



Alaya's choices

Actor Alaya F speaks about why exploring darker shades has been a fulfilling decision for her as an actor

LEISURE | P2



Russia-India ties

Russia has not received any statement from India about stopping Russian oil purchases, Kremlin spokesman Peskov says

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Rupee jumps 117 paise

Indian rupee clocks a record gain of 117 paise in a single trading session to settle at 90.32 against the US dollar

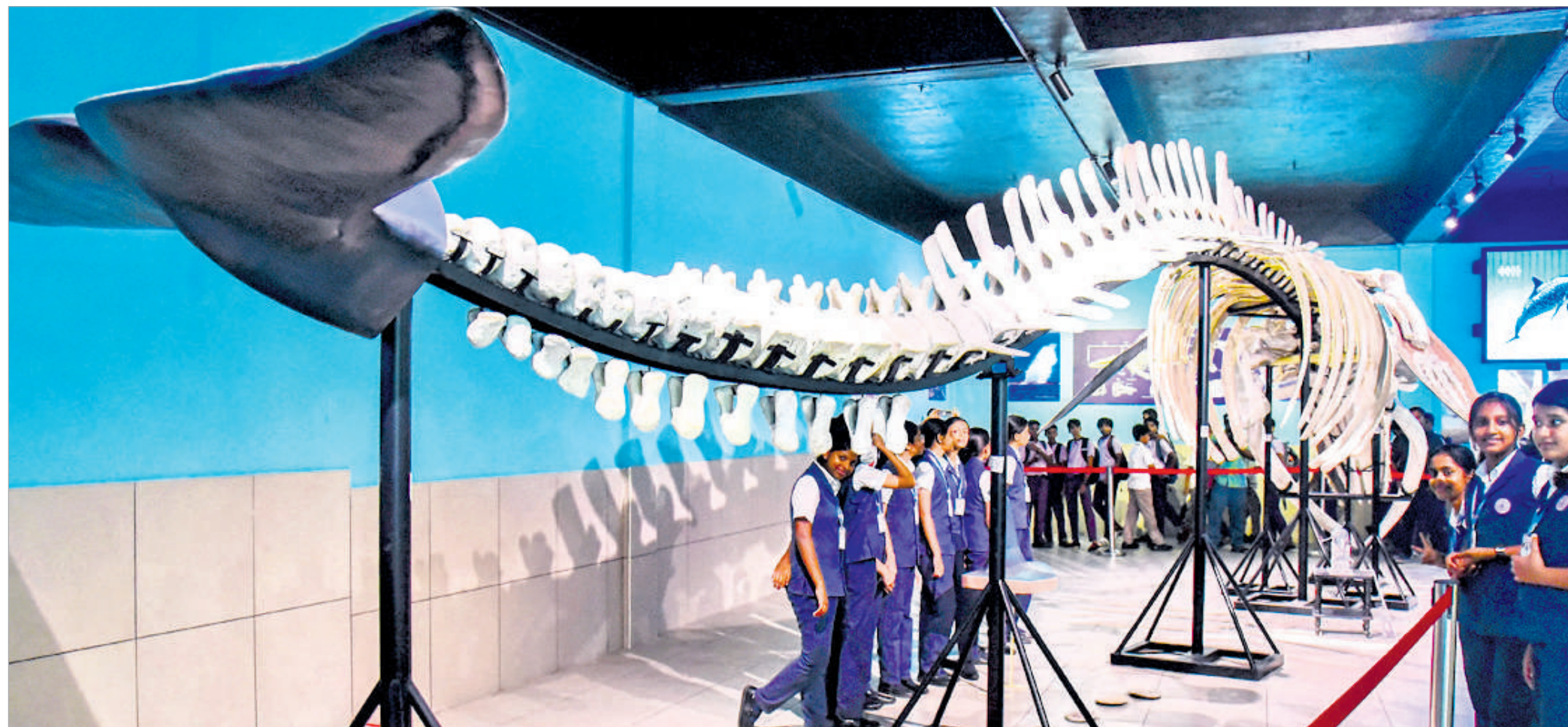
BUSINESS | P11



Bhambri scripts history

Yuki Bhambri rises to career-high ATP world No 20, first Indian men's doubles player since Bopanna

SPORTS | P12



MARINE WONDER: Students admire the skeleton of a blue whale on display during an exhibition on marine life at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Kochi, Tuesday

PTI PHOTO

Khemchand Singh to be new Manipur CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, Feb 3: Y Khemchand Singh was elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party in Manipur Tuesday, paving the way for the formation of a popular government in the northeastern state with him as its head.

“We deeply appreciate the selection of Yumnam Khemchand as the legislature party leader. It has been nearly a year since the state has been under President’s rule. He has one of the cleanest images among the MLAs. He is someone who believes in action rather than words as evident by developmental works in his constituency,” BJP’s Manipur unit spokesperson Laimayum Bashanta Sharma said Tuesday.



IRREGULAR by MANJUL



I know for sure nobody can quote from a book in Parliament. I read it on WhatsApp

SC raps Meta on privacy

Meta Platforms Inc Tuesday drew Supreme Court’s stinging rebukes over its privacy policy, which the top court termed as a ‘decent way of committing theft of private information’. The apex court upheld the Competition Commission of India’s (CCI) finding that Meta had abused its dominant market position and affirmed the penalty of ₹213.14 crore imposed on the social media giant. Expressing serious concern over data privacy, the court categorically stated that Meta cannot be permitted to compromise citizens’ right to privacy under the guise of data sharing. Observing that Meta enjoys a near-monopoly in the market, the bench remarked that merely offering users a choice does not address the issue

PNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Supreme Court Tuesday told Meta Platforms Inc and WhatsApp that they cannot “play with the right to privacy of citizens in the name of data sharing” and alleged that they were creating a monopoly in the market and committing theft of private information of customers.

Decrying WhatsApp’s privacy policy, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi referred to “silent customers” who are unorganised, digitally dependent and unaware of the implications of data-sharing policies, and asserted, “We will not allow the rights of any citizen of this country to be damaged.”

The top court was hearing



the appeals of the tech giants against a Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing a penalty of ₹213.14 crore over the privacy policy.

Emphasising the constitutional right to privacy, the CJI cautioned the companies against treating Indian users’ data as a transferable commercial asset.

“What is the choice? You have a complete monopoly in the market, and you are saying I am giving a choice. It is either you walk out of WhatsApp policy or we will share the data,” the bench said

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), November 4, 2025, set aside a section of a CCI order that had banned the instant messaging app from sharing data with Meta Platforms for advertising purposes for five years, but retained a ₹213-crore penalty on the social media platform.

Senior Advocate Mukul Rohatgi and Senior Advocate Akhil Sibal, appearing for Meta and WhatsApp, respectively, informed that the penalty amount has been deposited.

When Sibal said that it (data

sharing) is done with the consent of the consumer and there is an “opt-out” option, CJI said, “What do you mean by opt-out? You opt out of the country, withdraw your facilities from here. Because you are creating a monopoly in the market, there is no choice for the consumer.”

When Sibal reiterated that there is an option to opt out of the policy, CJI questioned the efficacy of the policy. “A poor woman selling fruits on the streets, will she understand the terms of your policy? Can you imagine the language you use, very cleverly drafted, even some of us will not be able to understand. The policy must be formulated from the perspective of the common customer. Will your domestic help understand this? You might have taken the data of millions of persons. This is a decent way of committing theft of private information,” the CJI said.

The SC said that it will pass an interim order February 9 and ordered that the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology be also made a party to the appeals of tech giants.

8 LS MPs suspended for ‘unruly’ behaviour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: In escalation of the tussle between the government and the Opposition over ex-Army chief MM Naravane’s unpublished ‘memoir’ on India-China conflict in 2020 and Monday’s India-US trade deal, among other issues, seven Congress members and one CPI-M MP were suspended from Lok Sabha Tuesday for ‘unruly behaviour’ after they tore papers and threw them at the Chair.

Their suspension from the House for the remaining part of the Budget Session that concludes April 2 will intensify the face-off with the government over various issues, including Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi being denied an opportunity to cite the article based on excerpts

from ‘memoir’ of Naravane.

The Opposition parties have also raised concerns about American President Donald Trump announcing the India-US trade deal and the alleged demolition drive at Manikarnika Ghat in Varanasi. As soon as the House met at 3pm following multiple adjournments, Dilip Saikia, who was in the Chair, named the eight Congress members.

Subsequently, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju read out a resolution seeking suspension of the eight members for the remaining period of the Budget session.

The suspended members are: Gurjeet Singh Aujla, Hibi Eden, C Kiran Kumar Reddy, Amarinder Singh Raja Warring, Manickam Tagore, Prashant Padole and Dean Kuriakose (all Congress) and S Ventakesan (CPI-M).

CM launches mass wedding scheme

PNN & AGENCIES

Berhampur, Feb 3: A total of 201 couples tied the nuptial knot in a ceremony Tuesday as Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launched ‘Mukhyamantri Kanya Bibaha Yojana’, a flagship scheme for the mass marriage of women from poor families, and asserted that his government was committed to protecting the dignity of women.

The mass marriage programme took place near the renowned Maa Tara Tarini Tem-



ple at Purusottampur village in Ganjam district. He said the state govt launched this scheme keeping in view the problems faced by poor families in conducting the marriage of their daughters.

“No poor man will consider his daughter a burden.

Agri interest protected: Goyal on trade deal

New Delhi: India has ensured the interests of its sensitive agriculture and dairy sectors are completely protected in the bilateral trade pact that it is finalising with the US following months of negotiations, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said Tuesday. Hours after US President Donald Trump announced cut in tariff to 18 per cent from 50 per cent in return for favourable treatment by New Delhi, Goyal said a joint statement will be issued by both countries soon that will spell out the details of the pact.



All should feel proud of their daughters as they have been bringing laurels for the state and the country and excel in every field,” Majhi said, adding that ₹35,000 has been transferred to the bank accounts of the women through DBT.

An amount of ₹59 crore has been earmarked in the 2025-26 fiscal for conducting mass weddings under the scheme, Majhi said, adding that women between 18 and 35 years of age and men in the 21-35 age group can take advantage of the scheme. **P3**

Boy swims for 4 hrs to save family swept out to sea

AGENCIES

Melbourne, Feb 3: A 13-year-old boy is credited with saving the lives of his mother and two younger siblings with a four-hour long swim after the family was swept out to sea off the Australian coast.

Austin Appelbee swam 4 km to shore to raise the alarm after he got into difficulties Friday with his mother Joanne Appelbee, 47, brother Beau, 12, and sister Grace, 8, police said.

The teenager said he initially set off for help on an inflatable kayak that was taking water. He abandoned the kayak then took off his life jacket because

it impeded his swimming.

He said he tried to focus on positive thoughts as he swam for around four hours through rough seas for shore, raising the alarm at 6 pm.

“The waves are massive and I have no life jacket on... I just kept thinking just keep swimming, just keep swimming,” Austin said Tuesday. “And then I finally I made it to shore and I hit the bottom of the beach and I just collapsed.”

The family, from the state capital Perth, were on vacation and were using kayaks and paddle boards hired from their hotel around noon when rough ocean and wind conditions started



dragging them out to sea.

A search helicopter found the mom and two children wearing life jackets and clinging to a paddleboard at 8:30 pm, police



said. They had drifted 14 km from Quindalup in Western Australia state, after spending up to 10 hours in the water.

“The actions of the 13-year-old

boy cannot be praised highly enough - his determination and courage ultimately saved the lives of his mother and siblings,” Police Inspector James Bradley said. Joanne Appelbee told reporters Tuesday she sent her oldest child for help because she could not leave the three children.

“One of the hardest decisions I ever had to make was to say to Austin: Try and get to shore and get some help. This could get really serious really quickly,” she told Australian Broadcasting Corp. She said she was confident he would reach shore but was filled with doubt as the sunset set and help had not arrived.

BOLANGIR: CLASS IX GIRL GANGRAPED; 6 DETAINED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Feb 3: A Class IX girl student was allegedly gangraped by six persons, including her classmates, under Turekela police limits in Bolangir district, police said Tuesday. Police detained six persons, including her four classmates, another minor in connection with the case, authorities said Tuesday. The horrific incident, which reportedly occurred December 25, 2025, came to light after a video of the incident went viral on social media.

According to investigators, the 15-year-old victim was allegedly

gangraped at an under-construction school building. Bolangir SP Abilash G ordered the detention of all six persons after a relative of the victim alerted officials regarding the viral footage.

Bolangir Collector Gaurav Shivaji Isalwar and District Child Protection Unit officials were coordinating with law enforcement agencies to provide support to the survivor and ensure a legal review of the case. Authorities are pursuing charges under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Information Technology Act regarding the recording and distribution of the video.

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your ability to let go things will reflect in your personal as well as your professional life. Today could be a significant day for you, and Ganesha advises you not to forget your special abilities. Make good use of them so that others too can benefit.

TAURUS
You will be very sensitive about the image you project socially and professionally. Ganesha sees you treating this very seriously and doing everything you can to make this right impression. Today, you will remain decent, dignified and focussed in all that you do. Do not be too eager to please others.

GEMINI
Routine work bores you, and today you will go all out to break free from the shackles of boredom. The results, however, may not be as dramatic. You will have to depend on your children, if any, to rescue you from the tyranny of routine. Monetary gains can be expected either in the form of inheritance of ancestral property or as increment in your basic salary.

CANCER
Don't meddle in others' affairs today, suggests Ganesha. For they will not take it kindly. Adopt the middle path. Ganesha feels that you must keep your bravado and boldness in check.

LEO
Your pride and self-confidence will help you to excel in whatever task it is that you take up today. Other people will also praise you. You will buy new clothes and other possessions that you have been desiring since a long time, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
You will be faced with serious financial problems today. You may even have to pay through your nose to get what you desire. Later in the evening, you might accomplish some short-term goals. Ganesha predicts that some vital business agreements will end your day in high spirits.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will be able to improve your relations abroad. There will be good news coming from friends or relatives living abroad. Your working ability and efficiency will make you popular in the office today. In the day today you shall have a variety of good and bad experiences

SCORPIO
Be vigilant; keep your eyes and ears open for all the events happening around you, says Ganesha. Your intuition is trying to tell you something, trust it. Think and act positively, the rest would fall in place.

SAGITTARIUS
Work is likely to keep you on toes. At work place, you and your opinions will be in demand. Those who are associated with stock exchange and shares will be happy to gain profits during the afternoon. Wait and watch the end result in the evening.

CAPRICORN
You have projected yourself as a confused individual, and rightfully so, as the Lions are most of times in double mind. But, today you'll come up with a specific career plan that will surprise many of the people. Be clear about what you want to do in life, how you want your life to be and make sincere efforts to achieve that stage, guides Ganesha.

AQUARIUS
You will take the road to spirituality today and give a miss to materialism. You will visit temples, other religious places, and spiritual leaders to find answers for some of your questions. It will, however, take a while for you to distinguish between mysticism and materialism, and understand that you can have the best of both worlds.

PISCES
You will not take matters to heart needlessly today, and will instead calmly evaluate the bitter words of others to see if there is a grain of truth in them somewhere. This is a good practice and one that should be continued. While you won't be in the mood to tolerate any injustice, you will be able to forgive those who have wronged you and will thus be able to refrain from stoking further, the fires of enmity, says Ganesha.



MERYL TO PLAY JONI MITCHELL IN BIOPIC

Hollywood actress Meryl Streep is set to portray Joni Mitchell in a new biopic. The Oscar-winner has long been rumoured to be in contention to take the lead role in a film about the music legend, which is being made by music writer-turned-director Cameron Crowe, reports *Female First UK*.

HALLE OPENS UP ON AGING

Actress Halle Berry has spoken candidly about aging in Hollywood and her refusal to let it define or erase her. "I have adamantly decided I am not going to allow myself to be erased," said the 59-year-old award-winning actress in an interview with *The Cut*, reports people.com.



For Alaya darker roles are fulfilling

MUMBAI: Alaya F has steadily carved a space for herself in Hindi cinema by consciously avoiding predictable choices. From her debut in *Jawaani Jaaneman* to thrillers like *U-Turn* and *Freddy*, the actress has shown a clear inclination towards roles that challenge her rather than conform to expectations. Opening up about this approach, Alaya recently spoke about why exploring darker shades on screen has been a deliberate and fulfilling decision for her as an actor.

"After *Jawaani Jaaneman*, I received multiple film offers ranging across

genres. As an actor, it's more fun to be a part of films of varying genres, play unique characters - there are so many people who don't get this chance. So, I jumped onto it," says Alaya.

The actor believes that embracing unconventional roles has helped her grow creatively. Instead of being driven by external expectations or industry noise, she prefers to follow instinct and passion. "Genuinely, I've reached a point where I'm like I love acting and I'm here to act, so I just want to act. I don't want to get stuck in all the drama of what I should do and what I shouldn't do. I just want to do what my heart wants to do," she adds.

AGENCIES



Dhauli-Kalinga Mahotsav from Feb 6

PRESTIGIOUS BUDDHA SAMMAN WILL BE CONFERRED UPON EMINENT THEATRE PERSON ANANTA MOHAPATRA

BHUBANESWAR: The 22nd Dhauli-Kalinga Mahotsav will be held from February 6 to 8, 2026, at 6.30 pm here at Shanti Vihar, against the iconic Peace Pagoda.

Organised by the Odia Language, Literature & Culture Department, Government of Odisha, and the Orissa Dance Academy (ODA), in association with the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Art Vision, the festival continues its legacy of promoting peace through the medium of Indian performing arts.

Nearly 300 artists are expected to participate this year, reaffirming the festival's stature as a major cultural congregation in eastern India.

A highlight of the event is the presentation of its prestigious award the Buddha Sam-



man. Instituted 18 years ago by ODA, the honour will be conferred on eminent theatre personality Ananta Mohapatra. The award carries a citation, anga bastra and a cash prize of Rs. 2 lakh.

In its Golden Jubilee year, ODA will also present the special Swarna Smaraki Samman to Lalit Mansingh, former Indian diplomat and a noted patron

of Indian performing arts.

The Guru Gangadhar Smruti Samman, instituted in memory of Padma Shri awardee and ODA founder Guru Gangadhar Pradhan, will be awarded to four distinguished personalities this year—Odissi dancer Sikata Das, renowned singer and composer Guru Keshab Charan Rout, theatre personality and cultural revivalist Manmath

Satapathy, and scholar Chittaranjan Mallia. Each award carries a citation, anga bastra and a cash prize of Rs. 1 lakh.

The three-day cultural extravaganza will also feature a diverse line-up of performances, beginning with Odissi dance by Debamitra Sengupta and group and Purulia Chhau by Susanta Mahato and troupe on the opening day.

The second evening will showcase Odissi by Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Bharatanatyam by Arupa Lahiry and group, and Mayurbhanj Chhau by Haripada Mohanta's ensemble.

The festival will conclude with Patha Rajapatha, a fusion presentation by ODA, followed by Kathak by Souvik Chakraborty and group, and Kalaripayattu by Belraj Soni and troupe from Kerala.

PNN

MUMBAI: Actor Mrunal Thakur and Dhanush sparked dating rumours in August last year after they were spotted together at the *Son Of Sardar 2* premiere. Recently, there were also rumours about the two getting married. Amid this, Mrunal, in a chat with an entertainment portal, spoke about love and how it can change a person for the better.

"I think love is a beautiful feeling and should happen to each and every person on this planet. It changes you into a better person. It is literally like reparenting and fixing your inner child issues. It's one of the most beautiful things in the world. I really pray and hope that everyone finds love in their life," the actress said.

Mrunal's definition of love

She further disagreed with the notion that women in love are more giving and added that anyone who is in love becomes a giver. She said, "Sometimes, it is very difficult to receive love and acknowledge it. The definition of love has been changing. The only constant thing is love. It's about how you receive it — there's a lover and there's a beloved. When anyone is in love, they are the givers. It doesn't matter whether it's a woman or a man. When there's love, you just do things for that person. You just surrender."

AGENCIES



IT'S 51ST NAT'L THEATRE FESTIVAL: DAY 1

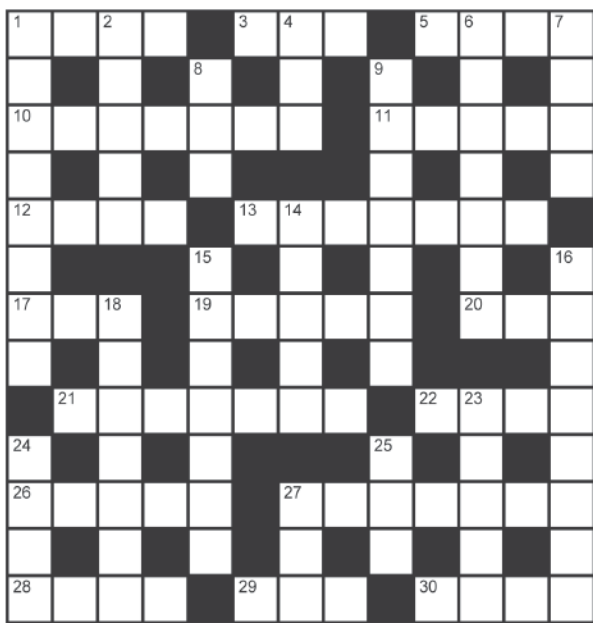


The members of Natya Chetana, Bhubaneswar, performed the Hindi play *Barsha* at Rabindra Mandap Tuesday, the first day of the festival organised by city-based troupe International Theatre (IT). The drama was written and directed by Subodh Patnaik. The four-day event marks the culmination of the golden jubilee year celebrations of the troupe. French theatre personality Partric Navette, and Odia director-actor Abinash Dandapat were felicitated on the occasion. Ekamra MLA Babu Singh, Culture Department Special Secretary Deba Prasad Dash, and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi Secretary Chandra Shekhar Hota were among the dignitaries present.

PICT: MANORANJAN MISHRA

FUN post

CROSSWORD



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Across

- Vessel part (4)
- Occupation (3)
- Hideous (4)
- Enlisted man (7)
- Way in (5)
- Links hazard (4)
- Rock group from Liverpool (7)
- Pool tool (3)
- Bring upon oneself (5)
- "Skip to My ___" (3)
- The ___ Stone (7)

- Kitty starter (4)
- Pancake topper (5)
- Simple wind instrument (7)
- Fencing sword (4)
- Mudhole (3)
- Salon offering (4)

Down

- Oil checker in a car (3-5)
- Popular wedding gift (5)
- Flowerly verse (3)
- Kind of card (3,4)
- Toy that does tricks (2-2)
- Tavern (3)
- Missives (7)
- Roast host (5)
- Throw into disorder (7)
- Tepid (8)
- Blow up (7)
- Unsophisticated (5)
- ___ of Wight (4)
- Long-tailed rodent (3)
- Ump's call (3)

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

UNCERTAINTY OVER POLICE SI EXAM

STUDENTS' BODY TO HOLD PROTEST FEB 5

OUTR organises technical seminar on IC Packaging

Garg reviews 2025-26 Budget implementation, key reforms

Members of Students Against Corruption alleged that the government has “forgotten” the SI recruitment process and demanded immediate announcement of an examination date



Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Uncertainty surrounding the Police Sub-Inspector (SI) recruitment examination has sparked growing unrest among aspirants across the state. Citing alleged corruption and the sale of government jobs, the student body Students Against Corruption intensified pressure on the state government and announced a protest February 5 during a press conference here Tuesday.

The controversy centers on an alleged question paper leak in the Police SI exam, which is currently under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Termed one of the state's biggest recruitment scams, the probe has been shifted from the Crime Branch to the CBI.

However, the continued de-

lay in announcing a fresh examination date has fueled dissatisfaction among thousands of meritorious candidates. Addressing the media here, leaders of Students Against Corruption strongly criticised the government for its inaction.

The organisation's convenor, Bibhuti Bhushan Mohapatra, said that the agitation has been called to remind the government about both the status of the CBI investigation and the long-pending Police SI examination. He alleged that the government appears to have “forgotten” about the SI recruitment process altogether and demanded the immediate declaration of an examination date.

Issuing an indirect warning, Mohapatra said that if the government fails to act, students

will be forced to take to the “Gandhian path” of protest. Accordingly, the organisation has fixed February 5 as the date for the agitation.

The group further demanded a thorough CBI investigation into the SI recruitment case, urging strict action against senior officials involved in the scam. They emphasised that only decisive action can put an end to the alleged sale of government jobs and uproot recruitment corruption in the state.

Highlighting the gravity of the issue, Mohapatra pointed out that the SI examination had already been cancelled twice and that despite the recruitment notification being issued in 2024, the government has failed to announce an examination date even in 2026.

He said this raises serious questions about the government's administrative capability and has created immense mental stress and uncertainty for lakhs of aspirants regarding their future.

The press conference was attended by organisation members and aspirants, including Soumya Anupras, Smruti Ranjan Acharya, Bighnesh Patel, Santosh Sahu, Mahesh Kumar Banshur, Vishnu Prasad, among others.

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The School of Electronic Sciences (SES) at Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) successfully organised a one-day technical seminar titled ‘IC Packaging and Electronic Potting Simulation Using Moldex3D’, highlighting advanced simulation-driven approaches in semiconductor manufacturing.

The seminar commenced with a warm welcome address by Abhyarthana Bisoyi, followed by vote of thanks delivered by Rashmi Rekha Sahu. The event was graced by the presence of OUTR VC Bibhuti Bhusan Biswal, and SES head Madhab Chandra Tripathy, whose participation underscored the university's commitment to cutting-edge technological education and research.

The seminar was organised in collaboration with CoreTech System Co Ltd (Moldex3D), Taiwan, along with its Indian regional office. Representing Moldex3D were senior manager Khaled El Bchiri and regional manager Marirajan Ramachandran, who shared their extensive



Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: A high-level all secretaries meet was organised Tuesday under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Anu Garg to review the implementation of State Budget 2025-26, revenue collection and key governance reforms at Kharavela Bhawan here.

The meeting reviewed the expenditure and revenue collection status as of January 31, 2026, in accordance with the approved State Budget for the current financial year. Sector-wise expenditure trends were assessed, with officials reporting a higher spending rate compared to the corresponding period last year in sectors such as agriculture, fisheries and animal husbandry, cooperatives, housing and urban development, power, and social sectors.

With only two months remaining in the financial year, the Chief Secretary directed all departments to expedite execution of ongoing projects to

boost expenditure and ensure achievement of revenue collection targets set for 2025-26.

The meeting also underlined the importance of focusing on emerging or ‘sunrise sectors’, including industry, sports, science and technology, handlooms and textiles, tourism, electronics and information technology, MSMEs, skill development and technical education. These sectors were identified as key drivers of future economic growth for the state.

A detailed review was conducted on the implementation of the 15 action plans announced by the CM. Departments were instructed to submit comprehensive reports in the coming months on measures taken against corrupt, inefficient and non-transparent officers. To strengthen efficiency and accountability in governance, regular reviews of training programmes under the Mission Karmayogi i-GOT platform were also directed.

The Chief Secretary further stressed the need to ensure effective use of Odia language in government offices and to update departmental websites that are yet to be made available in Odia.

In the context of the recently presented Union Budget, Garg advised secretaries to bring innovation into schemes and programmes while preparing the upcoming state Budget, ensuring it is people-centric and aligned with the ‘Odisha Vision’ to achieve the goal of a developed Odisha.

Development Commissioner and Additional Chief Secretary Deoranjana Kumar Singh highlighted key issues related to revenue mobilisation and emphasised the importance of field visits by secretaries to strengthen implementation at the grassroots level.

Senior officials, including additional chief secretaries, principal secretaries, commissioners and secretaries of various departments, attended the meeting and participated in the deliberations.

STRENGTHENING URBAN SANITATION ECOSYSTEM

Learning workshop on FSSM held in City

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Housing and Urban Development department Tuesday, in collaboration with TSU-FSSM (EY) and Dasra, organised a learning workshop on Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) at Odisha Urban Academy. The workshop brought together senior officials, sector experts, and key knowledge partners to consolidate and advance Odisha's pioneering initiatives in urban sanitation.

During the event, a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in the presence of department's Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee, between the Water Corporation of Odisha (WATCO), the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), and TIDE Technocrats Ltd for the establishment of a state-of-the-art pyrolysis unit at the Basuaghai Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP).

The workshop featured a structured stakeholder consultation, aimed at eliciting actionable recommendations to further strengthen Odisha's

FSSM framework and ensure its long-term operational and financial sustainability, in alignment with the state's vision of ‘Viksit Odisha’.

Addressing the gathering, Padhee appreciated the collective efforts of the state government and its partners, describing Odisha's FSSM programme as “a bright star in the urban development domain,” receiving recognition at both national and international levels. She also acknowledged the decade-long partnership with the Gates Foundation for its continued support in strengthening the state's sanitation initiatives.

Department's Additional Secretary and Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) Mission Director Binaya Kumar Dash stated that the learning workshop marks an important milestone in enhancing the future-readiness, scalability, and sustainability of Odisha's FSSM ecosystem.

The initiative marks a significant step towards advanced biosolids treatment, resource recovery, and promotion of circular economy practices in the sanitation sector.

DHSE launches orientation programme for new PGTs



Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: An orientation workshop for Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs) new-ly-appointed in Government Higher Secondary Schools and Government Upgraded Higher Secondary Schools under the Directorate of Higher Secondary Education (DHSE), School and Mass Education department, began Tuesday.

The workshop is being conducted in two phases—the first from February 3 to February 7 and the second from February 9 to February 13. In the first phase, PGTs from Psychology, Zoology, Botany, Urdu and Anthropology streams are participating.

The programme is being held at the Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IM-

AGE), Siripur, with the participation of around 240 PGT teachers from various disciplines.

In the inaugural session, Regional Director of Higher Secondary Education, Berhampur, Ramesh Chandra Sethy; Joint Directors Binita Senapati, Snigdha Mishra and Sasmita Mali; Deputy Directors Vijaya Laxmi and Jitendra Nayak; and Education Specialist and State Chief-in-Charge, Unicef, Lalita Patnaik, were present, among others.

Speaking on the occasion, Sethy advised PGT teachers to focus on finding solutions. He said that the responsibility of shaping good citizens for society and the nation rests on teachers, and it is their duty to provide proper guidance to students. He also emphasised identifying and addressing the

gaps that exist between teachers and students.

Senapati, in her address, advised PGT teachers to continue the process of acquiring knowledge at all times. She stressed that to impart education effectively, teachers themselves must remain lifelong learners.

Patnaik said that the learnings gained by teachers through induction workshops help in making students more competent. She elaborated on adolescence, describing it as the second phase of development in students' lives, during which proper guidance is essential.

Creating a positive mindset among students, she said, is a key responsibility of teachers. She urged teachers to understand students and contribute to shaping their future.

Two Gujarat men held in ₹5.14cr online fraud

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: The Odisha Crime Branch, in coordination with the Cyber Police, has arrested two men from Gujarat in connection with a large-scale online investment fraud in which a man was duped of ₹5.14 crore through a fake trading platform, officials said Tuesday.

The accused have been identified as Milanbhai Bhupatbhai (31) and Koshiya Vaibhav Jiten-drabhai (30), both residents of Surat district in Gujarat.

According to Crime Branch sources, the complainant was contacted March 17, 2025, through WhatsApp and was automatically added to a group named ‘Equity Hub 41’. One of the fraudsters posed as a Wharton School graduate and a former JP Morgan fund manager, claiming to manage a USD 6 million asset portfolio. The group offered free stock market tips and daily NIFTY technical analysis to gain the complainant's trust.

Believing the claims, the victim transferred ₹5.14 crore to eight different bank accounts



between March 17 and April 9, as instructed by the fraudsters. The fake trading account later showed a threefold increase, reflecting an investment value of nearly ₹12 crore. However, when the victim attempted to withdraw the funds, his efforts went in vain as he was unable to retrieve the amount.

Following digital and financial trail analysis, a Crime Branch team conducted raids in Gujarat and arrested the duo. Mobile phones, SIM cards and other incriminating materials were seized from their possession.

The accused were produced before a Judicial Magistrate in Gujarat and are currently on transit remand. They will be forwarded to the SDJM Court in Bhubaneswar. One of the accused had earlier been arrested from Assam in connection with the same case.



CLASSIFIED

LOST

I Rudra Kishor Padhan, S/o. Late Jagannath Padhan, R/o. Banipali, P.S.: Sadar, Dist.: Balangir. I am the owner of landed property at Mouza: Banipali, Khata No.93/93, Plot No. 585/990, Area- A 0.09dec. I have lost somewhere the Sale Deed of said property on 20.01.2026 while I was coming from Buromunda chowk to my home. After through search I could not traced it out.

Leadership vacancies loom over OHRC

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: With the tenure of Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) chairperson and members set to expire February 6, concerns are growing over the absence of any visible move by the state government to initiate the appointment process for the next set of office-bearers.

Activists and civil society groups have cautioned that a delay in initiating the selection process could lead to vacancies in the commission, adversely affecting its functioning. OHRC is a crucial statutory body that handles complaints related to human rights violations and provides an important forum for citizens seeking redressal.

According to established procedures, the appointment of the



chairperson and members of the commission involves recommendations by a high-level committee followed by formal approvals, a process that can take up to three months or longer. With less than a week remaining for the current tenure to end, the absence of preparatory steps has raised apprehen-

sions of a possible institutional vacuum.

Civil society organisation ‘Aama Janata Adhikar’ has urged CM Mohan Charan Mahi to immediately initiate the appointment process in order to ensure continuity in the functioning of the commission. In a representation submitted to the

CM, the organisation warned that prolonged vacancies could result in delays in the disposal of cases and weaken public confidence in the state's human rights protection mechanism.

The organisation also pointed to the earlier experience of the Lokayukta, where prolonged vacancies had led to operational paralysis, and stressed the need to avoid a similar situation in the OHRC.

Signatories to the representation include Prasanna Bisoi, Manoj Jena and Basudev Bhatta. As of now, there has been no official response from the state government regarding the initiation of the appointment process.

The current OHRC chairperson Justice Satrugana Pujahari was appointed February 10, 2023, succeeding BK Patel.

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.36 ▼ 1.29	SENSEX	83739.13 ▲ 2,072.67	GOLD	₹149,000 ▲ ₹7307
EURO	106.70 ▼ 2.11	NIFTY	25727.55 ▲ 639.15	SILVER	₹274,823 ▲ ₹38,562

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	31.2°	28.8°	Dry weather likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	15.5°	14.4°	
Humidity	85%	85%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

WORLD CANCER DAY



Sai Institute of Gastroenterology and Liver Sciences: Pioneer in detection of early gastric cancer in India



DR ASHUTOSH MOHAPATRA

Sai Institute of Gastroenterology and Liver Sciences (SIGLS) — a pioneering single-specialty day-care center in Bhubaneswar — is transforming the landscape of gastrointestinal and liver disease care in Eastern India. By blending state-of-the-art technology with globally trained medical expertise, SIGLS has emerged as one of the few centers in the country offering third-space endoscopic surgeries — advanced, scar-free procedures that enable the treatment of complex digestive disorders without the need for open surgery.

Leading this center of excellence are Dr Ashutosh Mohapatra and Dr Sonmoon Mohapatra, whose combined vision and expertise are redefining the standards of gastroenterology in the region.

Dr Ashutosh Mohapatra, Director of SIGLS, is a nationally recognised gastroenterologist and a pioneer in the early detection of gastric cancer in India. Dr Sonmoon Mohapatra, Director of Advanced Endoscopy, is a US-trained senior consultant gastroenterologist and advanced endoscopist, certified by the American Board of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology. Having completed dual advanced fellowships at the Mayo Clinic, USA, her specialisation spans third-space endoscopy, EUS, ERCP, and endoscopic oncology.

Recently, the Institute was

joined by eminent physician Dr. Professor Subas Chandra Samal adding more teeth to the early cancer detection and treatment. Former HOD of Gastroenterology, AIIMS Bhubaneswar, Dr. Samal has 35 years of experience in healthcare.

Together, this expert leadership team drives SIGLS with a shared mission — to provide world-class, patient-centered care, introduce cutting-edge endoscopic innovations to Odisha, and set new benchmarks in excellence, safety, and training in gastrointestinal healthcare.

Pioneering efforts in early gastric cancer detection

With decades of experience and a vision rooted in community awareness and high-quality endoscopy, he has introduced Japanese-style systematic screening and image-enhanced endoscopy techniques to the Indian context. His extensive research, academic contributions, and globally cited publications have established new standards in endoscopic diagnosis and preventive gastroenterology. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, he received the EMERALD Award at the Mumbai LIVE Conference (April 2025) from Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadanvis, under the category Endoscopy Leader – Tier 2/3 Cities. Through Sai Institute of Gastroenterology and Liver Sciences (SIGLS), he continues to advocate for quality-driven endoscopy, early diagnosis, and minimally invasive treatment, ensuring better outcomes and survival for patients across Eastern India. “Early gastric cancer is often subtle and easily missed

unless the endoscopist is trained to look for it,” says Dr. Mohapatra. “We need to move beyond just performing endoscopy to performing high-quality, detailed mucosal inspection using advanced imaging. The difference between missing and detecting an early lesion can change a patient’s life — it’s the difference between a major surgery and an endoscopic cure.”

Revolutionary treatments now available locally

Patients across Odisha and neighbouring states can now access world-class procedures like Endoscopic Submucosal Dissection (ESD) for early GI cancers and large colon polyps, Submucosal Tunnel Endoscopic Resection (STER) for removal of tumors arising from the wall of the stomach or esophagus, and Per Oral Endoscopic Myotomy (POEM) for achalasia car-

dia and swallowing disorders — all performed through the mouth, without any external cuts or large incisions. Recently, a 48-year-old woman with a gastric subepithelial tumor (a tumor beneath the inner lining of the stomach) in the upper stomach (proximal body) underwent a successful STER procedure at SIGLS.

Using subserosal endoscopic dissection — a form of organ-preserving, minimally invasive endoscopic surgery — the growth was completely removed without any open surgery or gastrectomy. The final diagnosis revealed it to be a Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor (GIST). The patient recovered smoothly and was discharged without compli-

cations, avoiding the pain, recovery time, and long-term side effects associated with major surgery.

“Such complex procedures used to be possible only in select tertiary centers abroad or in metro cities. We’re proud to make them accessible here in Odisha,” said Dr. Sonmoon Mohapatra, Director of Advanced Endoscopy at SIGLS, who trained at the prestigious Mayo Clinic, USA. “Our focus is on organ preservation and early recovery — helping patients get back to their lives sooner and healthier,” she said.

State-of-the-art, patient-first facility

Equipped with Japan-grade high-definition endoscopes, endoscopic ultrasound (EUS), and specialised infection-control units, SIGLS ensures the highest level of safety and accuracy in diagnosis and treatment. Its services span from ERCP and EUS for bile duct and pancreatic disorders to endoscopic bariatric therapies such as Endoscopic Sleeve Gastropasty (ESG).

A Center for Training, Research, and Compassionate Care

Beyond patient care, SIGLS is dedicated to training young doctors and endoscopy technicians, conducting clinical research, and increasing public awareness about early detection of digestive cancers and liver diseases.

The writer is the Director of Sai Institute of Gastroenterology and Liver Sciences (SIGLS), a nationally recognised gastroenterologist and a pioneer in the early detection of gastric cancer in India

BREAST CANCER: EARLY DETECTION & TREATMENT



UNITED BY UNIQUE



DR PRASHANT CHANDRA DAS

Breast cancer is the most common malignancy among Indian women and as per the projections, by the end of 2026, it will make up 15 per cent of the nation’s total cancer burden. The surgical procedure was historically a mastectomy (removal of total breast). However, with improvements in the understanding of the biology of breast cancer, and advancements in radiation therapy and chemotherapy it has gradually evolved into breast conserving surgery.

How early can breast cancer be detected?

Usually the earliest symptom of breast cancer is a painless lump in breast.

With advanced imaging modalities like digital mammogram, CT scan and MRI and increased awareness among people who undergo screening for breast cancer, new lesions are being detected even before one can feel them.

How to treat these early lesions?

After detecting these lesions, an initial evaluation is done to see for any other sites of spread. Surgical removal is the first therapeutic modality for these lesions. Identifying these early lesions during surgery is a challenge. The use of intraoperative ultrasonography and localisation of the lesion in the breast tissue is done using wire. The specimen is sent to the pathologist for immediate confirmation of malignancy and determination of cancer free margin status. This, along with surgical assessment of the axilla itself is the curative therapy.

Do all early lesions require chemotherapy and radiation therapy?

The requirement of chemotherapy depends on the

hormone receptor status and other pathological characteristics of the tumor. For low risk patients, chemotherapy can be omitted. However, radiation therapy is mandatory for all breast conserving surgery patients as it reduces the chances of recurrence.

Does this lead to cure?

The earlier the stage of cancer, the better the cure. Studies have shown that for localized breast cancer, 5 year survival chance is around 99 per cent.

The writer is a surgical oncologist at Apollo Cancer Centre, Bhubaneswar. He holds an MBBS from MKCG Medical College, an MS in General Surgery from BHU, Varanasi, and an MCh in Surgical Oncology from Kidwai Memorial Institute of Oncology, Bangalore. He has also completed a Fellowship in Minimal Access Surgery (FMAS). Mo: 7978066307 7377559672



CBI Raids Talabira Coal Mine

Sambalpur: A Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) team from New Delhi, assisted by its Bhubaneswar unit, Tuesday conducted a raid at Talabira coal mine office of Neyveli Lignite Corporation India Ltd (NLCIL) at Khinda panchayat in Sambalpur district, probing allegations of corruption and irregularities in coal mining and extraction. Regional officials of State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) from Sambalpur and Jharsuguda were also part of the team. The raid is linked to complaints of large-scale irregularities in coal mining and lifting, as well as pollution-related issues in the area. Investigators are reportedly examining allegations that coal extraction at the Talabira-1 mine exceeded the approved quantity by a substantial margin. CBI officials, however, declined to share details of the ongoing investigation.

ଶୁଷ୍କ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିକଶିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ଶ୍ରୀ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋଦୀ ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ବିଶ୍ୱ କର୍କଟ ଦିବସ

୪ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୨୦୨୬

“ଅନନ୍ୟ ଓ ସଞ୍ଜିଳିତ ପ୍ରୟାସ ଉପଯୋଗରେ କର୍କଟ ରୋଗର ନିରାକରଣ”

କ୍ୟାନ୍ସର (କର୍କଟ) ରୋଗ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ବ୍ୟାପକ ଜନ ସଚେତନତା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରତି ବର୍ଷ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୪ ତାରିଖକୁ ବିଶ୍ୱ କର୍କଟ ଦିବସ ରୂପେ ପାଳନ କରାଯାଉଛି । କର୍କଟ ରୋଗର ପ୍ରମୁଖ କାରଣ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ତମାଖୁ ସେବନ, ମଦ୍ୟପାନ, ଖାଦ୍ୟ ପଦାର୍ଥରେ ରାସାୟନିକ ଦ୍ରବ୍ୟର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଓ କିଛି ଭୂତାଣୁ ଜନିତ ସଂକ୍ରମଣ ଅନ୍ତର୍ଭୁକ୍ତ । ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ବିଶ୍ୱ କର୍କଟ ଦିବସ ଅବସରରେ ଆମେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ଓ ସାମୂହିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ପ୍ରୟାସ ଜାରି ରଖି କର୍କଟ ମୁକ୍ତ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଗଠନ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରତିଜ୍ଞା କରିବା ।

କ୍ୟାନ୍ସର (କର୍କଟ) ପ୍ରତିରୋଧର ଉପାୟ

- ତମାଖୁ ସେବନରୁ ନିବୃତ୍ତ ରହିବା
- ମାଦକଦ୍ରବ୍ୟ ବା ନିଶା ସେବନ ନ କରିବା
- ନିରାପଦ ଯୌନ ଓ ପ୍ରଜନନ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ଆପଣାଇବା
- ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟକର ଖାଦ୍ୟାଭ୍ୟାସ ଜାରି ରଖିବା
- ସୁସ୍ଥ ଜୀବନ ଶୈଳୀ ଆପଣେଇବା
- ନିୟମିତ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କରାଇବା
- ପରିବେଶ ପ୍ରଦୂଷଣ ରୋକିବାକୁ ପ୍ରୟାସ କରିବା

ସଅଳ ଚିହ୍ନଟ ଏବଂ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ଦ୍ୱାରା କର୍କଟ ରୋଗ ଆରୋଗ୍ୟ ସାଧ୍ୟ

ଅଧିକ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ନିଜେସ୍ତୁ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟକର୍ମୀ, ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟକେନ୍ଦ୍ର କିମ୍ବା ଜିଲ୍ଲା ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଚିକିତ୍ସାଳୟର ଡେ-କେୟାର କେମୋଥେରାପି କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରନ୍ତୁ

ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

World Cancer Day 4 February

OIPR-10001/10003/2/25-26/0009

Witchcraft suspicion claims elderly man's life

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ambadala, Feb 3: An 81-year-old man was brutally murdered, allegedly over suspicion of practising witchcraft, at Sundhipadar village under Saradhapur panchayat of Ambadala police limits in Rayagada district, police said Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Chichi Ram Bag (81). According to police, the assailants attacked him with a

sharp weapon, chopped his head and later crushed it with stones, killing him on the spot.

After the body was recovered, family members lodged a complaint at Ambadala police station. During the investigation, the police found the village largely deserted with most men missing, while women were unwilling to speak, raising suspicion about collective involvement in the crime.

Police suspect the murder was linked to long-standing tensions over allegations of witchcraft. Family members claimed that around six months ago, the elderly man had been involved in a heated argument with some villagers after being accused of practising witchcraft.

A scientific team and a sniffer dog were deployed at the crime scene. Police seized a torchlight and a sharp weapon from near the body.

The victim had been missing since Sunday evening. Villagers found his body lying in a drain near a paddy field Tuesday morning and informed the Ambadala police. Inspector-in-Charge Kalpana Behera said the exact cause and motive behind the murder would be confirmed after a thorough investigation. Muniguda IIC Keshab Sarangi also visited the spot and supervised the probe.

Hardcore Maoist surrenders in Rourkela

Rourkela: A hardcore Maoist active in the Saranda forest along the Odisha-Jharkhand border surrendered before the Rourkela police Tuesday afternoon. The Maoist, identified as Ambelen Honhaga alias Prabhu (18) laid down arms around 2pm at the Rourkela police headquarters in the presence of western range Deputy Inspector General of Police Brijesh Rai and Rourkela Superintendent of Police Nitesh Wadhvani. Police officials said Prabhu was a resident of Halamuli village under Chotanagra in West Singhbhum district of Jharkhand and was a local guerrilla squad member (LGS) of the CPI's (Maoist) South Chotanagra division. He had joined the banned outfit about two years ago and was active in border areas. DIG Rai said Prabhu was motivated to surrender following intensified anti-Maoist operations in Jharkhand and renewed appeals by security forces for cadres to join the mainstream. He was provided a reception by the police and granted financial assistance under the 'B' category of the state's surrender and rehabilitation policy. Under the policy, Prabhu will receive assistance worth about ₹2.65 lakh for education, health care and livelihood support, Rai said. SP Wadhvani said Prabhu was involved mainly in collecting rations for the organisation and undergoing training for various minor and major tasks in the Saranda forest. He joined the outfit in 2024 after coming in contact with a Maoist cadre known as Birs. The SP said Prabhu became disillusioned with Maoist ideology and was subjected to mental and physical harassment within the organisation, prompting him to surrender. He will also be provided benefits such as marriage assistance, a livelihood stipend, a food security card and housing support under the rehabilitation scheme. Police officials reiterated that Odisha's Maoist surrender policy is among the most accessible in the country and appealed to other cadres to abandon violence and return to the mainstream.

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Trade Truce

The fresh Indo-US trade deal announced by US President Donald Trump on 2 February will see American tariffs on Indian goods go from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. An additional 25 per cent ‘penalty’ imposed on India for its purchase of Russian oil has also been dropped. India, on the other hand, will have to remove all tariffs and non-tariff barriers on US products. Both Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are euphoric over the deal since on the surface it appears to be for mutual benefits. In the absence of a formal statement, there is no way to know exactly what they agreed to. Trump claimed that India has agreed to stop buying Russian oil and will purchase \$500 billion worth of US goods—both of which seem hard to believe, while Modi has only stated that tariffs will be coming down. What counts at the moment is that the negotiated settlement has broken the logjam persisting for the past few months since Trump imposed the impossibly high tariffs.

The exact nature of the deal is still being kept a closely guarded secret probably fearing backlash, especially in India which seems to have caved under Trump’s constant pressure. It is suspected India has bartered away its vital interests in agriculture and dairy sectors due to which the government is shying away from sharing details of the agreement with the public.

For one thing, this announcement is of crucial importance especially for India. Trump’s deal comes at a time when US’s own NATO ally, the UK, has been forced to embrace China to safeguard its economic interest, severely battered by his tariff war. India and the European Union have also clinched what is being stated as a ‘mother of all deals’ in their bid to multilateral cooperation in the face of the US’ one-sided aggression and big-brotherly attitude. This might be the reason for the timing of US trade negotiations with India.

Apparently, the deal provides an opportunity for India to see the rate of US tariffs drop from 50 per cent to 18 per cent and for the US to gain unprecedented market access in India. But the devil, as they say, is in the details. This means the balance sheet of gain and loss will be clear only when the detailed architecture of the deal is known. US-India ties have floundered for much of the past year. This trade deal appears to be a measure that can help both sides work through their various issues, including giving New Delhi a chance to gain Washington’s favour by playing its cards right this time around.

India desperately needed concessions from the US for its beleaguered economy reflected in its Budget proposals placed in Lok Sabha on 1 February. The US is India’s top exports market. To cushion itself from the American shock given by Trump, India has been seeking help from China and the EU. The just concluded free trade agreement with the EU was made in India’s frantic search for another top export market. But it is hard to compensate for the loss of US market. That is why India was eager to agree to a US deal, whatever cost it may entail.

There is logic in the argument put forward by some financial experts that Trump’s announcement of the trade deal in his Truth Social post leaves major questions unanswered. For example, there is no clarity on what products are covered, what the timelines are and whether India has really agreed to zero tariffs and zero non-tariff barriers, especially in sensitive areas like agriculture and regulated imports. The headline figure of \$500 billion in US purchases is also unclear. India currently imports less than \$50 billion a year from the US, suggesting this is more an aspiration than a firm commitment.

Another unresolved thorny issue hurting India’s interests is that even after the trade deal, US Section 232 tariffs on steel, aluminium and copper will remain at 50 per cent and on a few auto components at 25 per cent. Also, zero tariffs for pharmaceuticals, aircraft and parts, and some mechanical and electronic components will continue.

The deal hinges on India halting cheap oil imports from Russia, one of its closest partners. It has reduced its imports of Russian oil since new US sanctions on Russia were implemented in November. The scale of the purchase will now further go down and the US may want exactly that.

Whatever the final outcome, it appears Trump’s presidency revolves round transacting business deals through a tortuous bargaining process for the other party, throwing diplomacy and political ideology to the wind. India on the other hand needs to tread very carefully this time around for it cannot afford another trade or tariff war with the US.

WISDOM CORNER

“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tunes without the words - and never stops at all.”

EMILY DICKINSON

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever: its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness.”

JOHN KEATS

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.”

ROBERT FROST

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1789:** George Washington was elected to serve as the first U.S. president by a unanimous vote in the first electoral college.

■ **1902:** American aviator Charles Lindbergh, who was one of the best-known figures in aeronautical history, was born in Detroit, Michigan.

■ **1921:** American feminist Betty Friedan, cofounder of the National Organization for Women and author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), was born.

■ **1945:** Yalta Conference opened. On this day in 1945, during the final stages of World War II, the Yalta Conference opened with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin meeting to plan the final defeat and occupation of Nazi Germany.

■ **1948:** Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) proclaims independence within the British Commonwealth. Since the 16th century, the island had been colonized by Portugal, the Netherlands, and Great Britain.

■ **2003:** Yugoslavia officially changed its name to Serbia and Montenegro.

LOL

HIKING TRIP

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Matthew Watson were on a camping and hiking trip.

They had gone to bed and were lying there looking up at the sky. Holmes said, "Watson, look up. What do you see?"

"Well, I see thousands of stars." "And what does that mean to you?"



"Well, I guess it means we will have another nice day tomorrow. What does it mean to you, Holmes?" "To me, it means someone has stolen our tent."



Michael Froman

GREENLAND'S TRUE STRATEGIC VALUE LIES PRIMARILY IN ARCTIC SECURITY

One issue dominated this year’s World Economic Forum in Davos: President Donald Trump’s threats to gain US control of Greenland. The announcement of a skeletal agreement between President Trump and NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte was good news – even if it turns out to be a fig leaf for a failed land grab – because the brouhaha over Trump’s rhetoric was obscuring what is a genuinely serious geostrategic concern.

Without a robust US presence on the island, Trump argues, China and Russia will come to exploit its vulnerability. Arctic security and ballistic missile defense would both be undermined.

But the suggestion that Russia or China has plans to attack, invade, or somehow compromise the island to the detriment of the United States is overstated. Greenland is an autonomous territory of the Kingdom of Denmark, not a forward base of operations for hostile powers. More may need to be done to shore up Greenland’s defense, but to claim that it is for the taking by the US, or its great power rivals, is to wave away NATO and Article V, the alliance’s collective defense mechanism.

Greenland’s true strategic value lies primarily in Arctic security. The island anchors the western edge of the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap, a critical maritime corridor through which Russia’s Northern Fleet submarines and surface vessels must pass to reach the North Atlantic. This makes the island, the world’s largest, central to NATO’s ability to monitor, and, if necessary, contain Russia’s maritime forces.

Moreover, as Arctic ice melts, Greenland’s proximity to potential transpolar and high-latitude shipping routes further increases its importance as an outpost to maintain open sea lanes of communication. It is also uniquely positioned for ballistic missile early warning and missile defense of the US homeland.

But control of the island is not a prerequisite for realiz-



Greenland and Denmark’s political leadership have made it clear that they would be happy to have the US military back, just not at the cost of their national sovereignty. All the US needs to do is ask

ing its strategic potential. Under the existing 1951 defense agreement between the US and Denmark, America already has broad authority to station forces, construct and upgrade bases, and operate missile warning and space domain systems from Greenland. At one point in the early Cold War years, the US maintained 17 facilities on Greenland.

Today, the US has only one facility in Greenland that it operates on its own, not because the Danes kicked America out, but because the US packed up and left. Greenland and Denmark’s political leadership have made it clear that they would be happy to have the US military back, just not at the cost of their national sovereignty. All the US needs to do is ask.

True, acquiring Greenland would significantly increase America’s size. While Greenland looks much bigger on the traditional Mercator map, which might be part of its appeal, at roughly 836,000 square miles (2.2 million square kilometers), it is about 22% the size of the current United States, adding land mass similar to the major territorial expansions of the nineteenth century.

But Greenland, 80% of which is permanently covered by ice, is unlikely to provide a bonanza of riches. Despite some early enthusiasm about its mining potential, Trump seems to appreciate that Greenland’s austere climate

and limited infrastructure are unlikely to put it at the top of the list for critical minerals production.

Be that as it may, Trump also views US control as a form of payback for the US role in liberating Europe from the Nazis, and in defending it ever since through NATO, which he views as serving only Europe’s interests. But America’s network of alliances, chief among them NATO, is a core comparative military advantage, covering all strategic theaters. Neither China nor Russia has remotely similar assets.

Trump doesn’t place much value on this asymmetry. And at Davos, he went a step further by questioning the resolve of the NATO allies to defend the US if it came under attack. But here, there is a historical record. When, for the first and only time in history, Article V was invoked after the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, thousands of allied NATO forces deployed to Afghanistan. Denmark, with a population smaller than that of Los Angeles, alone deployed more than 18,000 soldiers to fight alongside Americans, suffering one of the highest per capita casualty rates of the allied forces in the war. NATO member states, including Denmark, also fought alongside US forces in Iraq.

And while there once may have been merit to Trump’s discontent with the commitment of most NATO countries

to defense spending, the burden is now being reallocated. On a per capita basis, the US is no longer the alliance’s highest spender (Norway is). Moreover, all NATO allies now spend at least 2% of their GDP on defense, and last summer they, with the exception of Spain, agreed to a new goal of 5% by 2035, with 3.5% spent on core defense.

Trump’s doubts about the value of NATO also overlook how the alliance allows the US to leverage other countries’ resources to serve American interests. Military integration with NATO allows the US to field interoperable military capabilities at scale around the world. Trump might have been opposed to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but on the off-chance that America needs to go to war in the future, it would be good to have allies.

When it comes to the resolution of the Greenland dispute, an agreement can take several forms. For example, the United States has a permanent leasing arrangement with Cuba for Guantánamo Bay dating back to 1903. And despite demands by Cuba to return the land, it can be terminated only mutually, unlike other bases where US forces have been withdrawn at the request of the host government.

The Panama Canal Zone might provide an alternative model. For most of the 20th century, Panama allowed the US to control the canal and five miles on either side of the waterway. Another example that comes to mind is the United Kingdom’s bases in Cyprus, which are considered sovereign British territory.

One asset in Greenland gets little or no attention: the island is home to some of the world’s northernmost golf courses. There is one on the edge of a former US military base in Kangerlussuaq that could use some investment. Any proposal that includes a nod to Trump’s favorite sport may well sweeten the deal.

The writer is President of the Council on Foreign Relations.

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SPECTRUM IN JEST THIS

It doesn’t cost anything to give a hug



Melvin Durai

I HAVE ADMIRIED MANY TREES IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD, BUT HAVE JUST NOT FELT THE URGE TO PUT MY ARMS AROUND ANY OF THEM

It has been almost two years since Abubakar Tahiru, a Ghanaian forestry student, set a Guinness World Record for most trees hugged in an hour, and I have to admit that I have not hugged a single tree. I have admired many trees in my neighborhood, but have just not felt the urge to put my arms around any of them.

It’s not just Tahiru who has made me feel a little guilty about this. It’s also other environmental activists, most recently Truphena Muthoni, a 22-year-old Kenyan woman. Muthoni set the Guinness World Record for longest marathon hugging a tree with a staggering time of 72 hours. That’s three whole days hugging a tree. I don’t know who was more relieved when it was over: Muthoni or the tree.

Tree: “Phew! I thought it would never end.”

Second tree: “You didn’t enjoy it?”

First tree: “I did at first. It was nice to get some affection from a young woman. But then she got a little too clingy. It was just like what happened last year between you and the tree frog.”

Second tree: “You shouldn’t have reminded me. I miss that little guy!”

The record for longest marathon hugging a tree was first set in February 2024 by Faith Patricia Ariocot of Uganda. She hugged a tree for 16 hours, 6 seconds. Since then the record has been broken several times by African tree huggers. This is the second time Muthoni has held the record. In February 2025, she broke the previous record by hugging a tree for 48 hours. (I hope it wasn’t the same tree. It’s good to spread the affection around.)

“The first attempt was a statement, a way to reintroduce humanity to the Earth through a simple, intimate

act,” she told Guinness World Records. “The second attempt was a commitment. I realized that the world needed more than symbolism, it needed endurance, consistency, and proof that care for the planet is not momentary. Doing it twice was my way of saying that climate action is not a one-off event, but a sustained responsibility.”

You may be wondering how it’s possible to keep hugging a tree for three days straight. It helps that for record attempts that Guinness considers marathons (lasting longer than 24 hours), challengers are allowed five minutes of rest for every hour of activity. Muthoni could take a break every hour or save them up for a longer rest. But even with that accommodation, I probably wouldn’t be able to hug a tree for more than 12 hours. If it’s a mango tree, perhaps a little longer. I owe mango trees a lot of love.

When it comes to tree-hugging records, I prefer the record set by Tahiru, the Ghanaian forestry student, because he spread the love around. In April 2024, he hugged 1,123 trees in one hour, setting a Guinness World Record. He hugged the trees at Tuskegee National Forest in Alabama, US, averaging almost 19 hugs per minute. Each tree got just 3.2 seconds of his love.

You might think that 3.2 seconds is not long enough for a hug, but in my estimation, 3.2 seconds is twice the length of the typical human-to-human hug. The typical hug involves putting your arms around the other person and then removing them almost immediately.

Most people just don’t hug for a long time. This is especially true at parties. If you hug for more than a second or two, someone is likely to shout, “Hey, you two, get a hotel room!”

Letters TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Tariff relief

Sir, In a major boost to Indian exporters, the United States has reduced tariffs on Indian exports from 50% to 18%, following a phone conversation between President Trump and Prime Minister Modi. This announcement comes at a highly opportune moment, offering much-needed relief to industries facing global competition and tariff barriers. Key sectors such as garments, leather, gems and jewellery, and seafood stand to gain significant competitive advantage in the lucrative US market, potentially driving higher export volumes and increased revenues. India and the US have highly complementary economic strengths. While India offers vast manufacturing capacity and skilled labour, the US contributes advanced technology and capital. The trade deal not only enhances commercial ties but also promotes closer strategic cooperation, benefiting citizens, industries, and economies on both sides. More than a transactional agreement, this partnership symbolizes the power of two large democracies working collaboratively for shared prosperity.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Landmark ruling

Sir, By issuing a landmark ruling that recognises right to menstrual hygiene and access to menstrual hygiene products as a fundamental right under Article 21, the Supreme Court has made an assertion that women deserve a dignified life. In addition, the Court has directed the states to provide free biodegradable sanitary pads in schools and to set up menstrual hygiene corners with sufficient pads and innerwear. Lack of knowledge, financial constraints, inaccessibility to water and sanitary facilities and menstrual products cause serious health problems in women in India. Inability of schoolgirls to deal with menstruation leads to absenteeism and school dropout. The myth of ‘impurity,’ menstruation taboos and the stigma associated with it must be rooted out from society. Only through education the general perspective on menstruation can be changed. Women must not be deprived of their right to menstrual hygiene and accessibility to hygienic products. Menstrual hygiene and reproductive health must be made an important part of curriculum. Education must be aimed at living a comfortable life.

Venu GS, KOLLAM



Delhi records max temp of 22.5 deg C



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Delhi recorded a maximum temperature of 22.5 degrees Celsius Tuesday as dense fog enveloped the city for most of the day, with the IMD issuing a yellow alert for similar conditions Wednesday.

The air quality remained in the poor category. The maximum temperature at the city's base station was 0.2 notches above normal, while the minimum settled at 9.4 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Station-wise data showed that Palam recorded a maximum temperature of 19.5 degrees Celsius, below normal, with the minimum at 8.6 degrees Celsius. Lodi Road registered a maximum of 21.8 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 9.6 degrees Celsius, while the Ridge station logged a maximum of 21.7 degrees Celsius and a minimum of 11.0 degrees Celsius.

At Ayanagar, the maximum temperature stood at 21.8 degrees Celsius, while the minimum dropped to 10.3 degrees. No rainfall was recorded at any station during the past 24 hours, officials said.

During the morning hours, visibility dropped sharply to 100 metres at both Palam and Safdarjung, the weather office said.

For Wednesday, the IMD has forecast a minimum temperature of 9 degrees Celsius and a maximum of 22 degrees Celsius, with dense fog conditions likely under a yellow alert.

On the air quality front, Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 272 Tuesday, placing it in the 'poor' category, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Station-wise data showed uneven air quality across the capital, with 16 monitoring stations reporting 'poor' air quality, another 16 in the 'very poor' category and seven stations recording 'moderate' levels during the evening hours, according to data from the Sameer app.

According to the CPCB, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor' and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Data from the Decision Support System (DSS) showed that Delhi's transport sector contributed up to 13.1 per cent to the city's pollution load, followed by Delhi and peripheral industries at 11.3 per cent. Waste burning accounted for 1.3 per cent, construction activities 2.3 per cent, road dust 1.1 per cent and residential sources 3.3 per cent.

'PROMISED FLEXIBILITY, LIVING WITH FEAR NOW'

Women gig workers stage protest in Delhi

According to survey findings, a large number of gig workers in India put in extremely long hours, with nearly one in four working over 70 hours a week and more than half exceeding 49 hours

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: More than 100 gig workers, mostly women, staged a protest at Jantar Mantar Tuesday, demanding recognition as employees and alleging arbitrary blocking of accounts, low earnings, and lack of basic labour protection on digital platforms.

The demonstration was organised by the Gig and Platform Services Workers Union (GPSIWU), a women-led body, which said similar protests were being staged in Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan as well.

By early afternoon, Sunita, who works with a home services platform in Punjabi Bagh, said she already lost nearly ₹900 in daily income by joining the protest. Sunita said she was drawn to gig work after being promised flexible hours and stable earnings, but she now lives with the constant fear of her account being blocked.

"In the beginning, there were many bookings. They said I could manage my family. Now my ID is blocked without any explanation," she alleged.

Another protester said she worked with the same compa-



ny for almost four years before her account was suspended in 2022. Her husband died a few months later, leaving her struggling to find steady work. After briefly working as a cook for ₹15,000 a month, she lost that job too when the employer's family moved out of Delhi.

Several women at the site covered their faces, saying they feared retaliation if they were identified by the platforms. Many alleged that despite long working hours, deductions and mandatory charges left them with little take-home pay. Sunita said she recently received a booking worth ₹2,295, from which ₹431 was deducted as commission and ₹970 as "compulsory credit recharge".

"If we don't pay the credit amount, bookings stop coming. After working from morning till evening, this is what remains," she said, adding that the workers were also pressured to buy company products.

Union leaders said the problems went beyond pay.

GPSIWU president Seema Singh alleged that the platforms avoided responsibility when workers faced account suspensions, payment disputes or safety concerns.

"When something goes wrong, there is no human support. Workers who go to company offices in Gurugram are often sent back without solutions. Sometimes they are not even allowed to enter," she claimed. Singh also said that women workers received little help in cases of sexual harassment or late-night safety risks.

"All they offer is an AI chatbot. That cannot help a woman facing abuse," she said.

According to some recent survey findings, a large number of gig workers in India put in extremely long hours, with nearly one in four working over 70 hours a week and more than half exceeding 49 hours.

The protest comes weeks after gig workers in Delhi held strikes during Christmas and New Year's Eve over low pay, unsafe conditions and tight work deadlines.

Preventive strategy save 121 youths from organised crime

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 3: The Haryana Police Tuesday said 121 youths, who were found to be in contact with major criminal gangs in the state, were saved from the clutches of organised crime due to an effective preventive strategy.

Haryana Police's Special Task Force (STF), while launching a decisive offensive against the spread of organised crime and gangster networks, successfully identified 121 youths across the state and steered them towards the right path under the comprehensive strategy, they said.

"These youths were found to be in contact with major criminal gangs of Haryana through various means. This initiative reflects the far-sighted policy of Haryana Police aimed not only at law enforcement but also at ensuring social security," an official statement said.

DGP Ajay Singhal said, "One of the biggest challenges today is to guide youths at the crucial juncture where they can either become partners in nation-building or fall into the trap of crime".

He said the timely identification of 121 youths by STF Haryana and keeping them away from organised crime through counselling is not merely police action, but a visionary step towards safeguarding society.

According to Singhal, the fight against gangster culture, violence and glorification of crime is a responsibility shared by police, families and society.

Along with this, the Cyber Police and district-level police units are also actively playing a significant role in similar preventive and corrective activities, he said.

Singhal clarified that Hary-



ana Police's objective is not only to punish criminals but also to save those youths who are on the verge of going astray.

During in-depth technical and field-level monitoring by STF, it came to light that these youths were active on social media platforms linked to gangster networks and were showing attraction towards gang activities, the statement said.

"The Haryana Police operates a multi-layered, technology-based surveillance system to identify youths who come into contact with or under the influence of gangsters through social media," it said.

It further said the information about youths who could be at risk emerges during interrogation of arrested accused in criminal cases and routine analysis of available digital evidence. Active criminal profiles on social media and the patterns of activities associated with them are also monitored simultaneously to assess which youths are likely to be negatively influenced.

"Gangsters and their associates lured youths through greed and temptation. Through social media and personal contacts, they were shown a false, glamorous world of crime where quick money, fear-based identity and power were projected as attractive.

Haryana to launch faceless property registration pilot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 3: Haryana is set to take a major leap in land administration by launching a pilot faceless property registration system from Faridabad.

This is scheduled to begin by the end of March, Financial Commissioner, Revenue & Disaster Management Department, Sumita Misra said here Tuesday.

The Faridabad pilot marks the state's ambitious move towards a fully digital, faceless and citizen-centric property reg-

istration process, aimed at further enhancing transparency, minimising physical interface and improving ease of service delivery, she said.

Misra emphasised that this initiative represents a significant governance reform that will transform how citizens interact with the land administration system. The pilot project will be implemented for three months in one of the tehsils of the Faridabad district and will be closely monitored before any decision is made on expanding it to other districts of Haryana.



The initiative is designed to digitally streamline the entire property registration workflow, ensuring faster processing, improved efficiency and a

significant reduction in human discretion. This technological advancement promises to make property transactions more transparent and hassle-free for

citizens while maintaining the highest standards of security and data protection, an official statement said. Misra said the faceless property registration system will be securely hosted on the Government of India's MeitY Cloud, providing enterprise-grade security, robust data protection and scalability.

All approved features and functionalities will be deployed during the pilot phase, while certain non-critical features may be incorporated at a later stage based on user feedback and operational requirements.

Surajkund Mela features products made by inmates from 18 prisons in Haryana

The Haryana government is running comprehensive reformative and rehabilitation programmes within prisons across the state, aiming to steer inmates away from crime and towards a dignified, self-reliant life

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



The Haryana government is running comprehensive reformative and rehabilitation programmes within prisons across the state, aiming to steer inmates away from crime and towards a dignified, self-reliant life.

Under these efforts, skill-development-based training programmes for inmates are being effectively implemented.

The prison administration provides regular and systematic training in carpentry, painting, baking, embroidery, tailoring, aloe vera-based products, furniture making, and other handicrafts, to make inmates

self-dependent, officials said.

Many inmates, through these programmes, have not only become skilled artisans but have also developed self-confidence and a positive outlook towards life, they added.

Around 110 varieties of furniture and household items crafted by inmates from various Haryana prisons have been made available for exhibition and sale at the Surajkund fair. The products at the stall are receiving widespread appreciation from visitors for their high quality, durability, and reasonable pricing.

The responsibility of showcasing and selling these products on behalf of the Haryana Prisons Department has been entrusted to the District Jail Faridabad, an official statement said. Haryana Director General of Prisons Alok Mittal said that this initiative is not limited to product sales alone but conveys a strong message that with the right opportunities and guidance, every individual can move towards positive transformation.

The Haryana Prisons Department is playing a commendable role in equipping inmates with employment-oriented skills, self-respect, and social acceptance, thereby helping them reintegrate into the mainstream of society after serving their sentence, he said.

The fair is being held from January 31 to February 15, showcasing the finest traditions of handicrafts, handlooms, culture, and cuisine from different states of the country, and from other nations.

While 44 countries participated in the fair last year, this year, more than 50 countries are represented, with over 700 foreign delegates and representatives taking part.

Egypt is the partner nation for this edition, further strengthening cultural exchange between countries.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. : 61-SBP-TRD-OT-2025-26. Dtd. 27.01.2026

Name of work: PROVISION OF 160 SQ MM G-JUMPER AT ISOLATOR LOCATIONS IN PLACE OF 105 SQ MM JUMPER IN SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

Approx. cost : ₹ 42,00,386.32, EMD: ₹ 84,000.00, Completion period: 12 Months.

Tender closing Date & Time: At 1530 hrs. on 18.02.2026.

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

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

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

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

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD)
PR-1079/Q/25-26 Sambalpur

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, BOUDHGARH

e-mail: boudhgarhnac@yahoo.co.in, Ph. No.: 06841-222024
No. 315 **EXPRESSION OF INTEREST** Date: 31.1.26

No. 130011/15/2528: Boudhgarh NAC proposes to undertake "Providing Consultancy Service for preparation of DPR for different projects".

Proposals are invited to conduct the assignment and submit the deliverables from consulting registered architectural firms that have requisite experience in preparation of DPR for different infrastructure project.

The details of EOI may be accessed and the EOI can be downloaded from the website www.nacboudhgarh.in or in person on payment of the required paper cost.

The completed application as per the instructions in the EOI document, should reach the following address by Speed Post/Registered Post/ Courier latest by **3.30 P.M. on dated 11.02.26**.

Boudhgarh NAC reserves the sole right to accept or reject any or all proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Sd./- Executive Officer
NAC, Boudhgarh

OIPR-13001/13155/1/25-26/0015

श्रीमान कौशल और उद्यमिता विभाग

श्रीमान कौशल और उद्यमिता विभाग

प्रधानमंत्री कौशल विकास योजना

INVITING PROPOSALS FROM INDUSTRY / INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS / SMEs TO PARTNER IN THE JOURNEY OF VIKSIT BHARAT

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship invites applications for imparting skills in 16 high demand sectors including Semiconductor, AI, Renewable, Healthcare, Gems and Jewellery, Tourism and more.

Industry / Industry Associations / SMEs must have relevant experience in:

- Specialized training delivery in future-ready and emerging sectors
- Enhanced industry linkages and placement outcomes
- Wider geographic coverage, particularly in priority areas
- Competitive quality assurance through diverse training partnerships

Interested Industry / Industry Associations / SMEs may apply through the link: www.skillindiadigital.gov.in

Last date of proposal submission: February 13, 2026

GOVT OF ODISHA

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, NAYAGARH

No. 25001/16/2526

A.U.P.O.: Nabaghatpur, Dist.: Nayagarh, Ph.: 06753-252049, E-mail: nayagarhrw2005@yahoo.in

No.: Tender-Online-Nayagarh Divn- 13/2025-26

e-Procurement NOTICE

1 Name of the Work : Road Works

2 Total No. of Projects : 07 (Seven) Nos. of Projects

3 Class of Contractor : B Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant class of other licensing authorities

a) Estimated cost above Rs.20.00 lakhs & upto Rs.3.00 Crore

b) Estimated cost upto Rs.40.00 lakhs

c) Estimated cost upto Rs.20.00 lakhs

4 Estimated Cost put to tender : Rs.4.84 lakhs & Rs.45.47 lakhs

5 Time for Completion : 01 (One) Calendar Month

6 Other Details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding From	To	Date & Time of Opening of Tender
1	2	3	4	5
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Nayagarh	No. : Tender Online - Divn. NAYAGARH - 13/2025-26	06.02.2026 at 10.00 A.M.	16.02.2026 upto 5.30 P.M.	17.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersofodisha.gov.in.

OIPR-25001/25106/1/25-26/0015

Sd./- Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division., Nayagarh

of the day

quote

Some people are of the view that an IAS officer posted in the chief minister's office is exerting pressure on the divisional commissioners and district magistrates to cut the names of the PDA voters from the list

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF

When the world's largest democracies work together, it accelerates growth, innovation, and shared prosperity. Congratulations to Hon'ble PM on this major milestone for India's economic journey

BHUPENDRA PATEL | GUJARAT CM

When we play against other countries, it does not receive as much attention, but when it's against Pakistan, it is blown out of proportion. That is when such situations arise. It should not happen. Yes, they are participating in this World Cup, but they will not play against us

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

SHORT TAKES

Roadways bus falls into gorge; 3 killed

Dehradun: Three passengers, including two women, were killed and at least 10 others were seriously injured when a Himachal Roadways bus fell into a deep gorge in Uttarakhand's Dehradun district Tuesday, officials said. According to the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the accident occurred at Kuanu in the Kalsi area on the Minus road, where the bus went out of control and plunged 100 meters into a deep gorge. After receiving information about the incident, SDRF and police teams reached the spot immediately and launched a rescue and relief operation.

One more dies in knife attack

Kasaragod (Kerala): A 60-year-old man, who was injured in an attack during a family dispute in Manjeshwar, in this northernmost district, a day ago, has died while undergoing treatment, police said Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Sheikh Abba, also known as Sheikhanji, a native of Thumind. With his death, the toll in the incident has risen to two.

HC directs Rajpal Yadav to surrender

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has directed actor Rajpal Yadav to surrender before jail authorities by February 4 in connection with his conviction in cheque bounce cases. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma observed that Yadav's conduct deserved to be deprecated as he repeatedly breached his undertakings to the court to repay the amount to the complainant M/s Murali Projects Pvt Ltd.

SC grants interim bail to ex-Ch'garh minister

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday granted interim bail to Congress MLA and former Chhattisgarh excise minister Kawasi Lakhma in two alleged liquor scam cases lodged by the Enforcement Directorate and the state police separately. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joyimalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took note of the fact that the former minister was in jail since his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) January 15, 2025 on money laundering charges.

There was a demand for three railway projects in Jammu and Kashmir but the government here and the local MPs had opposed the projects as there was apprehension of damage to apple orchards. These projects have been stopped for the time being

ASHWINI VAISHNAV | RAILWAY MINISTER

Congress slams govt on trade deal



The Opposition Tuesday hit out at the government over the India-US trade deal, alleging Prime Minister Narendra Modi "succumbed" to America's economic expansionism and has "completely surrendered" to appease US President Donald Trump at the cost of our farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The Congress Tuesday demanded that the Modi government should take Parliament into confidence on the details of both the EU and US trade deals, while alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "completely surrendered to appease" US President Donald Trump at the cost of India's farmers.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh, pointing to Trump's statement that the India-US trade deal was coming into effect immediately at Mo-

di's request, claimed that the "request was no doubt made to create diversionary headlines because his cowardice and capitulation to China had been exposed by Rahul Gandhi".

"In his Truth Social post of late last night, President Trump wrote that the India-US trade deal was being announced and coming into effect immediately at Mr. Modi's request. That request was no doubt made to create diversionary headlines because his cowardice and capitulation to China had been exposed by Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha yesterday afternoon," Ramesh said on X.

Hitting out at the government over the India-US trade deal, Ramesh said "India stands diminished by this unfortunate sequence of events".

He said that from the information President Trump has provided, it is abundantly clear that Prime Minister Modi has "completely surrendered".

Ramesh said that almost exactly a year ago, Prime Minister Modi landed at the White House to greet President Trump on his re-election.

Subsequently, President Trump embraced Pakistan and Field Marshal Asim Munir en-

Modi buckled under pressure, says Rahul

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Tuesday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi buckled under US pressure to finalise a trade deal and "sold off" the hard work of Indian farmers through the agreement. Addressing reporters in the Parliament House complex after he was not allowed to speak in the Lok Sabha as he insisted on quoting from an article that cited former Army chief M M Naravane's unpublished "memoir", Gandhi also said that it is for the first time in history that the Leader of Opposition has not been allowed to speak on the president's address. In a post on X, Gandhi said, "PM Modi is Compromised. PM is too afraid to let me speak in Parliament about Naravane, Epstein Files and how he has surrendered on Tariffs."

thusiastically, "exposing the hollowness of Mr. Modi's huglomacy", he claimed.

Ramesh pointed out that President Trump announced the trade deal very late last night. Pointing out that Parliament is in session, Ramesh said the text of both the EU and US trade deals must be laid on the table of both Houses and debated, "especially since the US Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins has issued a statement claiming that India has liberalised agricultural imports from the US".

Members of opposition parties also staged a walkout from the Rajya Sabha while raising the issue of the Indo-US trade deal and demanding a discussion on it. Several opposition MPs from the Rajya Sabha, including Congress's Ramesh, Digvijaya Singh and Randeep Surjewal, AAP's Sanjay Singh, and Manoj Jha from the RJD, among others, protested in Parliament premises and alleged that the interests of farmers in India had been compromised by the government.

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PM'S PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA EPISODE TO AIR FEBRUARY 6

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday invited citizens to watch the special Pariksha Pe Charcha episode Friday to witness engaging conversations and the collective spirit of India's youth. The Prime Minister has been interacting with young students through Pariksha Pe Charcha



Wingtips of 2 planes touch at Mumbai airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 3: Wingtips of Air India and IndiGo planes came in touch with each other at the Mumbai airport Tuesday evening, and both aircraft have been grounded for checks, according to officials.

All passengers are safe. While Air India's plane was waiting on the taxiway prior to take off, the IndiGo aircraft was taxiing after landing at the airport, which has parallel runways. Both were Airbus A320 aircraft.

Aviation regulator DGCA's team is at the site and will be probing the incident, a civil aviation ministry spokesperson said.

Details about the number of passengers could not be immediately ascertained. An Air India spokesperson said flight AI2732 operating from Mumbai to Coimbatore was delayed after the aircraft scheduled to operate the service came into contact with another airline's aircraft while waiting on the taxiway prior to take-off.

"The wingtips of the two aircraft made contact, resulting in damage to our aircraft's wingtip. As a precautionary measure, the aircraft has been grounded for further technical checks. All passengers were safely disembarked," the spokesperson said in a statement.

An IndiGo spokesperson in a statement said the wingtip of its aircraft operating flight 6E791 from Hyderabad to Mumbai came in contact with a plane of another airline while taxiing, after landing.

Missing law student found dead in gorge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Pune, Feb 3: A 20-year-old female law student from Navi Mumbai, who went missing January 30, was found dead in a 400-feet-deep gorge at Tiger Point in Lonavala, Pune Police said, adding that the body was traced using drone cameras.

Police are probing the suicide angle and said that domestic tension could be the reason behind Shreya Narendra Pati taking the extreme step.

Pati's body was pulled by a local trekking group - Shivdurg Mitra Trekkers- from the 400-foot-deep gorge Sunday.

"The deceased girl was a student of BITS Law School in Kalyan. She had left her house in Navi Mumbai January 30, saying she was going for trekking to the Duke's Nose in Lonavala, and would return by 5 pm."

"When her family started contacting her, her phone was out of coverage," said Dinesh Tayde, a senior police inspector, Lonavala rural police.

He added that around 7.30 pm, the girl's father received a call from a snack vendor near Tiger's point, who told him that he found a bag near his stall, in which he found the college ID card of Shreya.

Early detection, prevention key to cancer response: ICS

The warning comes at a time when the Union Budget 2026-27 has announced significant measures to improve access to cancer treatment, including customs duty exemptions on select cancer drugs and a major push for domestic biopharma manufacturing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: With new cancer cases in India projected to increase sharply from over 1.5 million annually to more than 2.45 million by 2045, early detection and prevention must become the cornerstones of the country's cancer response, the Indian Cancer Society (ICS) said Tuesday.

The warning comes at a time when the Union Budget 2026-27 has announced significant measures to improve access to cancer treatment, including customs duty exemptions

on select cancer drugs and a major push for domestic biopharma manufacturing.

Public health experts welcomed these steps, but cautioned that treatment alone will not be sufficient to address India's rapidly growing cancer burden.

The Delhi branch of the Indian Cancer Society expressed concerns during a media interaction held Tuesday here, where health experts, policymakers and cancer survivors discussed emerging cancer trends, gaps in early diagnosis and the need for stronger pre-



vention strategies.

"The 2026 Budget has opened the door for affordable care, but our mission at ICS remains focused on ensuring patients never reach the advanced stages where these drugs are their only hope," an ICS spokesperson said.

Since 1983, the Delhi branch has pioneered community in-

terventions, bridging the gap between legislative intent and grassroots implementation.

The interaction concluded with a call to action for further public-private partnerships to leverage the new Biopharma Shakti framework, ensuring that screening and diagnostic tools reach the underserved populations that ICS has served

for over 70 years.

Jyotsna Govil, Chairperson, ICS Delhi, highlighted society's decades-long commitment to cancer prevention, patient support and advocacy.

She underscored the role of informed media in dispelling myths, encouraging early detection, and ensuring evidence-based information reaches communities.

Presenting key data, Dr Nitesh Rohatgi, Senior Director, Oncology, Fortis Memorial Hospital, outlined current cancer incidence and trends in India, emphasising the importance of age-appropriate prevention, early screening, and emerging advances in diagnostics and treatment that can significantly improve outcomes and reduce costs.

Speaking on policy and systemic challenges, Dr Urvashi Prasad, cancer survivor and

former Director, NITI Aayog, flagged gaps in cancer data, regional disparities in care, and financial barriers that continue to limit access to timely diagnosis and quality treatment.

Prasad stressed the need for stronger Centre-State coordination and sustained public investment in cancer care.

Offering a survivor's perspective, Renuka Prasad, a cancer survivor and Secretary, ICS Delhi, shared insights into the average patient journey, highlighting the emotional, physical, and financial toll of cancer.

She outlined society's community-focused initiatives, including 'Prashanti', the society's healing and rehabilitation centre, large-scale screening drives, the Rise Against Cancer app and patient support initiatives supported by partners such as HDFC.

of the day

quote

The growth rate of Bihar for the financial year 2026-27 is estimated to be 14.9 per cent. This budget will help in achieving the programmes/ schemes implemented under Saat Nishchay 3 (seven resolves) by our government. We have set a target of providing jobs and employment to one crore youth by 2030. Work has already begun to provide jobs and employment to youth through proper management of the state's financial resources

NTISH KUMAR | BIHAR CM

The MNREGA has emerged as a strong pillar of support for the poor and vulnerable sections across rural Andhra Pradesh. It has benefited countless families but the Centre is murdering it

YS SHARMILA | APCC PRESIDENT

The country has set a target of becoming a developed nation by 2047. Prime Minister Modi has made the world aware of India's capabilities through his leadership

MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

X

POST OF THE DAY

You really think Indian farmers can compete with US farmers? US farmers: Have huge land holdings/Farmer US govt provide huge subsidies to them Highly equipped with modern technology Have enough storage facilities to tackle market flacuations Indian Farmers: Small land holdings/farmer Minimal subsidy by Govt Limited access to modern technology Almost NIL storage facilities, immediately get affected by market flacuations . Only Indian tariffs on US farm supplies were protecting Indian farmers till date But now due to this one-sided US and India trade deal, our farmers who are already struggling will face much difficult times ahead Trump took care of US farmers but Modi let our farmers down to save his friend #indiaustradeal

@Vtxt21

SHORT TAKES

Four women die in road accident

Jagtial (Telangana): Four women agricultural labourers died and two others were injured when the tractor trolley they were travelling overturned in this district Tuesday, police said. The incident occurred in Mallapur mandal at around 6.15 PM when they were returning to their village, a senior police official said. The vehicle fell on the roadside resulting in the death of four women and injuries to two others, the official said. The injured were shifted to a hospital. Further investigation is on.

Students hold protest in DU

New Delhi: Hundreds of students marched through Delhi University's North Campus Tuesday, demanding the immediate implementation of the UGC Equity Regulations 2026. The protest, called the "Equity March," was organised by the All India Students' Association (AISA) along with other student groups. Carrying placards and raising slogans, students said the recent judicial stay on the regulations had stalled a long-pending attempt to address caste-based discrimination in higher education.



The successful US-India trade agreement reflects the growing strength of India's voice on the global stage under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji

PEMA KHANDU | ARUNACHAL CM



A car moves through a snow-covered area after the area received fresh snowfall during winter, in Pahalgam, Anantnag , Jammu and Kashmir

PFI PHOTO

Encounter in higher reaches of Udhampur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 3: An intense gunfight lasting nearly an hour rattled a remote forest area in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district Tuesday after security forces trapped two to three suspected Pakistani terrorists of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit inside a natural cave, officials said.

One of the terrorists was hit during the encounter but managed to retreat into the cave, even as the Army induced paratroopers and a sniffer dog squad to neutralise the holed-up terrorists, the officials said.

Army's White Knight Corps in a post on X said a contact was established with the terrorists during an operation, named 'Ki-ya', by the troops of Counter-Insurgency Force Delta, police and CRPF at around 4 pm in the general area of Basantgarh.

"Cordon has been established. Firefight is on and the operation is in progress," the Army said.

However, the officials said heavy gunfire and deafening explosions rocked Jaffer, Gujra-da and Chigla Balotha forests in Ramnagar area of the hilly district for nearly an hour following detection of some terrorists near a natural cave.

The operation in the vast forest area started early Monday following information about movement of suspected terrorists affiliated with Pakistan-based JeM, they said.

The officials said the cordon around the location was strengthened further to ensure that the terrorists are not able to flee the area by taking advantage of the darkness and thick foliage.

This was the second encounter in Udhampur since December 15 when a policeman was killed at Soan village. However, the terrorists had managed to escape taking advantage of thick foliage and darkness.

Usman was part of the same group which is trapped in Udhampur district and was active in the area for the last several years.

2025 BIHAR POLLS

Winning candidates spent ₹24L on average: ADR

According to the report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), the candidate expenditure limit for the Bihar elections was ₹40 lakh, and out of the 240 MLAs analysed, 100 or 42 per cent declared expenses less than 61 per cent of that limit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: The average expenditure of the winning candidates in last year's Bihar elections stood at around ₹24.33 lakh, with around 42 per cent MLAs declaring election expenses less than 61 per cent of the ₹40 lakh limit, a report said.

According to the report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), the candidate expenditure limit for the Bihar elections was ₹40 lakh, and out of the 240 MLAs analysed, 100 or 42 per cent de-

clared expenses less than 61 per cent of that limit.

Based on the election expense declarations of the 240 MLAs, the average amount of money spent by them in the elections stood at ₹24.33 lakh.

A party-wise breakdown showed that the average spending by 88 BJP MLAs was ₹27.36 lakh or 68.4 per cent of the expense limit.

For the 84 MLAs of the JD(U), the average election expenditure was ₹25.53 lakh or 63.8 per cent of the expense limit, while the figures stood at ₹19.60 lakh or 49 per cent of the limit for the

MAHATMA GANDHI'S STATUE STOLEN IN MELBOURNE

India Tuesday strongly condemned the theft of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the Australian Indian Community Centre in Melbourne and demanded immediate action to recover it. The bronze statue was allegedly removed from the community centre at Rowville in Melbourne in the early hours of January 12, according Australian media



Mamata: Will support if motion for impeachment of CEC is brought

Banerjee's remarks came a day after she, along with her delegation, walked out of a meeting with CEC Kumar and other election commissioners here on the SIR issue and alleged that the poll panel chief displayed arrogance and humiliated them

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is in the national capital as part of her intensified campaign against the ongoing SIR, Tuesday called for the impeachment of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and sought to rally support from other Opposition parties on the issue.

Banerjee's remarks came a day after she, along with her delegation, walked out of a meeting with CEC Kumar and other election commissioners here on the SIR issue and alleged that the poll panel chief displayed arrogance and humiliated them.

Addressing a press conference in the national capital, flanked by scores of people from West Bengal who have allegedly been affected by the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), Banerjee claimed the electors whose names were being deleted from the roll are supporters of her party.

Responding to a question on whether the TMC supports Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi's idea of bringing a law with retrospective effect to hold the CEC accountable, Banerjee said, "We also want him (Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar) to be impeached."

"We don't have numbers, but there is a provision. It would be recorded. If they (Congress) do something like this, we will also discuss with our party MPs. When there is public interest, we work together," she said.

She also made it clear that her party would fight the upcoming state polls alone, and challenged the BJP to face them in the election rather than "us-



ing" the EC.

Banerjee alleged that the names being deleted in West Bengal are largely of TMC supporters. "100 per cent are TMC deletions... One or two maybe of other parties for face saving...", she alleged.

Claiming that those impacted by the SIR exercise are mostly Dalits, tribals, minorities and other marginalised groups, she said, "In my state, there are 23 per cent SC, 6 per cent tribes, 33 per cent Muslims, shall I say get out of my state?"

"Where are we going? Are we going to start a super emergency in Bengal... all India? Only Bengal they cannot control. All leaders from different districts are in Bengal; all agencies are sitting in Bengal. They are disturbing people, from industry to traders, to politicians and commoners... But sometimes we forget, Chair is not permanent but people are permanent in democracy," she said.

He claimed that the BJP will not come to power in Bengal as the people "hate" it.

"The voters of the BJP are going to vote for us," said the Bengal chief minister. "In my constituency they have deleted 40,000 voters, unilaterally. The EC is acting on the behest of the BJP," she alleged.

Banerjee, who had launched a fresh tirade against the CEC after the Monday meeting, said, "Whatever we ask, he never replied; he was threatening us."

"We expected humbleness, we are very humble, we even took flowers and sweets. We conveyed our regards to them, but the way they behaved with us, we boycotted them," she said.

Asked about the EC's charge that Banerjee was "agitated" and "left in a huff", she said,

"Don't believe the EC's version. What EC is saying is just for face-saving."

"After what happened yesterday, we don't expect to be respected by the EC. They work as cadres of the BJP," she said.

Referring to the "victims" of the SIR process who were present with her at the press conference, the Trinamool Congress chief said they represented many others who suffered due to the exercise.

"People sitting behind us are all SIR victims. I could have brought lakhs of people here," Banerjee said.

"They are not giving an opportunity to SIR victims to defend themselves," the TMC supremo alleged.

Questioning the timing of the SIR, Banerjee Tuesday asked why the exercise was being conducted on the eve of Assembly elections.

She also questioned why the exercise was being conducted in only poll-bound states ruled by the Opposition and not in BJP-ruled Assam.

"Out of four election-bound states, they're doing SIR in three states and not in BJP-ruled Assam," she said.

"Why is SIR being done on the eve of the election. Is it possible to do it within 2-3 months without any planning," she asked. TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee also accused the CEC of behaving rudely.

"An elected CM has written six letters to the ECI. Not one has been answered or acknowledged. So, who is rude?" he said.

Mamata Banerjee has also filed a plea against the SIR in the Supreme Court, which is already hearing petitions on the issue by her party leaders and others.

ANKITA MURDER CASE

CBI to probe role of 'VIP'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

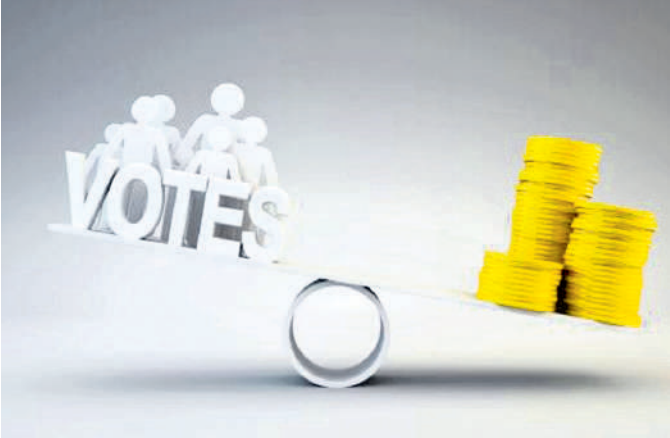
New Delhi, Feb 3: The CBI has registered a case against unknown persons to probe the alleged role of a "VIP" in the murder of 19-year-old resort receptionist Ankita Bhandari, whose body was found near Rishikesh in 2022, officials said.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had recommended a CBI inquiry into the case on the demand of Ankita's parents after an actress, who claimed to be the wife of a legislator, circulated audio and video clips purportedly indicating the involvement of a 'VIP' in the murder.

The CBI has taken over the state police FIR, which was registered based on a complaint by noted environmentalist and Padma Shri Anil Joshi, to investigate the alleged role of the 'VIP'.

Ankita, who worked as a receptionist at the Vanantra Resort in Uttarakhand's Pauri, was murdered by resort owner Pulkit Arya and two of his employees, all of whom have been sentenced to life imprisonment.

"Materials are circulating on social media, including audio and video and others, alleging that certain unknown individuals, referred to as 'VIP', were involved in a crime related to the Ankita Bhandari murder case.



19 Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) MLAs.

For the five MLAs of the Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular), the average election expenditure was ₹16.89 lakh (42.2 per cent), while it stood at ₹24.84 lakh (62.1 per cent) for the four

legislators of the Rashtriya Lok Morcha.

Among the opposition parties, ₹19.57 lakh was declared as the average election expenditure of 24 RJD MLAs, or 48.9 per cent of the expense limit, ₹13 lakh (32.5 per cent) for six



of the day

quote

I have instructed my Minister of Foreign Affairs, provided that a suitable environment exists - one free from threats and unreasonable expectations - to pursue fair and equitable negotiations, guided by the principles of dignity, prudence, and expediency

MASOUD PEZESHKIAN | PRESIDENT, IRAN

Congratulations to President Trump for a superb accomplishment on today's trade agreement with India

JIM RISCH | TOP AMERICAN LEADER

We are pursuing a diplomatic solution through negotiations. I am hopeful and optimistic that we will find common ground that respect our red lines

VIVIAN MOTZFELDT | FOREIGN MINISTER, GREENLAND

SHORT TAKES

S Africa deploys frigate to India

Johannesburg: The South African Navy's frigate SAS AMATOLA has commenced a strategically significant deployment to India, where it will represent South Africa at the 2026 International Fleet Review and Exercise MILAN, hosted by the Indian Navy. "SAS Amatola's voyage to India is significant on multiple levels," the South African Navy (SAN) said in a statement after the frigate departed Sunday. "This deployment marks an important milestone for South Africa's maritime posture, reaffirming the SAN's role as an active contributor to multilateral naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. It also reflects a measured return to long-range deployments, undertaken with careful planning, disciplined prioritisation and professional resolve."

NASA delays astronauts' lunar trip until March

Cape Canaveral (US): NASA's long-awaited moonshot with astronauts is off until at least March because of hydrogen fuel leaks that marred the dress rehearsal of its giant new rocket. It's the same problem that delayed the Space Launch System rocket's debut three years ago. That first test flight was grounded for months because of leaking hydrogen. NASA announced the news Tuesday, shortly after the critical fuelling test ended at Kennedy Space Centre. Until the exasperating hydrogen leaks, the space agency had been targeting as soon as this weekend for humanity's first trip to the moon in more than half a century.

3 Indians held for shooting outside home

Ottawa: Three Indian nationals have been arrested by Canadian police on an anti-extortion patrol and charged after bullets were fired at a home. Harjot Singh (21), Taranveer Singh (19) and Dayajeet Singh Billing (21) face one count each of discharging a firearm, and all have been remanded in custody until Thursday, the Surrey Police Service (SPS) said in a statement Monday. The suspects were arrested by patrol officers after an early morning report of shots fired and a small fire outside a home in Surrey's Crescent Beach neighbourhood, the LakelandToday reported. The SPS members were patrolling in Surrey's Crescent Beach neighbourhood when reports came in of shots being fired and a small fire outside a residence near Crescent Road and 132 Street February 1, 2026.

No word on India stopping oil purchases, says Kremlin

The Kremlin spokesman said that Russia intends to continue to develop its relations with India in every possible way

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Feb 3: Russia has not heard any statements from India about stopping Russian oil purchases, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday. His comments came a day after US President Donald Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has "agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela." "We haven't heard any statements from New Delhi on this matter yet," Peskov said. The Kremlin spokesman also said that Russia intends to continue to develop its relations with India in every possible way, according to Russian media reports. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, who oversees the energy sector in the cabinet, said the government is closely monitoring the situation. He pointed out that Russia is only seeing public statements from the US regarding the possibility of India refusing Russian oil. "We're only seeing public statements. We'll see how the situation develops," Novak said. He said that Russia was confident its energy resources would continue to be in demand globally, as they ensure a balance between supply and demand.



Trump, who spoke with PM Modi Monday, announced that India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff on Delhi, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent

"Overall, our energy resources are in demand. Supply will always find demand because the balance is maintained," Novak said. Sources in Russia's energy ministry said they have not received any notice from Indian refiners to cancel contracts. In a post on Truth Social, Trump, who spoke with PM Modi Monday, announced that India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff on Delhi, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent. Trump last year imposed 50



We're not talking specifically about negotiation yet. We are open to dialogue. If we can have a dialogue, maybe that can lead to negotiation

CARLOS FERNANDEZ DE COSSIO | DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, CUBA

CHINA TO BAN HIDDEN DOOR HANDLES ON CARS

China will ban hidden door handles on cars, commonly used on Tesla's electric vehicles and many other EV models, starting Jan 1, 2027. All car doors must include a mechanical release function for handles, except for the tailgate. Officials said the policy aims to address safety concerns after fatal EV accidents where electronic doors reportedly failed to operate



French prosecutors seek public office bans in Le Pen appeals trial

REUTERS

Paris, Feb 3: French prosecutors urged an appeals court Tuesday to largely confirm a previous court's ruling against French far-right officials in an EU embezzlement trial, without saying yet how this will apply to longtime party chief Marine Le Pen. The initial ruling, in March last year, was a major setback for Le Pen as it banned her from running for office for five years, effective immediately. If that ruling is fully confirmed, Le Pen will not be able to run in next year's presidential election. If the ban is substantially shorter, or if there is no ban, she could still take part. In last year's ruling the court said that Le Pen had been "at the heart" of a scheme to misappropriate more than 4 million euros of EU funds and use them to pay the far-right party's staff back home. Le Pen told the court in her appeals trial that she had no sense of having done anything wrong, and had appealed against the ruling along with others from her party. The prosecutor's office wants public office bans to be decided this time too, Thierry Ramon-atxo, Advocate General at the Paris General Prosecutor's Office told the appeals court. "We will seek office bans," he said. "Parliamentary assistants worked for the party but were paid by Europe. That's the stark reality." The prosecutors are expected to specify later in the day what sentences they will seek for each of the defendants, including Le Pen, with the ruling expected in the coming weeks or months.



Russia pounds Ukrainian energy in diplomatic snub



REUTERS

Kyiv, Feb 3: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy accused Russia Tuesday of exploiting a US-backed energy truce to stockpile munitions, and using them to attack Ukraine with hundreds of drones and a record number of ballistic missiles a day before peace talks. The overnight attack knocked out heating in cities including the capital Kyiv during freezing temperatures as Ukrainian negotiators headed to Abu Dhabi for a second round of US-brokered trilateral talks set for Wednesday and Thursday. "It was a deliberate attack against energy infrastructure, involving a record number of ballistic missiles," Zelenskyy wrote on X, a day after saying Moscow had largely observed the moratorium agreed by the two sides on energy facilities. "The Russian army exploited the US proposal to briefly halt strikes - not to support diplomacy but to stockpile missiles." Ukraine is under US pressure to agree to a peace deal while attacks by Russia on its energy system appear intended to freeze Ukrainians into submission during one of the coldest winters in years. The first round of trilateral talks in late January brought no movement on territorial issues, with Moscow demanding Kyiv cede more land in east Ukraine, which it refuses to do. Sharpening his tone from previous days, Zelenskyy said Tuesday the work of Ukraine's

Zelenskyy says Russia flouts US-backed energy ceasefire

Kyiv says Moscow fired record number of ballistic missiles

Strikes hit energy facilities before new peace talks

negotiators would be "adjusted accordingly" after the attack, but offered no details. Speaking to reporters in Kyiv at a press conference with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, he said Ukraine would approach Washington to discuss new consequences for Russia. **NEW ATTACKS ON ENERGY SYSTEM** Ukrainian officials said Russia launched 450 drones and over 70 missiles in strikes that wounded at least 12 people and struck apartment blocks and energy infrastructure as temperatures hovered around -20 Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit). More than 1,000 apartment buildings in Kyiv and nearly 270,000 residents in Ukraine's second city of Kharkiv remained without heating, officials said. Zelenskyy has previously said Ukraine, which is struggling to stop grinding Russian battlefield advances, was ready for 'substantive' talks. Moscow and Kyiv blame each other for the failure to agree a peace deal. Territory remains the main sticking point, with Ukraine resisting Russia's demands that it cede the remaining 20% of the eastern region of Donetsk that Moscow has been unable to conquer since its 2022 invasion.

Paris prosecutor's cybercrime unit searches X office, Musk summoned

REUTERS

Paris, Feb 3: French police raided the offices of Elon Musk's social media network X Tuesday and prosecutors ordered the tech billionaire to face questions in April in a widening investigation, amid growing scrutiny of the platform by authorities across Europe. France's raid and the summoning of Musk - which could further increase tensions between Europe and the US over big tech and free speech - are linked to a year-long investigation into suspected abuse of algorithms and fraudulent data extraction by X or its executives. Britain's privacy watchdog, meanwhile, also kicked off a formal investigation into Musk's artificial intelligence chatbot Grok over the processing of personal data and its potential to produce harmful sexualised images

and video content.

INVESTIGATION INCLUDES SEXUALLY EXPLICIT DEEPPAKES In a statement the Paris prosecutor's office said it had broadened the scope of its investigation following complaints over the functioning of Grok. The French probe will now also investigate alleged complicity in the "detention and diffusion" of images of a child-pornographic nature and the violation of a person's image rights with sexually explicit deepfakes, among other potential crimes. Musk and former CEO Linda Yaccarino were summoned to a hearing April 20. Other X staff were also summoned as witnesses. There was no immediate comment from X. In July, Musk denied the initial accusations and said French prosecutors were launching a "politically-motivated criminal investigation".



A maiko or apprentice geisha and a participant wearing traditional kimono throw beans during the annual Setsubun bean-scattering ceremony to celebrate the upcoming arrival of spring and ward off evil spirits at Takahata Fudosen Kongoji temple in Hino, Tokyo, Japan

REUTERS

EUROPEAN NATIONS HARDEN STANCE

REUTERS

Madrid, Feb 3: Spain plans to ban social media for those aged under 16 and will create a law to hold social media executives personally responsible for hate speech on their platforms, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Tuesday. Spain joins a host of countries such as Britain and France considering tougher stances on social media, after Australia in December became the first country in the world to prohibit access to such platforms for children under 16. Governments and regulators worldwide are also looking at the impact of children's screen time on their development and mental health. "Our children are exposed to a space they were never meant to navigate alone... We will

no longer accept that," Sanchez said as he addressed the World Governments Summit in Dubai, calling on other European countries to implement similar measures. "We will protect them from the digital Wild West," he added. **'COALITION OF THE DIGITALLY WILLING'** Sanchez said Spain had joined five other European countries that he dubbed the "Coalition of the Digitally Willing" to coordinate and enforce cross-border regulation. The coalition will hold its first meeting in the coming days, he said. Sanchez did not say which countries were in the group, and his office didn't immediately respond to a request for clarification. "We know that this is a battle that far exceeds the boundaries



of any country," he said. One of Europe's few centre-left leaders currently, Sanchez first took aim at social media owners last year, referring to them as a "techno-caste" that should be held responsible for "poisoning society" with algorithms. The EU's Digital Services Act, which took full effect in

early 2024, requires social media platforms to moderate content, while critics say this creates tensions between responsible governance and censorship concerns. The recent rapid explosion of AI-generated content online has fuelled the debate, however, highlighted this month by a public outcry over reports of

Spain aims to hold social media executives accountable for hate speech

Spain joins 'Coalition of the Digitally Willing' for cross-border regulation

82% of Spaniards support banning social media for children under 14

Elon Musk's Grok AI chatbot generating non-consensual sexual images, including of minors. The proposed measures will be a form of censoring criticism of the government, said Pepa Millan, parliamentary spokesperson of far-right Vox party, which uses social media to spread its message. "The only thing they legislate for and the only measures they take are to cling to power and maintain the official narrative

in the media," she said. **HOLD SOCIAL MEDIA EXECUTIVES ACCOUNTABLE** Sanchez said Spain will introduce a bill next week to hold social media executives accountable for illegal and hate-speech content, as well as to criminalise algorithmic manipulation and the amplification of illegal content. Among the measures he proposed was a system to track hate speech online, while platforms would be required to introduce age verification systems that "were not just check boxes", he said. Sanchez also said prosecutors would explore ways to investigate possible legal infractions by Elon Musk's Grok, TikTok and Instagram. His government would begin the process of passing legislation from as early as next week, he said.

of the day

quote

A stronger India-US trade partnership can enhance competitiveness, exports and broader economic growth



NAVEEN JINDAL | PRESIDENT OF INDIAN STEEL ASSOCIATION

As India accelerates its transition toward a carbon-neutral future under the government's visionary leadership, Yamaha is proud to support this national agenda through high-quality electric innovation



HAJIME AOTA | YAMAHA MOTOR INDIA GROUP CHAIRMAN

So now with this announcement (India-US trade deal), I think the FDI as well as FII flows to the stock market, affected because of uncertainty regarding this deal, will hopefully increase.



S MAHENDRA DEV | CHAIRMAN OF EAC-PM

RESULTS CORNER

Pidilite Industries profit up 12%

New Delhi: Pidilite Industries Ltd Tuesday reported 12 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 623.84 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2025. The company had posted a profit of Rs 557.08 crore in the third quarter last fiscal, Pidilite Industries, manufacturer of adhesives, sealants and construction chemicals, said in a regulatory filing. Revenue from operations stood at Rs 3,709.91 crore as against Rs 3,368.91 crore in the year-ago period, it added. Total expenses in the quarter under review stood at Rs 2,929.74 crore as against Rs 2,672.48 crore a year ago, the company said.

Mankind Pharma profit rises 9.5%

New Delhi: Mankind Pharma Tuesday posted a 9.5 per cent increase in consolidated profit after tax to Rs 414 crore for the December quarter, led by strong performance in the domestic market. The company reported a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 378 crore in the October-December period last year. Revenue from operations increased to Rs 3,567 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 3,199 crore in the year-ago period, Mankind Pharma said in a statement. The company's revenue in the domestic market stood at Rs 3,046 crore during the third quarter of the current fiscal year, up 11 per cent from Rs 2,742 crore in the year-ago period. Shares of the company on Tuesday ended 4.3 per cent up at Rs 2,155.90 apiece on BSE.

Varun Beverages profit grows 33%

New Delhi: Varun Beverages Ltd, PepsiCo's largest franchise bottler, Tuesday reported 32.9 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 260 crore for December quarter 2025, helped by volume growth. The company, which follows the calendar year as its financial year, had posted a net profit of Rs 195.64 crore for the October-December period a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from Varun Beverages Ltd (VBL). Revenue from operations was up 13.54 per cent to Rs 4,334.79 crore in December quarter 2025. It stood at Rs 3,817.61 crore a year ago. Consolidated sales volume in the quarter "grew by 10.2 per cent to 237.1 million cases from 215.1 million cases in Q4 CY2024. Sales volumes in India grew 10.5 per cent, and international markets grew by 10 per cent," said an earnings statement by the company.



The flurry of FTAs is an affirmation of India's role at the centre of global frameworks, aimed at building resilient international trade patterns

SUNIL BHARTI MITTAL | BHARTI ENTERPRISES FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN

RBI'S MPC MEET BEGINS TODAY

The Reserve Bank's rate-setting panel will start its three-day brainstorming for the next bi-monthly monetary policy Wednesday in the backdrop of growth-focused Union Budget, low inflation and more recently the long-awaited India-US trade deal ending prolonged uncertainty on the external front.



Markets cheer India-US trade deal: Sensex zooms 2,072 pts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 3: Benchmark stock index Sensex zoomed 2,072 points while the broader Nifty closed above the 25,700 level Tuesday after India and the US agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent.

The 30-share BSE barometer closed at 83,739.13, up 2,072.67 points or 2.54 per cent, logging its best single-day gain in the past eight months. The index started the trade on a buoyant note, and later jumped 4,205.27 points or 5.14 per cent to hit the day's high of 85,871.73.

The 50-share NSE Nifty zoomed 639.15 points or 2.55 per cent to settle at 25,727.55. During the day, it surged 1,252.8 points or 4.99 per cent to 26,341.20.

India and the US have agreed to a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the current 25 per cent, US President Donald Trump said Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

From the 30 Sensex firms, Adani Ports surged 9.12 per cent. The other prominent winners were Bajaj Finance, InterGlobe Aviation, Power Grid, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv and Reliance Industries.

Tech Mahindra and Bharat Electronics were the only laggards. The trade deal also propelled a sharp rally in textile, leather, gems and jewellery, seafood exports and specialty chemicals stocks.



"Indian equities experienced a significant rally today, driven by the long-anticipated India-US trade deal and a strengthening rupee, which boosted expectations of renewed FII inflows. The reduction of US tariffs on Indian goods from 50 per cent to 18 per cent enhances India's competitive position among emerging markets and bolsters the outlook for export-oriented sectors with high US exposure, such as textiles, aquaculture, gems and pharmaceuticals, which were supported in the 2026 Union Budget," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Among indices, services jumped 4.86 per cent, followed by realty (4.79 per cent), power (4.79 per cent), utilities (3.92 per cent), capital goods (3.71 per cent), industrials (3.44 per cent), consumer discretionary (3.06 per cent), metal (2.85 per cent), healthcare (2.83 per cent) and financial services (2.83 per cent).

A total of 3,304 stocks ad-

vanced while 981 declined and 137 remained unchanged on the BSE. "The market has been long awaiting the Indo-US trade deal announcement and the outcome fuelled a mega rally in benchmark and sectoral indices. With India also announcing an FTA deal with the EU last week, the twin trade deals have given a major boost to the markets. There is also a sigh of relief after the rupee recouped over 100 paise in a day, which may encourage renewed FII interest in local equities after witnessing continuous outflows over the past few months," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi rebounded sharply and jumped nearly 7 per cent. Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index also ended higher.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dropped 0.65 per cent to USD 65.87 per barrel.

Silver, gold rally after 3-day slump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Silver and gold prices ended a three-day steep fall and rebounded sharply in the national capital Tuesday, with the white metal surging Rs 24,000 to Rs 2.84 lakh per kg, while gold climbed to Rs 1.57 lakh per 10 grams amid firm global cues and weak US dollar.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver prices soared Rs 24,000, or 9.23 per cent, to Rs 2,84,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The metal had closed at Rs 2,60,000 per kg Monday after slumping Rs 52,000.

The rebound followed a steep three-day fall in which silver prices plummeted Rs 1,44,500, or nearly 36 per cent from Rs 4,04,500 per kg -- its all-time high -- recorded on January 29.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also recovered, rising Rs 5,000, or 3.3 per cent, to Rs 1,57,700 per 10 grams from Monday's closing level of Rs 1,52,700 per 10 grams, as per the association.

The yellow precious metal had fallen Rs 30,300, or nearly 17 per cent, from its record high of Rs 1,83,000 per 10 grams on January 29, as investors rushed to book profits after a sharp rally.

"Gold recouped part of its recent losses on Tuesday after a sharp unwinding of a



record-setting rally that had pushed prices down to a four-week low. Silver also moved higher, supported by bargain hunting following two days of sharp sell-offs," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Gandhi added that investors who had been waiting for a correction to initiate long positions are now viewing the current pullback as a buying opportunity.

In the international markets, both precious metals mirrored the domestic rebound, with spot silver prices gaining USD 9.55, or 12.07 per cent to USD 88.77 per ounce, while gold climbed to USD 275.39, or 5.91 per cent, to USD 4,935.49 per ounce.

MFs to continue govt bond sales despite India-US trade deal

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 3: Indian mutual funds will likely continue selling government bonds, after record sales in January, as demand-supply dynamics outweigh US trade-deal optimism for debt investors, according to five fund managers.

Funds net sold bonds worth 290 billion rupees (\$3.2 billion) in January, the most for any month on record, followed by 53 billion rupees on Monday, clearing house data showed.

Mutual funds are the seventh-largest holders of Indian government bonds and sold more than 10% of their overall

holdings of 2.81 trillion rupees last month, according to ICRA Analytics, amid a supply overhang and bets that the central bank's rate-cutting cycle is nearing an end.

"While the tariff announcement has brought forward positive market sentiment, demand-supply challenges continue to persist as there was no buyback announcement in the budget, with gross borrowings remaining elevated," Basant Bafna, senior fund manager - fixed income at Mirae Asset, said Monday.

Bafna said he prefers corporate bonds in the 1- to 3-year segment and certificate of

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 3: As hiring gets more challenging in India, recruiters are increasingly turning to Artificial Intelligence (AI), with 71 per cent saying it helps match roles with the right skills or 'hidden talent', a report said Tuesday.

Amid these pressures, recruiters are seeing AI as part of the solution, as 71 per cent in India say AI has helped them uncover candidates with skills they would have previously missed, while 80 per cent report it makes gaining insight into a candidate's skills easier, according to a report by LinkedIn.

The report has revealed that more than three-quarters (76 per cent) believe AI is already speeding up hiring.

The LinkedIn report is based on a survey conducted by Censuswide in November 2025 among 19,113 consumer respondents between November 13 and November 28, 2025, and among 6,554 global HR professionals between November 10 and November 27, 2025.

Further, the report found that India's hiring market is moving fast, but finding the right talent is getting harder with 74 per cent of recruiters struggling to find qualified can-



didates, even as hiring activity runs 40 per cent above pre-pandemic levels.

This is because recruiters are facing a volume-quality mismatch and among recruiters who say hiring has become more difficult, over half point to a surge in AI-generated applications (53 per cent), while many cite continued shortages in in-demand skills (47 per cent).

Nearly half also say distinguishing genuine applications from low-quality or misleading ones is adding friction to the process (48 per cent).

Looking ahead, AI adoption while recruiting is only set to rise as around 8 in 10 Indian employers said they plan to expand their use of AI to support hiring goals, evaluate ap-



deposits, as spreads remain attractive against historical averages.

India's benchmark 10-year bond yield jumped 7 basis points after Sunday's budget,

Rupee jumps 117 paise to close at 90.32 against dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Mumbai, Feb 3: The Indian rupee emerged as the best-performing Asian currency Tuesday, registering a record gain of 117 paise or 1.28 per cent in a single trading session to settle at 90.32 against the US dollar, after India and the US agreed to a trade deal.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee rose to the highest levels in two and a half weeks and rallied by around 1.5 pc on the trade deal between India and the US.

Domestic indices also surged by around 2.75 per cent, boosting domestic market sentiments. Further, weakness in crude oil prices and massive foreign fund inflows also favoured investor sentiment.

India and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down the reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent, lower than that for countries like China, Bangladesh and Vietnam.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.30 against the US dollar, then gained some ground to touch an intraday high of 90.05 and a low of 90.52 against the greenback.

At the end of the trading session on Tuesday, the rupee was quoted at 90.32 against the greenback, registering a gain of 117 paise from its previous close.

The rupee gained 44 paise to close at 91.49 against the US dollar on Monday, a day after the Union Budget 2026-27 was presented.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the India-US trade deal is a "big decision" that will benefit everyone

in the country, and asserted that his government always works in favour of the nation.

Forex traders said the India-US trade deal will reopen the door for FII participation, and if capital flows recover in CY26, it would ease some pressure on the rupee.

"With the 'reciprocal' tariffs on India's exports to the US now lowered, we estimate the current account deficit to narrow by around 0.25 per cent of GDP in CY26 to 0.8 per cent of GDP. In addition, if capital flows recover in CY26 on the conclusion of the India-US trade deal, which would ease some pressure on the INR, and result in downside risk to our current USD/INR 12-month forecast of 94," Goldman Sachs said in a research note.

However, things may not be completely smooth sailing for the INR, some experts believe.

"There could be hiccups along the way with this trade agreement. For example, it may not be easy for India to divert its Russian oil purchases quickly. Also the RBI's FX policy could also complicate things. The RBI has been intervening in a rather unpredictable way over the past few months to prevent one-sided speculative positioning both short and long in the INR," HSBC said in a research note, adding, "Our end-2026 forecast for USD-INR is 90".

L Catterton gets CCI nod to pick stake in Haldiram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Fair trade regulator CCI Tuesday approved global investment firm L Catterton's proposed acquisition to acquire a stake in Haldiram Snacks Food Pvt Ltd.

"The proposed combination entails an acquisition of certain shareholding (on a fully diluted basis) of Haldiram Snacks Food Private Limited (Target) by L Catterton India Fund," the Competition Commission of India (CCI) said in a statement.

L Catterton India Fund is a scheme of L Catterton India Trust, a Sebi-registered alternative investment fund, which is engaged in making investments in India.

Haldiram Snacks Food Pvt Ltd (including its affiliates) is engaged in the manufacturing and sale of packaged food products in the country such as snacks, sweets, ready-to-eat products, dairy products, bakery products, chocolates, and non-carbonated ready-to-drink beverages.

"Commission approves the proposed acquisition of certain shareholding of Haldiram Snacks Food Private Limited by L Catterton India Fund," the competition watchdog said in a post on X.

In December 2025, L Catterton said it has entered into a strategic partnership with Haldiram and acquired a stake in the country's leading snacks and food brand.

Avnish Jain, fixed income CIO, Canara Robeco Asset Management said, adding the RBI may continue to announce bond purchases to ease liquidity gaps in the banking system.

MOVE TOWARDS CORPORATE BONDS

Mutual funds are moving away from government bonds and instead investing in shorter duration corporate bonds, debt issued by banks and higher-yielding state debt.

Funds prefer two- to four-year corporate bonds as the focus shifts from mark-to-market capital gains to accrual-based strategies, said Anurag Mittal, senior executive vice president & head fixed income at UTI AMC.

WPL ELIMINATOR

Delhi march into fourth final

The Capitals will take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vadodara, Feb 3: Delhi Capitals put up an all-round display to extend their remarkable consistency, storming into a fourth consecutive Women's Premier League final with a comprehensive seven-wicket win over Gujarat Giants in the Eliminator here Tuesday.

Opting to bowl, the Delhi Capitals Women bowlers restricted Gujarat Giants Women to 168 for seven before Shafali Verma (31 off 21 balls) and Lizelle Lee (43 off 24) laid the foundation for the chase with a brisk 89-run opening stand, helping overhaul the target in 15.4 overs.

Chasing the target, Delhi were off to a flying start as Verma and Lee went on the offensive, making full use of the field restrictions. The duo hammered 15 boundaries and a six to race to 89 without loss, threatening to make a mockery of the chase.

But just when the two big-hitters looked set to bat Gujarat out of the contest, leg-spinner Georgia Wareham (2/28) engineered a brief fight-back, dismissing both openers in the same over.

However, the setback did little to derail Delhi's momentum as Laura Wolvaardt (32 not out) and skipper Jemimah Ro-



drigues (41) showed composure and class through the middle overs.

Veteran all-rounder Marizanne Kapp hit the winning runs for the Capitals, who will take on Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the final Thursday.

Earlier, Gujarat Giants rode on a composed unbeaten half-century from Beth Mooney to post a competitive total.

The Australian opener struck 62 not out off 51 balls, laced with six boundaries, holding the innings together

after the Giants were put under severe pressure early by the Delhi bowlers.

Brief Scores: Gujarat Giants 168/7 in 20 overs (Beth Mooney 62, Georgia Wareham 35, Chenille Henry 3/35, Nandni Sharma 2/44) lost to **Delhi Capitals** (Lizelle Lee 43, Jemimah Rodrigues 41, Laura Wolvaardt 32, Shafali Verma 31; Georgia Wareham 2-28) by seven wickets.

I-LEAGUE 2025-26

TEN CLUBS CONFIRMED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Ten teams have confirmed participation in the truncated season of the I-League 2025-26, the country's second-tier competition, starting February 21, according to sources.

Out of the 10 clubs, eight have paid their contribution of around Rs 20 lakh each towards the total cost of the delayed league. The deadline for making the payment was February 2.

The eight clubs which have made the payments are Diamond Harbour, Real Kashmir, Gokulam Kerala, Rajasthan United, Dempo SC, Namdhari FC, Shillong Lajong, Sreenidi Deccan.

Diamond Harbour of West Bengal and Chanmari FC of Mizoram were promoted from the I-League second division 2024-25.

Goa's Churchill Brothers are almost certain not to compete in the I-League. They were initially announced as last edition I-League champions and promoted to the ISL.

But the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) later ruled that Inter Kashi were the champions, and the Varanasi-based club was subsequently promoted to the ISL. Churchill had knocked the doors of the Delhi HC against the AIFF, and the case is still pending.

ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Pistol shooters begin campaign

India hopes for strong start with the largest squad of 118 shooters with Kazakhstan fielding the second biggest contingent of 35 athletes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 3: Double Olympic bronze medallist Manu Bhaker and world champion Samrat Rana will be among a host of shooting stars aiming to give India a strong start at the Asian Championship for Rifle/Pistol here Wednesday.

World Cup Final champion Suruchi Singh and Esha Singh will also be in the fray on the opening day at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Ranges here.

Four finals will be held Wednesday -- the senior men's and women's 10m air pistol, along with the Junior and Youth men's 10m air pistol events.

Suruchi Singh and Samrat Rana will be one of the favourites to win the gold medal along with Manu Bhaker and Esha Singh in the women's event.

World number four and world silver medallist Ho Ching Shing of Hong Kong lines up as one of the favourites for the women's 10m air pistol. She has made the continental final on four occasions, winning silver in 2019.

A dark horse for a medal could be Cheng Yen-Ching of Chinese Taipei, ranked 16th in the world. The 19-year-old had a solid performance of 25th in her debut World Championship and even finished fifth on her ISSF



World Cup debut in Munich.

Thu Vinh Trinh of Vietnam, a two-time Asian bronze medallist and two-time Olympic finalist, will also feature.

Samrat will lead the Indian men's side along with world number two and world bronze medallist Varun Tomar and Sharvan Kumar who finished 12th in the World Championship.

Valeriy Rakhimzhan of Kazakhstan, the world number eight and the ISSF World Cup silver medallist from Munich, Hsieh Hsiang-Chen of Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan's world number 25 Mukhammad Kamalov will be the main competitors for the Indian shooters.

Jonathan Gavin Antony, Mukesh Nelavalli, Deaflympics medallist Abhinav Deshwal, Himanshu Rana and Priyanshu Yadav will take the field in Junior category, while Darren K Dawn, Girish Gupta, Abhay Dhama, Mandeep Chauhan, Dhairya Prashar and Hardik Bansal will be in action in the youth section.

India has entered the largest squad of 118 shooters with Kazakhstan fielding the second biggest contingent of 35 athletes.

Regional powerhouses Korea and Japan have also fielded strong squads and shooters from Chinese Taipei, Vietnam and Hong Kong are also expected to put up good performances.

U-19 WORLD CUP

India favourite vs Afghanistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Harare, Feb 3: Unbeaten so far in the tournament, a confident and all-round India will be overwhelming favourites against Afghanistan in the semifinal of the ICC Under-19 World Cup here Wednesday.

India are the most successful team in the history of the event, having annexed the title five times (2000, 2008, 2012, 2018, 2022), followed by Australia, who have won the trophy four times.

Come Wednesday, India will look to take one step forward towards a record sixth title.

India have had a great run in the tournament, having won all their five matches quite comfortably, including a 58-run win over arch-rivals Pakistan in the Super Six stage.

Afghanistan too has had a fairly good tournament, winning four out of their five games, their only loss coming against Sri Lanka by four wickets.

Going by form and overall composition, India will hold an edge over the Afghans in the knock-out game.

Wicket-keeper batter Abhigyan Kundu has been the star



performer for India with the bat as the left-hander has so far amassed 199 runs from five games with two half centuries to his name.

Big-hitting opener Vaibhav Suryavanshi (196 runs from five matches, including two fifties), all-rounder Vihaan Malhotra (172 runs in five games) and skipper Ayush Mhatre (99 runs from five matches) have formed a solid unit, all firing as India push for another title.

The Indian bowling is spearheaded by right-arm fast bowlers Henil Patel and RS Ambrish. Both the pacers have been phenomenal upfront, scalping 11 and wickets respectively.

Mhatre and Malhotra, who picked up five wickets so far in the tournament with his off-breaks besides scoring India's lone century, will also look to contribute with the ball.

NORWAY CHESS 2026

Gukesh joins elite chess field

The Indian phenomenon Gukesh to play in world's strongest chess tournaments as the youngest undisputed world champion in the history of the game

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Stavanger, Feb 3: Reigning World Champion Gukesh Dommaraju will compete at Norway Chess 2026, taking his place in the field at one of the world's strongest chess tournaments.

The Indian star comes to Oslo as the youngest undisputed world champion in the history of the game. In 2024, Gukesh won the Candidates Tournament before going on to defeat then-World Champion Ding Liren, securing the world title at just 18 years old.

"I am really happy to take part in Norway Chess again, fighting against a very strong field as always, and looking forward to all the exciting games," said Gukesh.

His rapid rise includes several historic milestones, among them becoming the youngest player ever to cross the 2750 rating mark and earning the Grandmaster title at the age of 12, the third-youngest in chess history. He has also been a key



I am really happy to take part in Norway Chess again, fighting against a very strong field as always, and looking forward to all the exciting games

GUKEESH DOMMARAJU

part of India's recent success on the international stage. At the Chess Olympiad, he won individual gold on board one in 2022, followed by both team gold and individual gold on board one in 2024.

Norway Chess has already featured defining moments in Gukesh D's career. At the 2025 edition, he finished third and claimed his first classical victory over Magnus Carlsen in a dramatic game that sparked

the widely shared table-slam moment and quickly became one of the tournament's most talked-about encounters.

"Having Gukesh D return to Norway Chess as reigning World Champion is something we truly value. India has become one of the strongest chess nations in the world today, and we know many fans will be following Gukesh D closely. We hope chess audiences across India will tune in as he competes in Oslo in 2026," says Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess.

In total, 18 of the highest-rated players in chess history have competed in Norway Chess—with Garry Kasparov as the only exception among the all-time greats, though he has visited the event twice.

Odisha's Prishita attains WIM Title

With this achievement, the 14 year old becomes the 4th Women International Master from Odisha, bringing great pride to the state

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 3: Odisha's young chess prodigy Prishita Gupta has achieved a remarkable milestone by completing all the required norms and earning the prestigious Women International Master (WIM) title at the age of just 14 years. With this achievement, she becomes the 4th Women International Master from Odisha, bringing great pride to the state.

Prishita achieved her first WIM norm at the Trophée Dole Pasino Grand Open held in July 2025. Her second norm was secured at the Grandmasters Mix 22 Fantastico tournament in Senta, Serbia, followed by her third and final norm at the Grandmasters Mix 13 Fantastico, also held in Senta, Serbia.

A consistent top performer on the global stage, Prishita has been among the world's best players in her age category and was ranked World No 1 in her age group as per the January ratings. Adding to her list of accolades, she won the Gold Medal in the Under-16 Girls category at the Commonwealth Chess Championship 2025, held



in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in November 2025.

Congratulating her on this outstanding achievement, Debabrata Bhatta, Secretary of the All Odisha Chess Association (AOCA), lauded Prishita's dedication, discipline, and exceptional talent, and wished her continued success in her future endeavors.

Benzema joins Al-Hilal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Riyadh, Feb 3: France icon Karim Benzema swapped one Saudi club for another when joining Al-Hilal from rival Al-Ittihad - a move that could be bad news for Cristiano Ronaldo.

The former Ballon d'Or winner has joined Saudi Pro League leader Al-Hilal, which is one point ahead of Ronaldo's Al-Nassr. Ronaldo is still waiting for his first league title since moving to Saudi Arabia in 2022 and has seen his main rival strengthen with the addition of five-time Champions League winner Benzema.

The former Real Madrid striker, a teammate of Ronaldo's at the Spanish giant, led Al-Ittihad to the title last year, as well as the King's Cup.

Al-Hilal is Saudi Arabia's most successful team with 21 league titles and four Asian Championships. Last year it stunned Manchester City at the Club World Cup 4-3 and knocked out Pep Guardiola's team.

Benzema's deal comes at a time when there are reports Ronaldo is unhappy about a lack of transfer activity from Al-Nassr.

Indoor pickleball debuts in Odisha



POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 3: Sambalpur marked a historic moment with the inauguration of The Deuce Racket Club, the first indoor pickleball academy in Odisha. The academy was inaugurated by Dilip Mohanty, PPR & PTR Director of India, in the presence of eminent guests including Dr Kanchan Roy, renowned physician of Sambalpur, along with his wife Gita Roy, Udit Babu, Vice President of Sambalpur District tennis Association, and Veenet jindal renowned builder of Western Odisha.

The academy is owned and

managed by Sumeet Panda, Joint Secretary, Odisha Pickleball Association, along with Sweekruti Dash, national pickleball medalist and practicing lawyer.

Notably, Ansuman Babu, an Asian medalist trained under Sumeet Panda, was highlighted as a shining example and inspiration for the young generation.

Focused on professional and dedicated training, The Deuce Racket Club aims to produce players for the Asian and European circuits, while also promoting fitness and building a strong, healthy sports community in Sambalpur.

Bhambri hits career-high ranking

The tennis great becomes the first Indian men's doubles player to break into the Top 20 after Rohan Bopanna

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Chandigarh, Feb 3: Indian tennis player Yuki Bhambri has climbed to a career-high ranking of world No 20 in the latest ATP Rankings, making him the first Indian men's doubles player to break into the Top 20 after Rohan Bopanna.

With a significant jump from his previous rank of 22, Bhambri has officially broken into the elite Top 20 of the ATP doubles standings for the first time in his career.

This ranking leap comes on the back of an impressive run of form for the 33-year-old, who has featured in multiple ATP Tour finals and made deep runs at Grand Slam tournaments.

Partnering with Sweden's Andre Goransson, Bhambri produced an excellent showing at the first Grand Slam of the year, the Australian Open in Melbourne, reaching the third round to collect the ranking points necessary to push him past the threshold.

After dismissing local wild-



cards James Duckworth and Cruz Hewitt in the opener, Bhambri and Goransson staged a dramatic comeback against Santiago Gonzalez and David Pel in the second round, winning 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-3. They narrowly lost to the Brazilian duo Orlando Luz and Rafael Matos in a tightly contested match in the next round, 6-7(7), 3-6.

Bhambri, who is a Round-

lass Tennis Academy athlete, has been steadily progressing since the 2025 season, when he reached the US Open semifinals alongside New Zealand's Michael Venus, where they were narrowly edged out by the fourth-seeded British duo of Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski after holding a set and break advantage.

In March 2025, Bhambri

Earlier in the season, Bhambri also became India's No 1 doubles player, ending veteran Rohan Bopanna's remarkable 286-week reign at the top

claimed his first ATP 500 title at the Dubai Tennis Championships, partnering Australia's Alexei Popyrin. The pair came from a set down and saved four match points to defeat reigning US Open and Australian Open doubles champions Harri Heliouvaara and Henry Patten 3-6, 7-6(12), 10-8 in a thrilling final.

He is currently scheduled to play the ATP 500 swing in the Middle East, using these higher-tier tournaments to push toward further ATP ranking gains and later join the Indian squad for the Davis Cup tie against the Netherlands.