Pai's view is not just "biased, it is fundamentally dogmatic," arguing that, "You (Pai) look at a public service and see a balance sheet; I look at it and see 1.5 crore citizens."

Highlighting the state government's Shakti scheme, the minister claimed that, "We have crossed 650 crore+ free

trips for women. This isn't just a "scheme"; it is the greatest mobility-led economic empowerment in India's history."

"The "Social Service" Balance: Unlike private players, we don't cherry-pick. 30 per cent of our routes operate at a loss to ensure a student and rural citizens in a remote village has a bus. 30 per cent operate at break-even. 40 per cent (long-distance) generate the profit that sustains the rest. 98 per cent of villages have bus connectivity across state. This is how you serve a society, not a board of directors," he added.

Reddy pointed out that Karnataka operates 26,054 buses; in Bangalore alone, nearly 45 lakh commuters are served daily.

"With a fleet of 7,108 buses—including 1,686 electric buses—we cover over 13 lakh km and 66,000 trips every day, the highest in India. Show me a single BJP-ruled city or state, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat, that matches this scale and efficiency," he said.

According to him, in just the last two years, 5,800 plus new buses have been inducted and by March 2026, another 2,000 plus buses will be on the roads.

"During the BJP tenure (2019-2023), when bus inductions were frozen and corporations were left to rot, why didn't you raise a single question? Why does your "corporate concern" only wake up when a pro-people government is performing," he alleged.

# Karnataka to hold exclusive job fair for persons with disabilities

**The initiative as a significant state government programme aims at making persons with disabilities economically self-reliant by providing suitable employment opportunities**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Jan 30:** Karnataka will organise an exclusive job fair for persons with disabilities, Minister Sharan Prakash Patil said Thursday, describing it as a major step towards inclusive employment.

The mega job fair will be held at Kanteerava Stadium here within the next three months, Patil said. He holds the Skill Development, Livelihood and Medical Education portfolios and is also the Raichur district in-charge minister.

Responding to a question raised by BJP MLA Gururaj Shetty Ganthole during Question Hour in the Legislative Assembly, Patil said the job fair is being organised by the Department of Skill Development and Livelihood.

He described the initiative as a significant state government programme aimed at making persons with disabilities eco-



nomically self-reliant by providing suitable employment opportunities. During the current financial year, the Karnataka Skill Development Corporation (KSDC) is implementing market-oriented vocational training programmes for persons with disabilities across the state, the minister said. Under the initiative, 1,000 candidates will be provided skill training, tool kits and employment opportunities at a total cost of Rs 3 crore, he added.

Patil said entrepreneurship development training programmes are also being conducted for persons with disabilities through the Entrepreneurship Development Department.

As per government orders, reservation for persons with disabilities in training programmes has been increased from three per cent to five per cent.

## SCAM ON WHEELS

# Mumbai cabbie charges tourist ₹18,000 for 400-metre ride; held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** A 50-year-old taxi driver has been arrested for allegedly charging a US tourist a whopping Rs 18,000 in what may have been the most expensive 400-metre ride through the Mumbai traffic, police said Friday.

The police Tuesday apprehended Deshraj Yadav, who allegedly picked up the tourist from the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport and dropped her off at a five-star hotel near the facility, an official said.

The incident came to light after the tourist took to social media to share her experience about her expensive ride in the city.

"Landed in Mumbai recently and took a taxi to @HiltonHotels. The driver and another guy took us to an unknown location first, charged us \$200 (Rs 18,000), and then dropped us at the hotel, which was only 400m away. Taxi No: MH 01



BD 5405," Argentina Ariano (@ArgentinaAriano) wrote in a post on X.

The police swung into action, registering a suo motu FIR earlier this week and nabbed Yadav within three hours. The foreign national, however, could not be contacted, the official said.

A probe revealed that the accused took the woman for a 20-minute drive around And-

heri East before returning to the same area and dropping her off at the hotel, where he collected the inflated fare, he said, adding that a search is underway for Yadav's accomplice.

A case has been registered against Yadav under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), and the process has been initiated to cancel his driving licence, the official said.

# Maha strengthens fight against bonded labour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** The Maharashtra government Friday issued several directives to boost the fight against bonded labour, especially those involving children.

Any instance of financial inducement linked to child labour will now invite action under bonded labour laws, a government resolution (GR) issued by the industries and labour ministry during the day said.

"If an employer has given money, loans or advances to the parents or guardians of a child, directly or indirectly, the case must be treated as bonded labour. Such children will be classified as bonded labourers and action will be taken as per law. District authorities will be responsible for rehabilitation and statutory benefits," the GR said.

To strengthen enforcement at the local level, the government has ordered the creation of a separate child labour unit in every district collectorate, which will act as a nodal agency for inspections, rescue



operations, prosecution and follow-up action, the GR said.

The GR directed the merger of the district-level child labour advisory committee and the district child labour action committee into a single district child labour action committee.

"The reconstituted panel will be headed by the district collector and will oversee implementation and periodic reviews. Every district will have a dedicated unit to deal with cases and complaints related to child labour," it said.

# K'taka govt officers, employees to wear Khadi to work first Saturday

*While the suggested attire for male employees is Khadi shirts, trousers, overcoats and other formal wear, female employees may wear Khadi or Khadi silk sarees, chudidars and other formal outfit*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Jan 30:** All officers and employees of the Karnataka government will perform their duties wearing Khadi clothes "voluntarily", on the first Saturday of every month, aimed at promoting the fabric and related products.

They will also be encouraged to wear Khadi on Independence Day, Republic Day and other official events.

Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh Thursday issued a circular in this regard. "On the auspicious occasion of 77th Republic Day, with an aim to reconnect public service with the freedom struggle of the country, the State Government



has taken a significant decision to promote the use of Khadi."

"Accordingly, all the officers/employees of all the Government/Aided Institution/Corporations/Boards/Autonomous Institutions/Universities of the State have been asked to wear Khadi on the first Saturday of every month 'voluntarily' and to direct the officers/staff of their departments to wear Khadi while participating in all official government programmes including Independence Day and Republic Day," the circular said.

It is hoped that this move will help in instilling a sense of respect, unity, national

sentiment, Indianness, self-respect and social responsibility towards indigenous products among government officers/employees, it added.

With the aim of promoting Khadi products, a meeting was chaired by the Chief Secretary regarding the voluntary wearing of Khadi clothes by the officers and employees of the government and government-owned corporations, authorities, universities, and aided institutions, Karnataka State Government Employees Association separately said Thursday.

"All officers and employees will perform their duties

wearing Khadi clothes on the first Saturday of every month. Khadi clothes to be purchased from the shops of the government-owned Khadi Village Industries Board," the association said in a release.

It said, in addition to the discount currently being given by the Khadi Village Industries Board, an additional discount of 5 per cent will be given to officers and employees.

While the suggested attire for male employees is Khadi shirts, trousers, overcoats and other formal wear, female employees may wear Khadi or Khadi silk sarees, chudidars and other formal outfit.

# Karnataka mandates 12 days of menstrual leave

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Bangalore, Jan 30:** The Karnataka Education Department has issued a circular Thursday ordering granting of provision of menstrual leave facility for women government employees in the state.

The order in this regard has been issued by the Commissioner of the School Education Department, Vikas Suralkar.

It may be noted that the Karnataka government issued a November 2025 order mandating 12 days of paid menstrual leave annually (1 day/month) for women in both government and private sectors, covering ages 18-52, applicable across various establishments under different labour laws.

The order by the Education department stated, "To enhance the efficiency and performance of women employees working in various departments of the state, and to boost their morale, the provisions for availing one day of paid leave per month during the menstrual cycle—amounting to a total of 12 days of paid



leave annually—shall be as proposed in Reference (2) and as specified in the Government Order dated Nov 12, 2025."

The order has also mentioned conditions. They include, "Women employees shall avail the menstrual leave for the respective month only in that month. Carrying forward unused menstrual leave to the subsequent month shall not be permitted; Women employees are not required to produce any medical certificate to avail one day of menstrual leave per month."

Women government employees aged between 18 and 52 years who are menstruating shall be eligible to avail this leave. The

competent authority empowered to sanction casual leave shall also be authorised to sanction menstrual leave. This leave shall be entered separately in the leave/attendance register.

Menstrual leave shall not be combined with any other kind of leave, the order stated. The order further stated, "The facility may be availed by submitting an application to the competent authority. Employees availing the leave shall, depending on the circumstances, necessarily bring to the notice of the concerned section officer any urgent office files or court-related files and ensure that responsibilities are duly attended to."



of the day

quote

Surpassing one crore enrollments and 80 lakh course completions across 4,290 courses on the iGOT Karmayogi portal reflects the strong commitment of our employees to continuous learning

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | ANDHRA PRADESH CM

Let us imbibe the ideals of Bapu and make our best contribution towards the creation of a prosperous, just and developed India

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

It is people's sentiment..... the decision will be taken by senior leaders and members of the Pawar family

RAJESH TOPE | FORMER MAHA MINISTER

SHORT TAKES

'Karnataka bans tobacco ads on buses'

**Bangalore:** Karnataka Minister Ramalinga Reddy Friday directed officials to prohibit all direct and indirect advertisements promoting the consumption of tobacco products on buses and at bus stands of the state's four transport corporations. In a note issued to the managing directors of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC), Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), North West Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (NWKRTC) and Kalyana Karnataka Road Transport Corporation (KKRTC), the transport minister ordered the directive to be implemented with immediate effect.

Man held on charges of spying for Pakistan

**Jaipur:** Rajasthan Police has arrested a 28-year-old man from the border district of Jaisalmer on charges of spying for Pakistan's intelligence agency, officials said Friday. The accused was found to be allegedly involved in anti-national activities and sharing strategically sensitive and confidential information related to the Indian Army across the border, they said. Additional Director General (Police Intelligence) Prfull Kumar said intelligence agencies in the state are keeping a continuous watch on the activities of Pakistani intelligence networks.

Ajit Pawar's ashes immersed

**Pune:** A day after Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar's funeral, his ashes were immersed Friday at the confluence of Nira and Karha rivers near his hometown Baramati in Pune district. Ajit Pawar (66), who died in a jet crash at the Baramati airport Wednesday, was cremated a day later with full state honours at the Vidya Pratishthan College ground, located around 100 kms from Pune city, in the presence of prominent politicians and thousands of people.

NCB busts secret drug lab; four held

**New Delhi:** The Narcotics Control Bureau has busted a secret drug manufacturing laboratory in Karnataka's Mysuru and arrested four people from Rajasthan after seizing narcotics worth ₹10 crore, the agency said Friday. This crackdown began January 28 in Gujarat's Surat, where federal officials intercepted a SUV in the Palsana area.



Ajit Pawar was the leader of the NCP legislature party and an important functionary of the ruling Mahayuti alliance. We are in the process of finalising the leadership transition

PRAFUL PATEL | NCP WORKING PRESIDENT

BOMB THREAT: FLIGHT DIVERTED

An IndiGo flight operating from Kuwait to Delhi was diverted to the Ahmedabad airport Friday morning after a bomb threat was reported on board, officials at the airport said. Nothing suspicious has been found yet, they said



Sunetra Pawar set to take oath as Maha dy CM today

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai/Pune, Jan 30:** Rajya Sabha MP Sunetra Pawar is likely to be sworn-in as Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Saturday, replacing her late husband Ajit Pawar in the cabinet, said NCP .

Sources Friday, signalling the party's continuation in ruling Mahayuti and delaying merger talks. She would be the first woman to hold the post of Deputy CM in the state, where the position was first created in 1978 when the coalition government era began in Maharashtra. Following the death of Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in an air crash in Baramati Wednesday, a section of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leaders had demanded that she be given the post held by her late husband in the Devendra Fadnavis-led cabinet.

Her consent to accept the decision to name her as her husband's successor has been communicated to party leaders, said the sources. "Tomorrow (Saturday), a parliamentary board meeting of the party will take place in Mumbai, where Sunetra Pawar will be elected as the leader of the NCP legislature party," said a source.

"It is likely that she will be sworn-in as Deputy Chief Minister by tomorrow evening," said the source privy to the developments.

Speaking to reporters in Nagpur, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the BJP, which heads the ruling alliance Mahayuti, would support any decision taken by the family and party of late Ajit Pawar. "The NCP will take whatever deci-



sion it has to take for the post of deputy chief minister, and the government and the BJP will support the decision. I can only tell you that we are standing behind the family of Ajit Dada and the NCP," the CM added.

Until the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Sunetra Pawar had kept a low profile. In the general elections that year, she stood from Baramati as the candidate of her husband's party, but was defeated by her sister-in-law and incumbent NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule in the prestige battle. Sunetra Pawar was subsequently elected to the Rajya Sabha.

The NCP's legislature wing will hold a meeting in Mumbai January 31 where she would be named as its leader, state minister and senior party leader Chhagan Bhujbal said earlier in the day in Mumbai.

Fadnavis had conveyed that he had no issue with the swearing-in ceremony taking place Saturday itself, provided a decision to that effect (Sunetra Pawar elected as new NCP legislature wing leader) was taken by the party, stated Bhujbal.

GOVT BLOCKS WINGO APP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The Government has blocked the Wingo App for allegedly sending fraudulent SMSes from users' phones using them as mules to allegedly carry out large-scale message-based cybercrimes, officials said Friday.

The action was taken by the Union Home Ministry and its anti-cybercrime agency, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), after getting numerous complaints against the Android application.

The agency said the app users were unknowingly becoming an accessory in an SMS fraud network run by cyber criminals. Following the complaints, the Government geo-blocked the app's command and control centre. Four Telegram channels, having 1.53 lakh users, and over 50 YouTube videos promoting the application were also blocked, the I4C said.

According to I4C, Wingo was a "Telecom Mule as a Service" app and provided earnings based on SMS tasks. Once a user downloaded the application, it activated a telecom mule infrastructure which used to start sending messages through the user's phone for carrying out cyber crimes. The messages used to reach 1.53 crore people every day, the agency said.

Over 1.53 lakh users, lured by daily small payments from the application, unknowingly allowed themselves to be part of these cyber crimes.

The app listed itself on the Android Play Store as a "multiplayer entertainment game that allows multiple participants to play in a live draw simultaneously."

The Noida police had also flagged the misuse of the application after its role cropped up during the investigation in e-challan related cyber fraud.

"This app lures users with promises of quick earnings by having them perform SMS tasks and is potentially used in cyber fraud activities," Additional DCP (cyber) Shavya Goyal had said Thursday.

Tharoor praises Rahul after meeting

The thaw in relations between Tharoor and the party's top leadership also became evident with Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly VD Satheesan asserting that the Thiruvananthapuram MP will be a star campaigner for the party-led UDF in the upcoming polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 30:** Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor Friday praised former party president Rahul Gandhi, saying he was a "sincere" person and a "strong voice" against communalism in the country, signalling bonhomie with the party leadership after his meeting with Gandhi and party chief Mallikarjun Kharge in New Delhi to resolve differences.

The thaw in relations between Tharoor and the party's top leadership also became evident with Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly V D Satheesan asserting that the Thiruvananthapuram MP will be a star campaigner for the party-led UDF in the upcoming polls.

"I can say that I am going to be in the Congress and that I am not going anywhere. I will be part of the poll campaign (in Kerala) and will work for the victory of the UDF," Tharoor told reporters here.

"But, why is it that I am being asked to make such statements?" the 69-year-old MP said, and clarified that his stand on certain issues may have been portrayed by the media as pro-BJP, but he viewed it as pro-government or pro-India.

Asserting that everyone likes Rahul Gandhi as he consistently speaks out against the politics of communalism, hatred, and divisiveness in the country, he said, "I do not have a different opinion on that."



Tharoor also said he had never agreed with any unfair criticism of Rahul, adding, "He is a sincere leader."

Tharoor's praise for Gandhi came amidst differences between the two. Last week, Tharoor skipped a key Kerala poll strategy meeting amid reported disappointment over being sidelined at a Kochi event by Gandhi.

Sources said Gandhi named other senior leaders on stage but did not mention Tharoor, a four-time MP and CWC member, triggering fresh unease.

Regarding his remarks supporting the Narendra Modi-led government during India and Pakistan tensions, Tharoor said he has made it clear in the past that, on some international matters, he prefers not to engage in politics and instead speaks from the national perspective.

"It is not something new; I have always said so," Tharoor said.

A row had erupted last year over his comments on the India-Pakistan conflict and the diplomatic outreach after the



Pahalgam attack.

His comments were at variance with the Congress' stand and many party leaders took a swipe at him, questioning his intentions.

Tharoor admitted that a party member should not go against the party line. "I have always stood with the party in Parliament and therefore, there is no need to be concerned," he said.

After meeting Kharge and Rahul to seek redress for his grievances Thursday, Tharoor said "all is good" and "we are all on the same page", signalling a rapprochement with his party ahead of the crucial Kerala Assembly polls.

A relieved party's state unit responded to the remarks positively Friday, saying, "He (Tharoor) will be in the front row of the campaign initiated by the UDF in Kerala for the elections."

Describing Tharoor as a global citizen and a noted writer, Satheesan said he has a strong connection with



Tourists ride a hot air balloon in the backdrop of snow-clad mountains near Manali, Himachal Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

PREZ RULE NEARS ONE-YEAR MARK

Speculation mounts over BJP's next move in Manipur

The 60-member Manipur Assembly is under suspended animation ever since President's rule was imposed February 13, 2025 following months of ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities and the Assembly's five year tenure will come to an end in March 2027

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Speculation is rife over the BJP's next move in Manipur as President's rule will complete a year in the northeastern state next month and no clear words yet on the possibility of re-installation of a popular government.

The 60-member Manipur Assembly is under suspended animation ever since President's rule was imposed February 13, 2025 following months of ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities and the Assembly's five year tenure will come to an end in March 2027.

Several rounds of talks were held by the BJP's Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra with the party's Meitei and Kuki MLAs separately, sources said. On December 14, 2025, BJP's national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh and



Patra met party's legislators from both warring communities under one roof.

Over 30 BJP MLAs attended the meeting, including Speaker of the Manipur Legislative Assembly T Satyabrata Singh and former chief minister N Biren Singh.

Among the seven BJP MLAs from the Kuki community, four participated in the meeting while three Kuki MLAs could not attend apparently due to some unavoidable reasons, sources said. So far there have been no word from the BJP whether there is a possibility

of formation of a popular government before the completion of one year, the sources said.

If a government could not assume charge in coming weeks, a statutory resolution will have to be adopted in both Houses of Parliament in the first part of the ongoing budget session for the extension of the President's rule, they said.

A total of 32 BJP MLAs won the 2022 assembly elections. The JD(U) won six seats and five of them later defected to the BJP. So, the BJP currently has 37 MLAs.

There are six National People's Party (NPP) MLAs, five Naga People's Front, five Con-

gress, two Kuki People's Alliance (KPA), one Janata Dal (United), three Independents. There is one vacant seat following the death of a sitting MLA.

Manipur has been under President's rule since February 13, 2025 after the then chief minister Biren Singh, who was heading a BJP-led government, resigned February 9 following ethnic violence that claimed over 260 lives since May 2023. The 60-member state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation.

Several rounds of talks were held by the BJP's Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra with the party's Meitei and Kuki MLAs separately, sources said. On December 14, 2025, BJP's national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh and Patra met party's legislators from both warring communities under one roof







# international

## of the day quote

We will never accept joint operations by the United States operations on our territory are carried out by Mexican forces, we always tell President Trump that

CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM | PRESIDENT, MEXICO

Venezuela's government on Thursday approved opening the nation's oil sector to privatisation, reversing a tenet of the self-proclaimed socialist movement that has ruled the country for more than two decades

DELCY RODRIGUEZ | ACTING PRESIDENT, VENEZUELA

I believe that progressing towards fulfillment of the aspirations of sustainable peace, good governance, development and prosperity through the federal democratic republican system of governance achieved by the sacrifice of the martyrs will be a true tribute to them

RAMCHANDRA PAUDEL | PRESIDENT, NEPAL

## SHORT TAKES

### 25 killed in Nigeria's deadliest Islamist attack

**Maiduguri, Nigeria:** At least 25 people were killed when suspected Boko Haram militants attacked a town in northern Nigeria, relatives of victims said, the deadliest reported Islamist attack since US President Donald Trump ordered air strikes on Christmas Day. The victims were labourers who had travelled to Sabon Gari town in northeastern Nigeria's Borno State to work at a construction site, when gunmen swept in Thursday and opened fire, relatives Hassan Usman and Auwal Isa told Reuters. Aliyu Ndume, a senator who represents the region, said he was "shocked and saddened" by the killing of his constituents.

### Nepal Poll campaign to begin from Feb 16

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's Election Commission Friday allotted political parties 15 days to campaign starting from February 16 ahead of the March 5 general election. Political parties are allowed to campaign from February 16 to March 2, according to Suman Ghimire, deputy spokesperson at the Election Commission. According to Ghimire, no campaign activities - including rallies, processions or assemblies - are allowed before February 16, in line with the Election Code of Conduct. During the official campaign period, political parties may organise public events and publish or broadcast election-related materials through the media. "Political parties are allowed to organise public rallies, mass meetings and other election campaign related programmes in the open only between February 16 and March 2," he said.

### 52 terrorists killed in Pakistan

**Islamabad/Lahore:** Pakistan's security forces killed 52 terrorists, mostly belonging to the Taliban, in separate operations across three provinces in the last 24 hours, the army and officials said Friday. Six terrorists were killed in Punjab province early Friday while on Thursday, 41 were killed in two separate intelligence based operations (IBOs) in Balochistan and five Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) men, including a commander, were killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

## Visit by Starmer shows drawbacks of 'China pivot' in countering Trump

REUTERS

**Hong Kong/Beijing, Jan 30:** British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit to China is the latest win Beijing can tout in its rivalry with Washington, but the deals he brings back to London also show the limits of the balancing act that middle powers may try to play.

He follows Canadian counterpart Mark Carney, who struck a trade deal on a similar visit weeks ago, before heading to Davos to herald a new global trade order as US President Donald Trump disrupts long-standing ties with allies.

European leaders have also visited, as have India's Narendra Modi and others since Trump began his second term a year ago, but it is less clear what tangible long-term economic and security benefits such visits

yield for Western powers.

"Traditional US allies feel hard done by and are now hedging their bets, but they are far from being able or willing to substitute China for the United States," said John Quelch, an expert in global strategy at Duke Kunshan University.

From the perspective of London, Ottawa and other Western capitals, the visits demonstrate to Trump that alternatives exist if he keeps up pressure on issues from Greenland to renegotiating the USMCA trade deal among the United States, Canada and Mexico.

But these are "superficial gestures amid stalled global growth," said Alicia Garcia-Herrero, chief Asia-Pacific economist at Natixis.

"These visits highlight the severe limits of any 'pivot' to China," she said. "They expose mid-



dle powers' vulnerability, chasing scraps while China's export flood overwhelms their industries."

And they benefit Beijing, by supporting the narrative of a broad pivot to China as the world's "reliable partner", in contrast with Trump's chaotic tariff policies and his growing list of threats and demands towards partners and rivals alike.

## NATIONWIDE PROTESTS BEGIN OVER ICE

Protesters across the US are calling for 'no work, no school, no shopping' as part of a nationwide strike Friday to oppose the Trump administration's immigration crackdown in Minneapolis. The demonstrations come almost a week after Alex Pretti, an intensive care nurse, was shot multiple times as he used his cellphone to record Border Patrol officers conducting an immigration enforcement operation



- Starmer gets lower whisky tariffs, visa-free access for Britain
- Visit seen as latest in world 'pivot to China'
- China paints itself "reliable partner" in contrast with US
- Export-heavy economy limits what Beijing can offer
- Some warn further integration threatens Western firms, securit

with a country that ran a trade surplus the size of the Dutch economy last year but where consumption is too weak for even its own producers to prosper at home.

In a meeting Thursday, Starmer told Xi, the two sides should collaborate but also allow 'meaningful dialogue' on areas they disagree.

On his trip to the world's sec-

### STARMER SCORES WINS ON VISAS, WHISKY

The deals clinched by Western powers on such visits come in return for deeper integration

## Russia halts strikes on Kyiv until Sunday

REUTERS

**Kyiv, Jan 30:** Russia has agreed to a request from US President Donald Trump to halt airstrikes on Kyiv until February 1 amid harsh winter temperatures, and Ukraine said it was ready to reciprocate as Washington pushes for a diplomatic solution to end the war.

But as the Ukrainian capital braces for another bitterly cold spell from Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Friday there was no formal truce between the two countries.

He added that Russia had shifted to hitting Ukrainian logistics, after having bombed Ukraine's roads and railways in recent days.

The Kremlin said President Vladimir Putin had accepted Trump's request to stop bombarding Kyiv to create "favourable conditions" for peace talks.

In recent weeks, Russian strikes on energy infrastructure in Kyiv have left hundreds of thousands of people without heating for days on end at times as temperatures have dipped below minus 15 degrees Celsius.

"President Trump did indeed make a personal request to President Putin to refrain from striking Kyiv for a week until

- Russia agrees to stop air attacks on Ukrainian energy installations until February 1
- Temperatures in Kyiv to drop to minus 26 degrees Celsius from Sunday
- US proposed de-escalation opportunity, no formal ceasefire

February 1 in order to create favourable conditions for negotiations," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, confirming that Putin had agreed.

Zelenskiy said Ukraine was ready to reciprocate, halting its attacks on Russian refinery infrastructure, saying this was "an opportunity rather than an agreement."

In a post on the Telegram app, Zelenskiy said there were no strikes on Ukrainian energy facilities overnight. In a separate briefing with reporters, Zelenskiy said Ukrainian air defences had been left depleted because Kyiv's European allies had delayed payments to the US under the PURL weapons purchase programme. As a result, he said, US Patriot air defence missiles had not arrived ahead of heavy Russian airstrikes on Kyiv that knocked out power to swathes of the city this month.



## GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

## Rohingya survivors seek justice at UN court

REUTERS

**The Hague, Jan 30:** Rohingya survivors of the 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar expect the International Court of Justice, the United Nations' highest court, to rule the country committed genocide against them, they said Friday.

A judgment is expected in three-to-six months' time following three weeks of hearings at the court in the Hague that is also known as the World Court.

The outcome of the case will have repercussions beyond Myanmar, including affecting South Africa's genocide case at the court against Israel over the war in Gaza.

### GAMBIA BROUGHT THE CASE

In their final submissions this week, lawyers for Gambia, a mainly Muslim country that brought the case, told the court that the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn from Myanmar's conduct is that it



intended to destroy the Rohingya as a group.

Myanmar has denied accusations of genocide and said the 2017 offensive that forced at least 730,000 Rohingya from their homes and into neighbouring Bangladesh was a legitimate counterterrorist operation.

Speaking Friday on the side-

ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Trump nominates Kevin Warsh as next Fed chair

**Washington, Jan 30:** President Donald Trump said Friday that he will nominate former Federal Reserve official Kevin Warsh to be the next chair of the Fed, a pick likely to result in sharp changes to the powerful agency that could bring it closer to the White House and reduce its longtime independence from day-to-day politics.

Warsh would replace current chair Jerome Powell when his term expires in May. Trump chose Powell to lead the Fed in 2017 but this year has relentlessly assailed him for not cutting interest rates quickly enough.

The appointment, which requires Senate confirmation, amounts to a return trip for Warsh, 55, who was a member of the Fed's board from 2006 to 2011. He was the youngest governor in history when he was appointed at age 35. He is currently a fellow at the right-leaning Hoover Institution and a lecturer at the Stanford Graduate School of Business.

In some ways, Warsh is an unlikely choice for the Republican president because he has long been a hawk in Fed parlance, or someone who typically supports higher interest rates to control inflation. Trump has said the Fed's key rate should be as low as 1 per cent, far below its current level of about 3.6 per cent, a stance few economists endorse.

During his time as governor, Warsh objected to some of the low-interest rate policies that the Fed pursued during and after the 2008-09 Great Recession. He also often expressed concern at that time that inflation would soon accelerate, even though it remained at rock-bottom levels for many years after that recession ended. But more recently, however, in speeches and opinion columns, Warsh has said he supports lower rates.

- MYANMAR HAS DENIED GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS
- JUDGMENTS ON AVERAGE TAKE SIX-TO-NINE MONTHS
- CASE WOULD LIKELY HAVE BEARINGS ON SOUTH AFRICA'S CASE AGAINST ISRAEL

we were killed," he said.

A UN fact-finding mission concluded the offensive had included "genocidal acts" and survivors recounted killings, mass rape and arson.

At the international court, Myanmar's lawyers said the fact-finding mission was biased and that its conclusions did not have the standard of proof needed for a finding of genocide.

Gambia's Justice Minister Dawda Jallow asked the court to reject Myanmar's arguments and said a judgment declaring genocide would help to break Myanmar's "cycle of atrocities and impunities".



of the day

quote

We are engaged in active dialogue with many developed nations (for free trade agreements)...We will soon close the FTA with Chile. It will open up critical minerals for us

PIYUSH GOYAL |  
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

In an increasingly complex operating landscape, defined by evolving consumer preferences, growing scale, an expanding product and powertrain portfolio, varying regulations across nearly 100 export markets, and an increasing focus on sustainability, technology has become a strategic enabler

HISASHI TAKUUCHI |  
MD AND CEO, MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA

Budget 2026 gives us the chance to create a future-ready, competitive workforce, strengthen supply chains, and position India as a global leader

RAVIKANTH YAMARTHY |  
CEO, LOGISTICS SECTOR SKILL COUNCIL

RESULTS CORNER

BoB Q3 net profit inches up 4.39%

**Mumbai:** State-run Bank of Baroda Friday reported a 4.39 per cent increase in consolidated net profit for the December quarter at ₹5,443 crore, helped by lower provisions as net interest margin compression held back core income growth. On a standalone basis, its net profit grew to ₹5,055 crore as against ₹4,837 crore in the year-ago period. The core net interest income grew by just 0.1 per cent to ₹11,800 crore despite a nearly 15 per cent growth in advances, as a 0.25 per cent compression in the net interest margin at 2.79 per cent held back the number.

Nalco profit rises 2% to ₹1,595cr

**New Delhi:** State-owned Nalco Friday reported a 1.8 per cent rise in consolidated profit at ₹1,595.15 crore for the quarter ended December 31, 2025, on higher revenues. The company had posted a profit of ₹1,566.32 crore in the year-ago period, National Aluminium Company Ltd (Nalco) said in a regulatory filing. Consolidated revenue from operations in the December quarter increased to ₹4,730.95 crore, up from ₹4,662.22 crore in the year-ago period. However, the company's expenses during the quarter increased to ₹2,793.37 crore from ₹2,639.41 crore in the year-ago period.

Google profit flat

**New Delhi:** Google India has posted a flat profit of ₹1,436.9 crore on standalone basis in the financial year 2025 due to decline in revenue and increase in employee and tax expenses, according to a regulatory document shared by market intelligence firm Tofler. The company had posted a total profit after tax of around ₹1,425 crore a year ago. The revenue from operations of Google India declined by 3.2 per cent to ₹5,340 crore during the reported fiscal from ₹5,518 crore in FY24.

Facebook net zooms

**New Delhi:** Facebook India has posted around 28 per cent increase in standalone profit at ₹647.45 crore for financial year ended March 2025, according to the company's regulatory filing shared by Tofler. The company had logged a profit of ₹504.93 crore a year ago.



FDI would come in if your private sector were also investing, but your private sector is not investing

RAGHURAM RAJAN |  
FORMER GOVERNOR, RBI

NSE IPO FINALLY GETS APPROVAL

Capital market regulator Sebi has granted a no-objection certificate to the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to move ahead with its long-awaited initial public offering (IPO), after a decade of delays caused by regulatory concerns and co-location controversy, a top exchange official said Friday. The listing plans of the country's largest bourse, NSE, were on hold since 2016, when the exchange first filed draft offer documents to raise around ₹10,000 crore through an offer for sale by existing shareholders



METALS MELTDOWN

Bullions sink on profit-taking

■ Gold plunges by ₹14K to ₹1,69,000 per 10 grams ■ Silver tanks by ₹20K to ₹3,84,500 per kilogram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** Gold prices tumbled by ₹14,000 per 10 grams and silver prices tanked by ₹20,000 per kg in the national capital Friday as investors booked heavy profits amid weak global trends and a rebound in the US dollar.

According to the marketmen, gold of 99.9 per cent purity plunged by ₹14,000, or 7.65 per cent, to ₹1,69,000 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). The precious metal had hit an all-time high of ₹1,83,000 per 10 grams on Thursday, after rising by ₹12,000.

Silver tumbled by ₹20,000, or nearly 5 per cent, to ₹3,84,500 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had soared ₹19,500 to hit a record of ₹4,04,500 per kg in the previous market session.

"Gold and silver experienced a significant correction on Friday as investors moved to aggressively book profits following a recent record-breaking rally. This decline was mainly fuelled by the heavy liquidation of long



positions by large institutional players, who sought to secure gains after a strong multi-session advance," Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that a recovery in the US dollar placed further pressure on bullion. "From a technical standpoint, both gold and silver had been trading in overbought territory over the past several sessions, heightening the risk of a corrective move."

The combination of stretched

technical conditions, institutional profit-taking, and a recovery in the US dollar that is likely to continue adds pressure on bullion in the short term, Gandhi said.

In the international market, spot gold was trading 5.31 per cent lower, or \$285.30, to \$5,087.73 per ounce. The yellow metal tumbled by \$425.86, or 7.92 per cent, to hit an intraday low of \$4,945.26 per ounce.

"Gold slipped below \$5,100 per ounce and silver dipped below USD 105 per ounce amid

Five retired members of CMPDI honoured

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Ranchi, Jan 30:** A farewell-cum-honour ceremony was organised at the institute's Mayuri Hall Thursday to mark the retirement of five members of the Central Mine Planning and Design Institute (CMPDI) family.

Those honoured included Om Prakash (Chief Medical Officer), Mamta Gupta (UDC), Amita Mehta (UDC), Dinesh Kujur (Coal Sampling Technician) and Bhola Ram.

On the occasion, CMPDI Chairman-cum-Managing Director Chaudhary Shivraj Singh, Director (Technical/CRD) Shankar Nagachari, Director (Technical/ES) Rajiv Kumar Sinha, Director (Techni-

cal/RD&T) Nripendra Nath and Chief Vigilance Officer Pankaj Kumar jointly honoured the retiring employees on behalf of the company by presenting them with saplings, citations, mementoes and shawls. They lauded the contributions of the retirees and wished them a bright future, good health, happiness and a long life.

Union representatives Satish Kumar Singh, Pralay Bhattacharjee, Souvik Bhushan Dev and Tuklal, along with CMOAI representative Ram Swaroop Khileri, also shared their views on the occasion. The welcome address, stage management and vote of thanks were delivered by Deputy Manager (Official Language) Abhay Mishra.



BUDGET AHEAD

Nifty, Sensex fall over 3%, mark steepest monthly drop since February 2025

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** Indian equity benchmarks logged their biggest monthly loss in nearly a year, as lingering uncertainty over US trade policy and a subdued earnings season triggered sustained foreign selling ahead of the federal budget Sunday.

The Nifty 50 lost 3.1% to 25,320.65 and the BSE Sensex lost 3.5% to 82,269.78, marking their steepest monthly drop since February 2025.

On the day, the two benchmarks slipped 0.4% each.

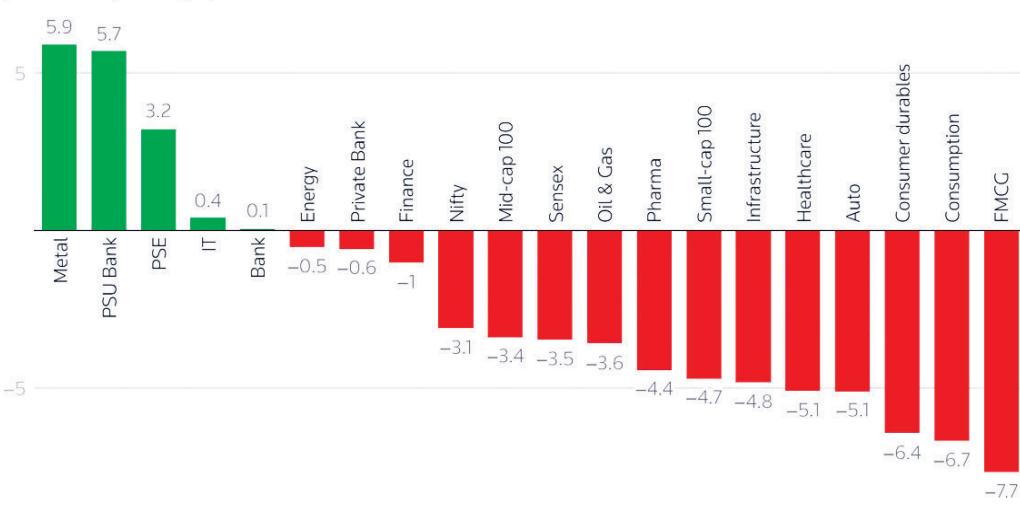
Foreign investors sold \$4 billion worth of domestic equities this month, which also pushed the rupee to fresh record low.

"Earnings have been anemic and there is little for foreign investors to get excited about at current valuations, especially when other North Asian markets offer

Indices log steep monthly loss in nearly a yr

Performance of India's key stock indexes in January 2026

(% monthly change)



Source: Exchange data

better value and exposure to themes such as artificial intelligence," said Sat Duhra, portfolio manager at Janus Henderson Investors.

The US tariff impasse has further dampened risk appetite,

Duhra said.

Broader Asian markets gained 9.4% in January. Eleven of the 16 major sectors logged monthly losses.

Fast-moving consumer goods lost 7.7%. Cigarette maker ITC fell



outs underway across major cities. The early-bird offer has been introduced to make the new electric scooter even more accessible for customers seeking convenient, independent and sustainable urban mobility.

Designed specifically for everyday city riding, the Chetak C25 brings a youthful and contemporary character to the iconic Chetak brand while staying true to its core values of solidity, sturdiness and reliability. The scooter features a premium all-metal body, clean monobody design and vibrant colour options, giving it a refined yet modern road presence. Its compact proportions and agile handling make it well-suited for congested urban environments.

Powering the Chetak C25 is

₹ hits intraday record low of 92.02 against \$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Jan 30:** The rupee Friday hit its record low of 92.02 before ending 6 paise higher at 91.93 against the US dollar amid a firm American currency and geopolitical uncertainties.

Forex traders said a negative trend in domestic equities weighed on investor sentiment and capped gains in the domestic currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened strong at 91.89 and further strengthened to 91.82 against the greenback. However, it weakened later in the session to touch its lowest-ever level of 92.02 before ending at 91.93, registering a gain of 6 paise from the previous closing level.

On Thursday, the rupee ended flat at its lowest level of 91.99 against the dollar. The currency recorded its previous lowest level of 92 a dollar on January 23.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.45 per cent higher at 96.57.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading 0.96 per cent lower at USD 70.03 per barrel in futures trade.

On the domestic equity mar-



Indian rupee recovered from all-time lows on an overnight decline in crude oil and commodity prices. However, recovery in the US dollar index and FI outflows capped sharp gains. The dollar index rose after Donald Trump said that he would announce his nominee to head the US Federal Reserve

ANU CHOUDHARY | RESEARCH ANALYST,  
MIRAE ASSET SHAREKHAN

ket front, Sensex declined 296.59 points or 0.36 per cent to settle at 82,269.78, while the Nifty fell 98.25 points or 0.39 per cent to 25,320.65.

Foreign institutional investors turned net buyers and purchased equities worth ₹2,251.37 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

Centre's fiscal deficit at 54.5% of FY target

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The Centre's fiscal deficit at the end of December stood at ₹8.55 lakh crore, or 54.5 per cent of the annual budget target for 2025-26 compared to 56.7 per cent in the year-ago period, government data released Friday showed.

The Centre estimates the fiscal deficit (the gap between expenditure and revenue) during 2025-26 at 4.4 per cent of GDP, or ₹15.69 lakh crore.

According to data released by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), the central government received ₹25.25 lakh crore or 72.2 per cent of the corresponding budget estimates (BE) of 2025-26 of total receipts up to December 2025.

It comprised ₹19.39 lakh crore of tax revenue (net to Centre), ₹5.39 lakh crore of non-tax revenue, and ₹46,047 crore of non-debt capital receipts.

The CGA data showed that ₹10.38 lakh crore was transferred to states as devolution of share of taxes by the central government during April-December, which is ₹1.37 lakh crore higher than the year-ago period.

Total expenditure incurred by the central government was ₹33.8 lakh crore (66.7 per cent of the corresponding BE 2025-26), out of which ₹25.93 lakh crore was on the revenue account and ₹7.87 lakh crore on the capital account. Out of the total revenue expenditure, ₹9.11 lakh crore was on account of interest payments and ₹3.17 lakh crore on major subsidies.

Forex kitty jumps by \$8bn to new all-time high of \$709.413bn

**Mumbai:** India's forex reserves jumped by \$8.053 billion to an all-time high of \$709.413 billion during the week ended January 23, the RBI said Friday. In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had jumped by \$14.167 billion to \$701.36 billion. The reserves had touched an all-time high of \$704.89 billion in September 2024, but had been under pressure lately, especially as the currency buffers got deployed to check undue volatilities in the rupee amid sharp depreciation. During the week ended January 23, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, jumped by \$2.367 billion to \$562.885 billion, the data released by the central bank showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effects of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units, such as the euro, pound, and yen, held in the foreign exchange reserves. Value of the gold reserves jumped by \$5.635 billion to \$123.088 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$33 million to \$18.737 billion, the apex bank said. India's reserve position with the IMF was also up by \$18 million to \$4.703 billion in the reporting week, according to the apex bank's data.



# Vintage Djoko meets prodigy Alcaraz

REUTERS

**Melbourne, Jan 30:** Novak Djokovic channelled his halcyon days in a five-set classic to dethrone Jannik Sinner and become the oldest man to reach the Australian Open final in the professional era at a rocking Rod Laver Arena.

Four months before his 39th birthday, Djokovic showed he remains unbeatable on his day as he sent the double defending champion packing with a 3-6 6-3 4-6 6-4 6-4 win completed in the early hours of Saturday morning.

"It feels surreal to be honest playing over four hours," Djokovic said on court. "I was reminiscing in 2012 when I played Rafa (Nadal) in the final, that was six hours almost. The level of intensity and quality was high (against Sinner) and that was the only way to have a chance to win. He won the last five matches against me, he had my mobile number, so I had to change my number to-night. Jokes aside I said at the net: 'Thanks for allowing me at least one'. Tremendous respect, an incredible player. He pushed me to the limit, so he deserves applause for his performance."

Djokovic will meet world number one Carlos Alcaraz in Sunday's decider, the Spaniard having fought off Alexander Zverev in the longest Australian Open semi-final.

Eighteen years after his first



## History in making

■ Djokovic dethrones Sinner, becomes oldest man to reach finals at 38

■ Alcaraz beats Zverev in longest SF ever to enter first final, eyes career Grand Slam

Melbourne crown, Djokovic will strive for a record-extending 11th against Alcaraz and the unprecedented 25th Grand Slam title that has eluded him.

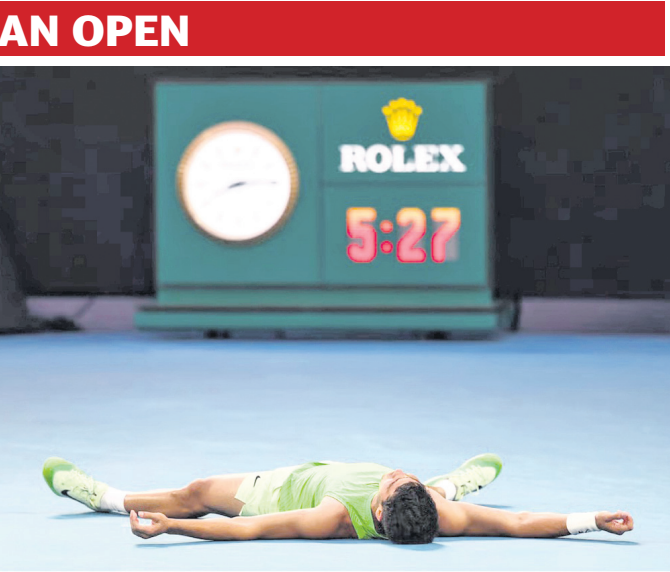
Djokovic needed incredible fortune to reach the semi-finals, with his quarter-final opponent Lorenzo Musetti retiring injured after taking the first two sets.

The Serb enjoyed a walkover in the fourth round as well, when Jakub Mensik pulled out.

But it was hard work and mental toughness that got Djokovic over the line against Sinner, a player who had beaten him in their previous five matches.

Serving for the match at 5-4, Djokovic summoned the grit and champion spirit of 20 years at the top, setting up two match points with a forehand winner down the line.

Sinner saved both but finally fired a backhand wide to concede, leaving Djokovic to throw away his racket, get down on his knees and cross his chest in thanks to the tennis gods.



## Grueling Alcaraz vs Zverev clash

Carlos Alcaraz fought through a leg issue to deliver a 6-4, 7-6(5), 6-7(3), 6-7(4), 7-5 win over Alexander Zverev Friday and reach his first Australian Open final, the Spaniard somehow managing to keep his career Grand Slam bid alive.

The 22-year-old looked concerned and was barely able to move after experiencing the issue at 4-4 in the third set, which he lost in a tiebreak, and he relied on his ball-striking and placement to land winners and prolong the contest.

Alcaraz continued to battle away, seeing off Zverev in the decider and will aim to recover

for a meeting with either Novak Djokovic or Jannik Sinner in Sunday's title clash, where a victory will see him complete his set of majors.

No stranger to epic five-setters on the big stage after his French Open final win over Sinner last year, Alcaraz said belief was the key to prevailing in the longest Australian Open semi-final at five hours and 27 minutes.

"I always say that you have to believe in yourself no matter what you're struggling," Alcaraz said. "I was struggling in the middle of the third set. Physically it was one of the most demanding matches I have ever played in my short career, I would say."

## Gadecki, Peers defend crown

Australia's Olivia Gadecki and John Peers became the first pair in 37 years to successfully defend the Australian Open mixed doubles title Friday, defeating French duo Kristina Mladenovic and Manuel Guinard 4-6 6-3 10-8 in a thrilling final. The wildcard pairing became the first team since Jana Novotna and Jim Pugh in 1989 to retain the crown and the first Australian pair to do so since Margaret Court and Ken Fletcher 62 years ago. "I can't believe we're in this position right now," said Gadecki after claiming her second Grand Slam title alongside Peers, who secured his fourth. "To hold the trophy again this year is incredible. I knew we could do it, but I didn't think we could really do it."



"But, I've been in this kind of situation, this kind of match before. I had to put my heart into the match. I did it, I fought until the last ball... I'm extremely proud of the way that I fought, the way that I came back in the fifth set."

## 5TH T20I

# Men in Blue target series finale win



*Samson's form, Axar's fitness concerns for India against NZ*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 30:** Sanju Samson would expect passionate home support to lift his game even as India fret over Axar Patel's fitness when they wind up their T20 World Cup preparations in the fifth and final T20 International against New Zealand here Saturday.

India were in experimental mode in the fourth T20I at Visakhapatnam, sticking to five front-line bowlers without resorting to all-rounders Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube. The plan didn't yield the desired result as the hosts lost even though the result does not alter the series outcome, which India has already sealed.

As has been the case through this series, the bowling department might see some shake-up again and the management could give a chance to mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy after resting him from the previous two matches. The batting department might not see too many changes,

but the management will keep an eye on Samson. A free-flowing batsman, Samson now appears to be holding the weight of the world on his shoulders.

A laden back-foot, and improper bat swing might require some deep correction ahead of the ICC showpiece starting February 7.

Since Samson is a contender for the pivotal opening slot at the marquee event, the lean patch cannot be allowed to enter a terminal phase.

But in his home town, backed by adoring fans, Samson might just find the lost rhythm.

That he is a superstar in this part of the country was evident from a video that the BCCI shared after the team's arrival.

Skipper Suryakumar Yadav was seen playfully clearing the way for 'Chetta' (elder brother) at the airport exit where hundreds of fans had lined up to catch the glimpse of the local favourite and his teammates.

Beyond the individual scenarios, there are team goals to be achieved. In modern cricket, turnaround time between matches or series is quite tight, and India will play their first game of the T20 World Cup February 7 in Mumbai.

# ASMITA Rugby League-Nat'l for women kicks off in City

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 30:** Over 300 players from 24 teams will be in action at the inaugural edition of the two-day ASMITA Rugby League-National for women starting Saturday at the Kalinga Stadium here.

The tournament is being held under the Sports Authority of India's ASMITA initiative, a flagship programme under the Khelo India scheme for women's sports. The Indian Rugby Football Union is organising it with the support of the Department of Sports and Youth Services (DSYS), Government of Odisha, and the Odisha Rugby Football Association.

The league marks the culmination of a six-month-long, multi-tiered competitive structure aimed at strengthening women's rugby pathways across the country. The league will feature the top eight state teams, which have qualified through



Rugby India's Senior, Junior (U18), and Sub-Junior (U15) National Rugby Sevens Championships (2025-26).

In total, 24 teams comprising 336 players and team officials will participate, making it one of the largest women's rugby events conducted in the country, the SAI said in a statement.

The SAI stated that during the current season, 49 city-level ASMITA leagues and two zonal leagues have been conducted

across the country, with participation from over 8,771 athletes across 858 teams.

"ASMITA has emerged as one of the most impactful women's sports initiatives in the country. The scale of participation we've seen this year - from city leagues to zonal competitions; shows how deeply the programme is resonating on the ground," Rahul Bose, President of the Indian Rugby Football Union, said.

# Young tigresses to battle older girls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pokhara (Nepal), Jan 30:** The Indian U17 women's team will play their first match in the SAFF U19 Women's Championship 2026 against hosts Nepal at the Pokhara Rangasala Stadium here Saturday.

Led by new head coach Pamela Conti, the U17 team is using this higher-age group tournament as part of its preparations for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup that will be held in China from April 30.

At the pre-competition press conference, Conti expressed her excitement ahead of her first tournament with the Young Ti-



gresses. "We are happy to be here in Nepal. I've been with the team for almost a week now, and we've had good training in Anantapur

(Andhra Pradesh). We have a young squad as we are U17, and we'll compete against older girls. Out of the 23 players in the

## THAILAND MASTERS

# DEVIKA ENTERS SF, STUNS SUPANIDA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangkok, Jan 30:** India's Devika Sihag pulled off a big upset at the Thailand Masters Super 300 badminton tournament, stunning home favourite and top seed Supanida Katethong in straight games to reach the women's singles semifinals here Friday.

The 20-year-old unseeded Indian, who claimed her maiden BWF International Challenge title at the Malaysia International last year, kept her composure to seal a 21-19 21-18 victory in the quarterfinals that lasted just 40 minutes.

The world No 63 will face fifth seed Huang Yu-Hsun of Chinese Taipei next.

Devika has been steadily building momentum on the circuit. In August 2025, she won Malaysia International, beating compatriot Isharani



Baruah in the final.

She was also part of the Indian mixed team that won a bronze medal at the 2025 World University Games.

Last season, Devika finished runner-up at the Indonesia Masters Super 100 and reached four finals in 2024, winning titles at the Swedish Open and Portugal International, while finishing second-best at the Estonian International and Dutch International.

# J'khand enjoy slight edge over Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jamshedpur, Jan 30:** Opener Shikhar Mohan made a strokeful 80 off 91 balls which was laced with 14 boundaries and one six to take Jharkhand to 244 for 6 in reply to Odisha's 282 all out in Ranji Trophy here Friday.

Besides Mohan, wicket-keeper Kumar Kushagra (47), skipper Virat Singh (32) and Robin Minz (37 not out) also made useful contributions with the bat.

Right-arm fast bowler Rajesh Mohanty (237) picked up two wickets for Odisha.

Earlier resuming at the overnight score of 241 for 6, Odisha finished at 282 with opener Swastik Samal (79) and Govinda Poddar (64) making significant contributions.

**Brief scores: Odisha** 282 all out in 104.5 overs (Swastik Samal 79, Govinda Poddar 64; Saurabh Shekhar 3/43) vs **Jharkhand** 244 for 6 in 67 overs (Shikhar Mohan 80; Sayed Tufayl Ahmad 3/73).



## T20 WC

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Jan 30:** The uncertainty surrounding Pakistan's participation in the ICC T20 World Cup 2026 has sparked widespread trolling on social media, with Iceland and Uganda Cricket leading the charge with humorous posts on replacing Pakistan that quickly went viral.

The situation arose after Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi cast doubts over the team's participation in the global event, citing support for Bangladesh, who were replaced by Scotland in the tournament

lineup.

Bangladesh had earlier appealed to the International Cricket Council (ICC) to relocate their matches from India to Sri Lanka, citing security concerns.

However, the global body rejected the request, resulting in Bangladesh's exclusion from the competition.

Amid the uncertainty, Iceland Cricket took a tongue-in-cheek swipe at the PCB, joking that they were prepared to step in should Pakistan withdraw from the tournament.

"We really need Pakistan to decide soon upon their par-



ticipation in the T20 WC. We are ready to take off as soon

as they pull out on 2nd Feb, but the flight schedule is a lo-

gistical nightmare to get us to Colombo in good time for 7th Feb. Our opening bat is an insomniac!" Iceland Cricket wrote on X.

Iceland Cricket later announced its "withdrawal" from contention, explaining that its players were amateurs with full-time professions and could not suddenly travel across the world.

The post cited bakers, ship captains and bankers among the squad and concluded, "Our loss is likely Uganda's gain."

Soon after, Uganda Cricket joined the banter with a witty post on Thursday, declaring

its readiness to step in if an opportunity arose.

"If a T20 World Cup seat opens, Uganda is ready, packed, and padded. Passports warm (not ice). No bakers leaving ovens or ships U-turning. Heat, noise, pressure? We'll bring the bold kit," Uganda Cricket wrote.

Despite announcing its squad for the T20 World Cup, Pakistan's participation remains uncertain.

PCB chief Naqvi has also met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the matter, with a final decision expected by Friday or Monday.