



Shriya's perception

Actor Shriya Saran believes that being boxed into a particular image is more about perception than limitation

LEISURE | P2



Iran's condition

Iran says it's ready for 'fair' talks with US but not on defence capabilities

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Bullions bloodbath

Gold prices tumble by ₹14,000 per 10 grams and silver prices tank by ₹20,000 per kg as investors book heavy profits

BUSINESS | P11



Clash of Titans

Carlos Alcaraz will face Novak Djokovic for the Australian Open title in an epic experience versus youth showdown

SPORTS | P12

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CM TO PRESENT BUDGET FEB 20

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Legislative Assembly will convene its Budget Session for 2026 from February 17, according to the official schedule released by the State Parliamentary Affairs Department. The session will continue till April 8 and will be held in two phases, comprising a total of 29 working days, providing legislators sufficient time for debate and legislative business. A key highlight of the session will be the presentation of the State Budget for 2026-27 by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who also holds the Finance portfolio. The budget is scheduled to be tabled in the Assembly February 20.



SOAKED PROTEST: Water cannons being used to disperse Indian Youth Congress activists during their protest march to the Kerala Health Minister Veena George's residence in Thiruvananthapuram, Friday

PTI PHOTO

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Social media must be age-restricted. Anything critical of the govt should not reach those aged 18 and above

SC orders free pads for schoolgirls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Declaring the right to menstrual health as part of the right to life under the Constitution, the Supreme Court on Friday directed all states and Union Territories to provide free oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins to girl students and functional, gender-segregated toilets for all the students.

In a landmark judgment to ensure gender justice and educational equity, a bench comprising Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan issued a slew

of directions to all states and UTs to ensure that these facilities are provided in schools irrespective of whether they are government-run, aided or private.

The verdict, authored by Justice Pardiwala, warns of stringent consequences for non-compliance, including the de-recognition of private schools and holding state governments directly accountable for failures in public institutions.

"The right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution includes the right to menstrual health; access to safe, effective and affordable menstrual hy-

giene management measures helps a girl child attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. The right to healthy reproductive life embraces the right to access education and information about sexual health," the bench held.

"As regards the availability of menstrual absorbent, we direct that all states and Union Territories shall ensure that every school where the government-run or privately managed in both urban and rural areas provides oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins manufactured in compliance free of cost," it ordered. **P9**

SHRI JAGANNATH DARSHAN YOJANA

GOVT SEEKS PEOPLE'S NOD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The scheme aims to facilitate economically weaker senior citizens and widows of all ages to have a darshan of Lord Jagannath in Puri.
- Nearly 1,00,000 beneficiaries will be selected from across the state while the scheme is on.
- Without consent, beneficiaries cannot avail facilities under the ambitious initiative.

has remained unsatisfactory in most districts."

Concerned over the delay in implementation of the scheme, a fresh letter was issued to district authorities to ensure that the people get benefits. District Social Security Officers (DSSOs), and Tourism Development Officers to take immediate action, the letter said.

Tourism Director Deepankar Mohapatra in the letter said that the scheme aims to benefit 5,000 people in 2025-26 fiscal and 30,000 in 2026-27 financial year. The scheme is to remain effective till 2028-29 fiscal. A total of approximately 1,00,000 beneficiaries will be selected from across the state during the duration of the scheme, an official said.

The Tourism department, in a letter to all district collectors said, "Despite earlier instructions to collect consent during pension distribution on January 15, 2026, progress

Kendrapara: 3 Bangla nationals deported

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 staying, 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 living 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 papers and were kept in custody before being deported, officials said.

\$ now ₹92.02

Mumbai: The rupee on 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. 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.

P11



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ARIES

A tough, action-packed day ahead! There may be a 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. Theteaders 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 drift 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, 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.

AGENCIES



HOW CAMERA CHANGED SHARVARI'S PERSPECTIVE

light and fleeting moments. Developed magical, her respect for and the power of a

A second-hand Nikon 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.

AGENCIES

FM10 later became

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She now observes architecture, urban design, moods

and human connections more deeply.

Sara's euphoric moment

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.

AGENCIES



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 aftermath 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.



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AGENCIES

FUN POST

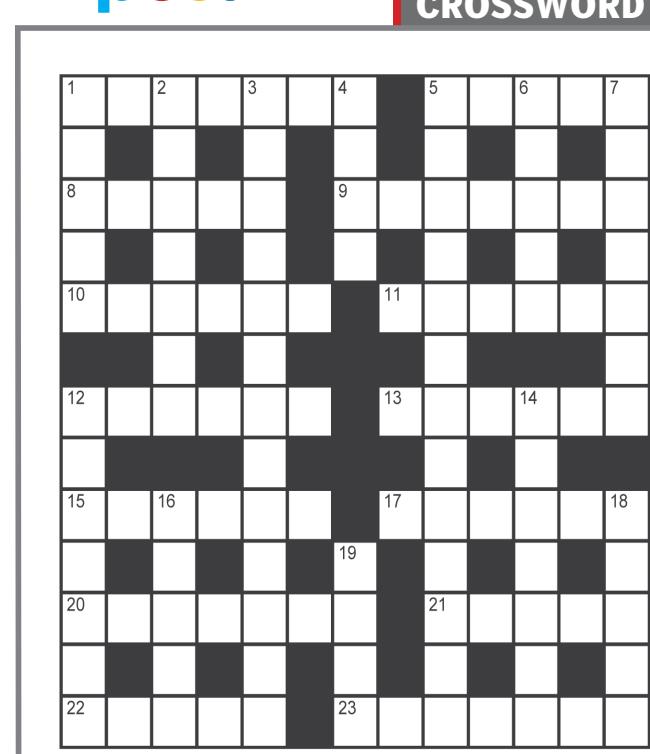
PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES



BREVITY



Across

- 1 Rhone town
- 5 Feather boa
- 8 Rhino relative
- 9 Fierce
- 10 Easement
- 11 On fire
- 12 Literary genre
- 13 Non-stop
- 15 Song part
- 17 Worthy principles
- 20 Restaurant boast
- 21 Musical composition
- 22 Jargon
- 23 Firmness of purpose
- 24 Step-by-step
- 25 Side dish
- 26 Jacket material
- 27 Kind of jet

Down

- 2 Shade of blue
- 4 Skier's problem
- 6 Boxing venue
- 7 Athlete's aim
- 12 Places fit for a king
- 14 Fragrant oil
- 15 Desire

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

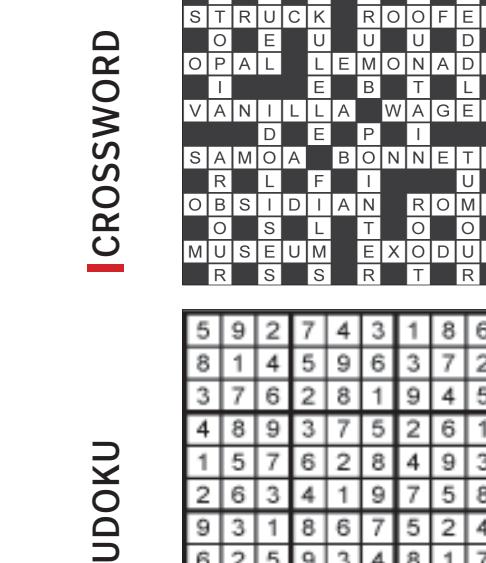
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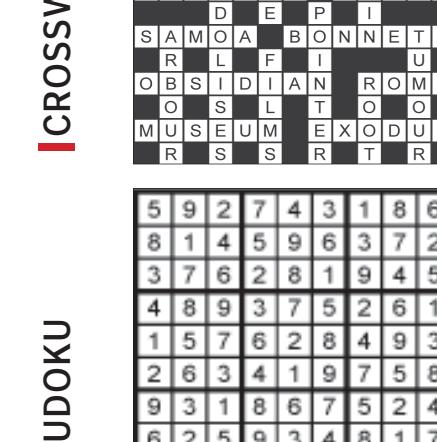
To solve the Sudoku puzzle, fill in the boxes in such a manner that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



SOLUTIONS



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



downtown

HC upholds two-child norm for GP member

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



What the court said

Elected representatives, especially at grassroots level, are expected to set an example by adhering to family planning norms

If they themselves violate the norm, what example can they set before the public?

Today's demographic realities in India would have invited even sharper criticism from Winston Churchill, who had said, "India is not a nation but mere population"

after, provided no additional child was born later. Since the appellant's case clearly fell outside this framework, the court held that he squarely attracted the disqualification clause.

In a strongly worded section titled "A Fragment on the Laudable Policy of Family Planning & Its Dire Need", Justice Dixit underlined the constitutional and social importance of population control.

Recalling Winston Chur-

chill's remark that "India is not a nation but mere population", made during colonial rule when its population was far smaller before partition, Justice Dixit observed that today's demographic realities would have invited even sharper criticism from Churchill, highlighting the urgency of effective population regulation.

Quoting earlier judgements, international reports, and thinkers such as Malthus and Bertrand Russell, Justice Dixit highlighted the dangers of overpopulation, including pressure on natural resources, environmental degradation, and obstacles to socio-economic development.

Referring to the 42nd Constitutional Amendment, which introduced "Population Control and Family Planning" in the Concurrent List, Justice Dixit said the provision reflects a conscious policy decision to curb unchecked population growth.

It cited UNFPA and World Health Organisation (WHO) data showing India's rapidly growing population and noted that Odisha is among the priority states for addressing demographic challenges.

The bench observed that elected representatives, especially at the grassroots level, are expected to set an example by adhering to family planning norms. "If they themselves violate the norm, what example can they set before the public?" it remarked, echoing earlier judicial pronouncements.

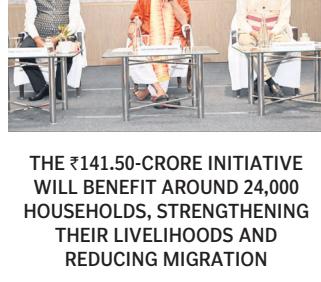
BJD seeks proper probe into death at min's residence

PTI & UNI

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: A day after the electrocution death of a 46-year-old man working as a domestic help at the official residence of Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krishna Chandra Patra in the City, Opposition BJD Friday termed the incident 'serious and alarming' and demanded a proper investigation to fix responsibility.

Senior BJD leader Sanjay Das Burma sharply criticised the BJP government for the hurried manner in which the body of Shankarshank Nag, a native of the Belpahar area in Bolangir district, was handed over to his family. While reports suggest the death was caused by an electric shock, Das Burma described it as a 'serious and alarming incident' at a government residence, pointing to a potential security lapse. He emphasised the need for a thorough investigation to determine the cause of death and fix responsibility.

Das Burma also alleged that media representatives were prevented from speaking to the family during the handover of the body, suggesting attempts to conceal details.



THE ₹141.50-CRORE INITIATIVE WILL BENEFIT AROUND 24,000 HOUSEHOLDS, STRENGTHENING THEIR LIVELIHOODS AND REDUCING MIGRATION

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, who also holds the Agriculture and Farmers' Empowerment portfolio, emphasised the need for proactive drought management.

Building resilience is essential for protecting livelihoods and strengthening the rural economy," Singh Deo said, calling upon all stakeholders to work in convergence for effective implementation of the programme on the ground.

Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment department) Arbinda Kumar Padhee highlighted the programme's focus on science-led planning, convergence and community ownership.

The ₹141.50-crore initiative will benefit around 24,000 households, strengthening their livelihoods and reducing migration, it said.

State launches drought mitigation programme

PNN & AGENCIES



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Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment department) Arbinda Kumar Padhee highlighted the programme's focus on science-led planning, convergence and community ownership.

The ₹141.50-crore initiative will benefit around 24,000 households, strengthening their livelihoods and reducing migration, it said.

Rejuvenation of urban parks on cards

POST NEWS NETWORK



assets that reflect the overall quality of urban governance and contribute significantly to citizens' health and well-being, the H&UD Minister directed the department to prepare a comprehensive, time-bound action plan for the beautification, modification and holistic improvement of parks across all ULBs of the coastal state.

Mahapatra laid special emphasis on the upkeep of statues installed in parks, stating that statues of eminent personalities and historical figures must be

preserved with dignity and due respect. He observed that negligence in this regard amounts to disregard for public sentiment and cultural heritage.

Mahapatra directed the department to issue clear and immediate instructions to all ULBs, defining responsibilities, timelines and quality benchmarks for park rejuvenation. He also called for regular monitoring, periodic inspections and adequate budgetary planning to ensure sustainable improvements rather than one-time cosmetic measures.

Taking a stern view of administrative lapses, the H&UD Minister warned of strict disciplinary action against officials and agencies found responsible for substandard maintenance or dereliction of duty. He made it clear that accountability would be fixed wherever shortcomings are identified.

Reaffirming the state government's commitment to building clean, green, inclusive and citizen-friendly urban spaces, Mahapatra stated that well-maintained parks play a crucial role in promoting public health, environmental sustainability and community well-being. He stressed that citizens across Odisha must be provided with safe, accessible and aesthetically pleasing public spaces.

The department has been directed to take prompt follow-up action and ensure effective implementation of the minister's directives in a mission-mode approach.

SPIRITUAL MEET

Followers of Swami Nigamananda Saraswati pull the chariot of the seeker to the 75th State-level Devotees' Convention organised by Nilachala Saraswati Sangha at Talabania Ground in Puri Friday



RICH TRIBUTES: (From Left) Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati and Speaker Surama Padhy pay tributes at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on Assembly premises in Bhubaneswar Friday

OP PHOTO

Gandhi's philosophy foundation of govt, society: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

On the death anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi ji, I offered floral tributes at his statue in Odisha Legislative Assembly. In the august presence of the Hon'ble Speaker, Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, ministers, as leaders across party lines offered their tributes to the Father of the Nation on his death anniversary.

X

At a function held on the Assembly premises, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, CM Majhi, Speaker Surama Padhy, Deputy CM Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, ministers, MLAs and others, paid their tribute to Gandhi.

Majhi said, "Today, on the occasion of National Martyrs' Day, I paid my respects by paying floral tributes to the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Odisha Assembly. Along with this, I paid my humble tribute to the immortal martyrs who sacrificed their all for the freedom and security of the country and paid my humble tribute to their boundless courage and patriotism.

"Bapu's philosophy of non-violence and humanity is the foundation of our governance and society. The determination and sacrifice of the martyrs will always guide us to build a strong nation. We will continue

to make efforts towards building a peaceful, prosperous and developed Odisha by honouring their sacrifices."

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly and BJD president Naveen Patnaik said, "Humble tributes to the Father of the Nation, #MahatmaGandhi, on his death anniversary, observed as #MartyrsDay. His ideals of #Ahimsa, truth, and peace continue to be the guiding light for humanity. His luminous legacy transcends time and geography. On this day, salute to the freedom fighters whose supreme sacrifice secured our nation's independence."

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CBI raids MCL coal mines, 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 Garjanbhal 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 Garjanbhal 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.

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

CM launches ₹492cr projects for Ganjam



42 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 Munzat 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

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 Gosainuagaon police limits in Berhampur.

Additional District Judge-III, Berhampur, Bibaswati 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 Gosainuagaon 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 Gosainuagaon 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 Gosainuagaon 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 undertrial 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.

During the trial, statements of 41 witnesses were recorded. Four accused, who were lodged as undertrial 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.

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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.

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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

A n aged farmer and his wife were leaning 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!

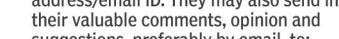


TO THE EDITOR

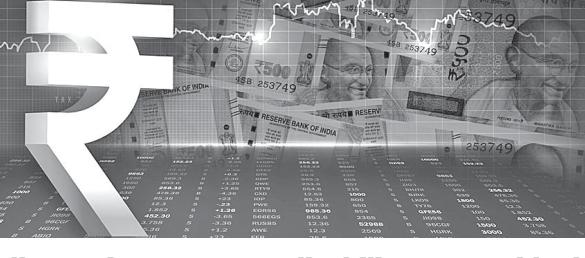
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THE BLIND SPOT



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

Every February, the Union Budget acts as a national reflection. Ministries examine it for approval, sectors look to it for support, and citizens search for hope in the details. Departments like railways, agriculture, and education receive specific budget allocations, each backed by sector experts and political supporters. However, amidst these carefully considered goals, nearly 2.7 crore Indians with disabilities remain overlooked, financially invisible, administratively lost, and politically sidelined, as India lacks a dedicated disability budget. This gap is not just a simple oversight. It highlights a troubling truth: disability does not fit into India's development discussions. Persons with disabilities (PwDs) are among the country's most vulnerable and economically marginalized groups. They appear in policy statements but are absent from financial planning.

Globally, development economists recognise disability inclusion as foundational to human capital formation and poverty reduction. India, however, 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. Funds are fragmented across ministries without a unified accounting or outcome framework. The result is predictably grim. Allocations for implementing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act have fallen sharply—from Rs 240.39 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 135.33 crore in 2024-25, a staggering decline of nearly 43% in just two years. Even these reduced allocations remain partially unspent. What is more alarming is not merely the shrinking envelope, but the absence of accountability. There is no

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

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

SPECTRUM INCOME INEQUALITY

Bridging India's wealth divide



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

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. Amartya Sen, 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 Dhan Yojana, 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,

providing a better life and evolving ways and means of widening livelihood opportunities for the marginalised and the impoverished sections of society is, no doubt, the only way of bridging the increasing inequality.

In this context, the Centre has to increase its share of the then popular MGNREGS, now Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeeyika Mission, to at least 80 percent if it wants the programme to be successful and not overburden the cash-starved states. It would also be judicious to start another such programme in the semi-urban areas.

It is widely acknowledged that inequality is a global phenomenon; however, the gap between the wealthy and the poor—as well as income disparities between urban and rural populations and between organized and unorganized sector workers—must be addressed. Achieving this requires strong political commitment and the implementation of an effective, gradual policy framework by the government. Will the forthcoming budget mark the beginning of such efforts?

INFRA

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 varieties 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

Time to fix Hasina case

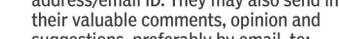
Sir, It is highly condemnable that Hindus are being targeted by fanatics in Bangladesh and that their establishments have been burnt down. The interim government should bring the criminals to book and initiate stern action against them. That said, we should also admit that Hindus are being attacked in 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

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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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," Gujarat told PTI Thursday at Baramati.

Asked whether he had discussed the issue with Sharad Pawar, Gujarat, 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



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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 Shiva Kumar in his post.

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

"Mr @TVMohandasPai, Our

BMTC 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 Sharad 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 Ganthihole 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-

nomic 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 Raajneesh 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/Bodies/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.

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."



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

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national

of the day quote

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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 (NWKRCT) 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

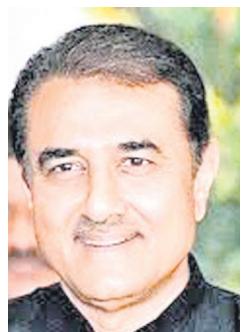
Jaipur: Rajasthan Police has arrested a 28-year-old man from the border district of Jaisalmer on charges of spying for Pakistan's intelligence agency, officials said Friday. The accused was found to be allegedly involved in anti-national activities and sharing strategically sensitive and confidential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



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 VD 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."



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.

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

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

The high-stakes Kerala Assembly polls are scheduled to be held in the next three months and are very crucial for the Congress as it seeks to wrest power from the Left, which has been in power in the state for a decade

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

Tharoor's praise for Rahul 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

the people. "So, he will be at the forefront of the election campaign. He is also part of the Congress party in Kerala and will be more active in the state because of the elections. For the next two months, he will be here," Satheesan said.

He added that the party is planning to take him to all 140 assembly constituencies in Kerala.

The high-stakes Kerala Assembly polls are scheduled to be held in the next three months and are very crucial for the Congress as it seeks to wrest power from the Left, which has been in power in the state for a decade.



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. 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-

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 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 decision

SNIPPETS

Kolkata fire: Adhikari leads rally

Kolkata: Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari Friday led a procession of hundreds of party supporters at Narendrapur near Kolkata, demanding the arrest of the owners of a city-based popular food chain following the death of several of their labourers in a devastating fire. Supporting Adhikari, party colleague Amit Malya described the blaze as 'man-made', caused by illegal warehouses operating without fire safety norms. The fire broke out in the early hours of January 26 at the warehouses of a momo manufacturing unit and a decorator at Nazirabad within Narendrapur police station limits. Adhikari alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) was shielding those responsible for the tragedy and showing insensitivity, claiming that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had not visited the site even five days after the incident, while rescue and search operations were still underway.

Foundation stone laid for Tathagat Global Gurukulam in Chhattisgarh

Haridwar: In a significant step to enhance last-mile access to quality education, the foundation stone (Bhoomi Puja) for Tathagat Global Gurukulam was ceremoniously laid at Bheja Jungli, a remote tribal village in the Gurukulam development block of Balod district. The ceremony was graced by NP Singh, Chairman of the Indian Education Board and Patron of Tathagat

Trust, alongside GR Rana, former Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. Ahead of the foundation ceremony, traditional rituals were performed with prayers to Raja Rao Baba and Kankalin Mata, followed by floral tributes to the portrait of tribal freedom fighter Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh, reinforcing the cultural and historical significance of the initiative.



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.

national



THE MODI GOVERNMENT HAS SYSTEMATICALLY WEAKENED THE RTI ACT -- OVER 26,000 PENDING CASES AS OF 2025. In 2019, the Modi Government hacked away at the RTI Act, seizing control over Information Commissioners' tenure and pay, converting independent watchdogs into submissive functionaries

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

DELHI'S WATER BILL SURCHARGE WAIVER SCHEME EXTENDED

The Delhi government has extended the deadline for its Late Payment Surcharge Waiver Scheme (LPSC) on water bills to August 15, minister Parvesh Verma said on Friday, while noting that more than three lakh people have availed the benefits of the scheme till now

**ASSAM ASSEMBLY POLLS****Shah ramps up BJP's campaign**

Shri Amit S

In the presence of Dr Hiranta Sarma

Shri Amit S

11:00 AM

Shri Amit S

Total cost of pu

₹ 1,700 Crore

Shri Amit S

international



American citizens will be very shortly able to go to Venezuela, and they'll be safe there

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

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



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

REUTERS

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

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 overpowers 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.



"President Trump's efforts to decouple the United States from China are also decoupling the United States from the world," Quelch added.

STARMER SCORES WINS ON VISA, WHISKY

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

■ 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, security

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-

ond largest economy, Starmer secured 30-day visa-free access for Britons travelling to China and lower tariffs on whisky, while British drugmaker AstraZeneca unveiled a \$15 billion investment in China. He got nothing beyond "frank dialogue" on tension arising from China's increasingly assertive stance on Taiwan, its stronger ties with Russia after the Ukraine invasion and a rights crackdown on Britain's former colony of Hong Kong.

British and US politicians who criticised Starmer's trip also aired accusations of espionage and human rights abuse, which Beijing denies.

And even before Starmer has wrapped up his China visit, Trump warned Britain it was dangerous to get into business with Beijing, after the prime minister extolled the economic benefits of resetting relations with China.

Trump nominates Kevin Warsh as next Fed chair

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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.

Iran rejects US demand

Iran ready for 'fair' talks with US but not on defence capabilities

REUTERS



- US military deployments expand amid tensions
- Trump said he planned to speak with Tehran
- Turkey offers to facilitate US-Iran dialogue

sive and missile capabilities — and Iran's missiles — will never be the subject of any negotiations," he added.

"We will preserve and expand our defensive capabilities to whatever extent is necessary to defend the country," Araqchi said.

Regional allies, including Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, have been engaging in diplomatic efforts to prevent a military confrontation between Washington and Tehran.

In response to US threats of military action, Araqchi said Tehran was ready for either negotiations or warfare, and also ready to engage with regional countries to promote stability and peace.

Araqchi and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said they had been speaking

to each other almost every day to discuss the tensions.

TURKEY READY TO BE 'FACILITATOR'

US officials say Trump has options but has not decided whether to strike Iran. Trump has repeatedly threatened to intervene if Iran continued to kill protesters in its crackdown on the countrywide demonstrations over economic privations and political repression, but the protests have since abated.

Israel's Ynet news website said Friday that a US Navy destroyer had docked at the Israeli port of Eilat.

NATO member Turkey shares a border with Iran and opposes any foreign intervention there. It has called for US-Iran dialogue to avoid further destabilisation and has been in touch with both sides to seek a solution.

Earlier Friday, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan told his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian in a call that Ankara was ready to play a "facilitator" role between the sides.

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 bombing 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



Guterres warns of UN's 'imminent financial collapse'

REUTERS

peacekeeping budgets.

US President Donald Trump has described the UN as having "great potential" but said it is not fulfilling that, and he has launched a Board of Peace which some fear could undermine the older international body.

Founded in 1945, the UN has 193 member states and works to maintain international peace and security, promote human rights, foster social and economic development, and coordinate humanitarian aid.

In his letter, Guterres said "decisions not to honour assessed contributions that finance a significant share of the approved regular budget have now been formally announced."

He did not say which state or states he was referring to, and a UN spokesperson was not immediately available for comment. Under UN rules, contributions depend on the size of the economy of each member state. The US accounts for 22% of the core budget followed by China with 20%.

GENOCIDE ALLEGATIONS

Rohingya survivors seek justice at UN court



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 counterterrorism operation.

Speaking Friday on the side-

lines of a meeting of survivors of mass atrocities, Yousuf Ali, a 52-year-old Rohingya refugee who says he was tortured by the Myanmar military, said he believed the court would declare a genocide had been committed.

"The world has witnessed us suffering for so many years, how we were deported, how our homes were destroyed and 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".



“
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



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

PYUSH 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 TAKEUCHI |
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.

METALS MELTDOWN**Bullions sink on profit-taking**

Gold plunges by ₹14K to ₹1,69,000 per 10 grams

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," Saumil 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

A few factors have led to the sharp correction in the prices of gold and silver. After the vertical increase in the prices of both bullions, there seems to be some profit booking globally. There were no support prices established at higher levels due to this parabolic rise, so the correction has been steep

VIJAY KUPPA | CEO, INCRED MONEY

continued profit-taking amid Trump and Senate Democrats have reached a tentative deal to avoid a US government shutdown, weighing on safe-haven assets," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said.

On Thursday, gold touched a new record of ₹5,595.02 before settling at ₹5,371.12 per ounce.

Spot silver also dropped ₹14, or 12.09 per cent, to ₹101.47 per ounce, after falling as much as 17.5 per cent in the intraday trade ₹95.26 per ounce in the overseas trade. On Thursday, it hit a fresh peak of ₹121.45 per ounce.

₹ 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.

Foreign 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 FII outflows capped sharp gains. The dollar index rose after Donald Trump said that he would announce his nominee to head the US Federal Reserve

ANUJ 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.

Five retired members of CMPDI honoured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ranchi, Jan 30: A farewell-cum-honour ceremony was organised at the institute's Mayur 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-

All-new Bajaj Chetak C25 rolls out in City with early-bird offer

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Jan 30: Bajaj Auto Ltd, the world's most valuable two-wheeler and three-wheeler manufacturer, has officially commenced retail sales of its all-new electric scooter, the Chetak C25, across India, including at its showroom in Bhubaneswar. Following an impactful national unveiling earlier this week, the new model has already generated strong customer interest across key markets.

To mark the enthusiastic response, Bajaj has announced a limited-period early-bird benefit of ₹4,299 for the first 10,000 customers pan India. Priced at ₹91,399 (ex-showroom Delhi), the Chetak C25 is now available at an effective ex-showroom price of ₹74,600, inclusive of state subsidies and applicable central government schemes.

The Bhubaneswar launch event was attended by senior representatives from Bajaj Auto and its authorised dealer partner, including Rashit Malhotra, ASM (Sales), Bajaj Auto, Mansur Baksh, Managing Director, MSB Automotive, and Saheera Banu, Director, MSB Automotive.

Sales of the Chetak C25 have commenced from Friday, with deliveries and showroom roll-

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 mono-body 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 a 2.5 kWh battery, offering a certified range of up to 113 km, aligned with typical daily commuting needs. Practicality is further enhanced with a 25-litre under-seat boot, while features such as hill-hold assist, guide-me-home lighting and disc brakes add to rider confidence and everyday ease of use.

With the introduction of the C25, Bajaj Auto now offers a complete Chetak portfolio alongside the existing 35 and 30 Series, catering to a wide spectrum of urban mobility requirements.

Backed by Chetak's expanding service network, the C25 combines compact agility with trusted durability, making it an attractive option for first-time EV buyers as well as households looking to add a second scooter for daily city travel.

Indices log steep monthly loss in nearly a yr

Stock markets snap 3-day rally on intense selling in metal, IT stocks

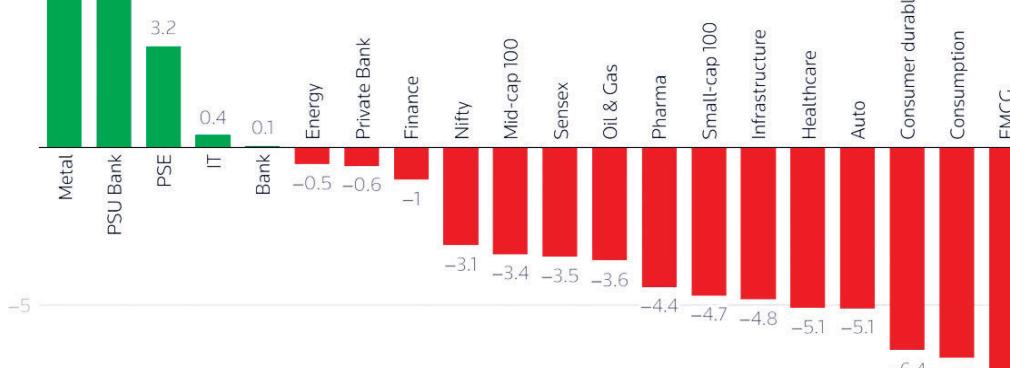
India's equity markets are set to trade Sunday in a special session

respectively.

Investors now turn to the federal budget for cues on growth support from government capex and fiscal discipline. Markets expect higher defence spending to bolster local production as well as targeted support for export-oriented sectors hit by US tariff headwinds.

Index heavyweight Reliance Industries fell 11.1% in January, posting its worst performance in about six years after missing December quarter profit expectations on muted retail segment growth.

On the day, metals slipped 5.2%, the biggest percentage loser among sub-indexes, as profit-taking set in. However, the index has gained 5.9% in January, driven by curbs on some Chinese steel imports and a spike in global prices.

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 damped 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

20.1%, posting its worst monthly drop in more than 25 years, on worries of a hit to future earnings from excise duty on cigarettes effective February 1.

The broader small-caps and mid-caps fell 4.7% and 3.4%,

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 forex 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

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 tonight. 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

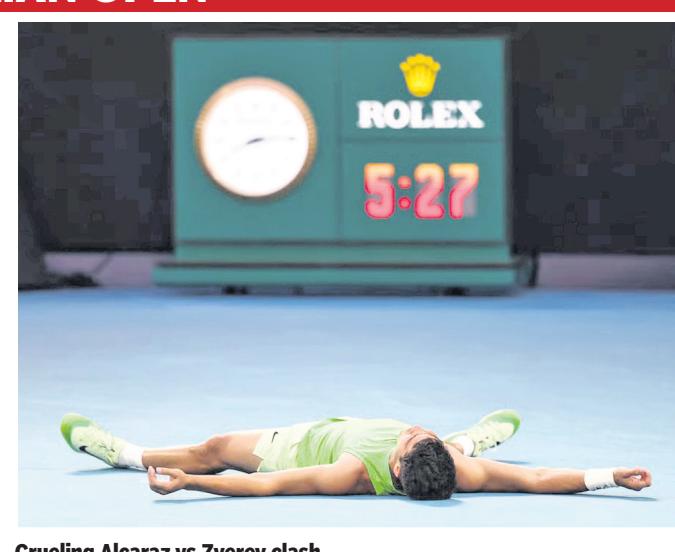
■ Djokovic dethrones Sinner, becomes oldest man to reach finals at 38

■ 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.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN



Grueling Alcaraz vs Zverev clash

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.

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."

Hockey coach Fulton offered to quit post defending Manpreet but HI had last word

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Jan 30: Veteran mid-fielder Manpreet Singh's omission from India's core hockey probables on disciplinary grounds was vehemently opposed by chief coach Craig Fulton, who had threatened to resign before being persuaded to continue by Hockey India, a well-placed source told PTI Friday.

It is reliably learnt that Fulton considered the push to sack Manpreet from the February 1 to 7 camp for 33 core probables in Rourkela as "external interference".

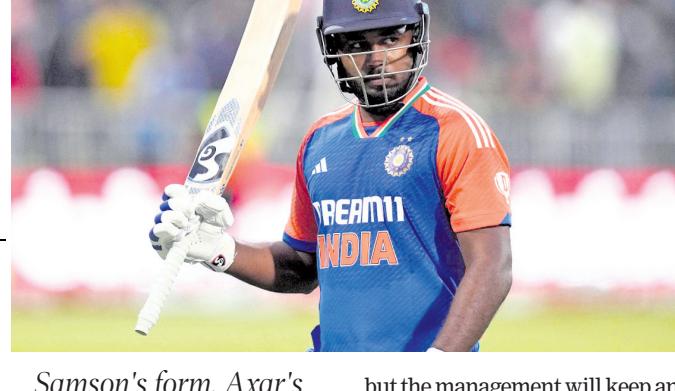
The two-time Olympic bronze-medallist was dropped from core probables for the first time in 15 years after it came to light that he had indulged in the abuse of a recreational drug during the tour of South Africa in December last year.

In the meeting to decide the probables, Fulton was left "disturbed" after Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey, secretary general Bhola Nath Singh and chief selector RP Singh collectively conveyed that Manpreet ought to be omitted.

"Fulton argued from the point of Manpreet being a mentor to younger players. But on that, Dilip said players will learn from other seniors. A few players were unhappy with the way HI behaved with Manpreet," the source said.

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.

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

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



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.

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

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Jamshedpur, Jan 30: Opener Shikhar Mohan made a stroke of 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 the top-two teams February 7.

2

After Nepal, India will face Bangladesh February 2 and Bhutan February.

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 Tu-fayl Ahmad 3/73).



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-



icipation 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 logi-

cal 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.

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.