



Global feat

Actor Nora Fatehi's journey reflects how a performer can move beyond industry labels and create lasting influence

LEISURE | P2



Princess apologises

Norway's crown princess issues an apology following days of scrutiny of her contacts with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein

INTERNATIONAL | P10



RBI holds rates

The Reserve Bank of India keeps its key repo rate unchanged, buoyed by a positive economic outlook

BUSINESS | P11



T20 WC begins today

India to open their campaign against a spirited USA Saturday, hoping to become the first team to defend the coveted crown

SPORTS | P12

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State to become 'Naxal free' by March 31: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: A Maoist couple, each carrying a reward of ₹55.10 lakh on their heads, and 17 other red rebels surrendered before Odisha Police Friday, following which Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi claimed the state would turn 'Naxal Free' by March 31.

The surrendered couple, Niranjan Rout (45) alias Nikhil, and his 42-year-old wife Rashmira Lenka, also known as Indu, are state committee members of CPI (Maoist), Director General of Police Y B Khurania said.

Earlier, Rout and his wife had written to the Odisha government expressing their willingness to surrender.

"Today, Odisha has achieved a major breakthrough in the national mission to eliminate Left Wing Extremism and build a Naxal-free India," the CM, who is also in charge of the home department, said in a post on X.

"My government stands resolutely committed to eliminating Maoist violence from Odisha and to achieving the goal of a completely Maoist-free state by 31st March," the CM said.

The DGP said that Rout, Lenka and 13 others surrendered before the Superintendent of Police of Rayagada, while four other party members renounced violence in Kandhamal district.

Regarding the surrender of 15 Maoists in Rayagada, Khurania said all of them were cadres of Bansadhara-Ghumusar-Nagabali (BGN) division of the outlawed CPI(Maoist).

"Apart from the Maoist couple, 13 more cadres of BGN division have also surrendered. A total of 14 modern guns have been seized from them," he said.

Those seized firearms were two AK-47 guns, five SLRs, a Sten gun, one INSAS rifle, a .303 rifle and four single-shot guns.

About the surrender of four Maoists in Kandhamal, Khurania said they were party members and belonged to Kalahandi-Kandhamal-Boudh-Nayagarh (KKBN) division of the CPI(Maoist).

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Well, it may sound old, but it's a fresh speech

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

3 courts receive bomb threat emails in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Odisha Police Friday launched a search and evacuation drive at three district judge courts after the establishments received emails threatening bomb explosions on the premises, police said.

The district and sessions judge courts in Cuttack, Puri and Phulbani received emails where the sender threatened to explode bombs on the court premises, causing panic among lawyers, litigants and judges.

The threatening emails

Sooryavanshi blitz leads India to 6th U-19 WC win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



WINNERS TAKE IT ALL: The Indian team lifts the trophy as it clinches the U-19 Cricket World Cup title for a record sixth time, beating England by 100 runs in the final in Harare, Friday

PIC: BCCI

P12

31 killed, 169 injured in blast at Pak Shia mosque

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 6: A suicide bomber blew himself up at a Shia mosque during Friday prayers in Pakistan's capital, killing at least 31 people and injuring 169 others, said officials, in one of the worst terror attacks targeting the community in recent years.

The powerful explosion, which was heard from a far distance, took place at Khadijatul Kubra mosque-cum-imambargah in the Tariq area of Islamabad, the police said in a statement. The suicide bomber was stopped at the gate of the imambargah, but he detonated himself, police and eyewitnesses said.



At least 31 people were killed and 169 others injured in the explosion, a district administration spokesperson said in a post on X.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the blast. However, police sources said that the attacker was a

foreign national and had links with Fitna al Khwaraji, a term used for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Citing eyewitnesses, Geo News reported that the terrorist first opened fire and then detonated himself.

TV footage showed multiple bodies lying on the floor surrounded by shards of glass and debris. Police and Rescue 1122 personnel were involved in rescue operations.

The army troops and Rangers have cordoned off the area, and security operations are underway in and around the site of the blast. An emergency was declared in the hospitals of the capital to deal with the situation.

According to police officials, the nature of the explosion was being probed, but the explosion seems to be a suicide attack.

Even though their overall

Prevent misuse of national emblem: Orissa HC to govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, Feb 6: A division bench of the Orissa High Court has directed the state government to strengthen mechanisms to prevent misuse and improper depiction of the national emblem.

The bench, comprising Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice Manas Ranjan Pathak, issued the direction Thursday while hearing a PIL filed by 'Alone Trust', a Ganjam-based NGO, which highlighted several instances of incorrect portrayal of the emblem in public buildings, court premises and public spaces.

The petitioner pointed out that at Indira Gandhi Park in Bhubaneswar, the national motto 'Satyameva Jayate' was missing.

India's national emblem is an adaptation of the Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath, adopted January 26, 1950.

The petitioner also drew attention to errors in Odisha's tableau, which won first prize at the 75th Republic Day Parade in 2024, where the motto was absent and Ashoka Chakras were wrongly depicted.

Up to ₹25,000 aid for digital fraud victims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: Amid growing digital fraud, the Reserve Bank Friday said that banking customers will receive compensation of up to ₹25,000 for a fraudulent transaction.

A customer will be paid the compensation even in cases where the customer ends up sharing the one-time password (OTP) with the fraudsters, Reserve Bank Governor Sanjay Malhotra told reporters here.

The money will be paid to the bank customers from the ₹85,000-crore Depositor Education and Awareness Fund, central bank officials said, making it clear that a customer can get compensation only once in a lifetime and provided that no malafide intent is found.

Even though their overall value is low, two-thirds of the digital frauds are under ₹50,000 in amount, the RBI brass said, stressing that a bulk of the fraud-hit people stand to benefit from the facility.

"As long as they are de-

frauded, whether on their own accord or anyone's accord, no questions asked, ₹25,000 will be paid. We will compensate them as long as it (the transaction) is unintended and they have lost the money," Malhotra said.

He added that it is important to have customers' "skin in the game," and 15 per cent of the fraud amount will have to be borne by the account holder even if the fraud is under the ₹25,000 limit. In cases of high-value fraud, the compensation will be capped at ₹25,000.

A draft of the compensation framework will be issued soon for public consultation, Malhotra said.

Deputy Governor Swaminathan J said that the money will be paid out of the DEA Fund, which also includes deposits which are unclaimed for over 10 years.

"It is that particular segment, which unwittingly becomes a victim of such frauds, is what we are trying to cover. So, the financial impact (of compensating) may not be very high," he added.

Netflix's 'Ghooskhor Pandat' lands in controversy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

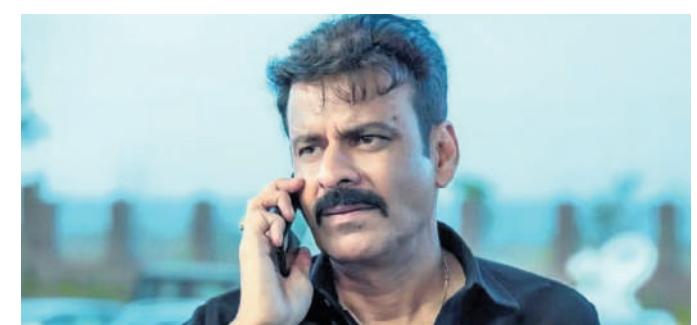
New Delhi/Mumbai, Feb 6: Hindi film 'Ghooskhor Pandat' sparked a controversy Friday over its title with politicians and social media users calling it casteist, prompting filmmaker Neeraj Pandey and lead star Manoj Bajpayee to issue a clarification, saying the intention was not to cause hurt and they are withdrawing all the publicly material related to the movie.

The film, which is produced by Pandey and portrays Bajpayee as a corrupt cop, was announced Tuesday during a Netflix event in Mumbai. After the film's teaser was unveiled, the title triggered an outrage on

social media with many users saying that it portrays a particular community in bad light.

The UP Police has registered an FIR against the film's director on the directions of CM Yogi Adityanath. The case was registered at the Hazratganj police station late Thursday night. In a statement, the UP government said the action was taken on charges of spreading social animosity, hurting religious and caste sentiments, and attempting to disturb public peace.

A senior BJP leader said the Centre has asked Netflix to remove the teaser and other promotional contents of the film. Such a kind of thing, which is against any society, is completely unacceptable," the BJP leader told PTI.



Netflix to remove the teaser and all other promotional contents of the film. Such a kind of thing, which is against any society, is completely unacceptable," the BJP leader told PTI.

caught in the middle of a global conspiracy unfolding in the heart of Delhi. The film is directed by Ritesh Shah, who has also penned the story with Pandey. It is produced by Pandey through his banner Friday Filmworks.

The BSP as well as the VHP also condemned the film's title.

Former UP CM and BSP chief Mayawati demanded that the Centre immediately impose a ban on the "casteist" movie.

In a post on her official X handle, Mayawati said it is a matter of "great sorrow and concern" that the term "pandit" was being portrayed as an infiltrator not only in Uttar Pradesh, but now even in films, leading to insult and disrespect across the country.

leisure

**LAURENCE FISHBURNE JOINS THE EXORCIST REBOOT**

Laurence Fishburne has joined the cast of Scarlett Johansson in the upcoming reboot of horror hit *The Exorcist*. Mike Flanagan is tackling the project, which will tell an all-new story and is not a sequel to 2023's *The Exorcist: Believer*.

REBECCA FERGUSON REFLECTS ON EARLY MOTHERHOOD

Rebecca Ferguson candidly revealed the profound impact of becoming a mother at 23, describing it as being "thrown into the deep end." Ferguson shared how becoming a mom at a young age changed her outlook towards life, especially her independence and career.

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ARIES

Today, you may just want to delve deep into yourself. You realise the importance of polishing the mirror of your soul and Ganesh approves. Spontaneity is important too, and spending time with children is an excellent way to keep in touch with it.

**TAURUS**

You are likely to remain unconquerable and unassailable throughout the day. Caution: Stay focussed and avoid frittering away your time and energy. You may face stress at work or in some ongoing project. Expect a relatively serene evening with your beloved, says Ganesh.

**GEMINI**

A great evening with your sweetheart will be the highlight of the day. It will be one of the better days in business; you will be able to earn enough money to save for the future. In the evening, you may have to spend a little extra, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**

You will remain watchful for most part of the day. There may be times when your colleagues may think that you are being overcautious and paranoid. So be it. Ganesh advises you to stick to this approach; soon, the same people will appreciate it at the end of the day. You may have to attend certain social engagements in the evening.

**LEO**

Today is one mushroom that may turn out to be unpalatable, says Ganesh. The stars indicate that this day shall be smeared with quite a few unsatisfactory moments, especially in the afternoon. A certain sense of wildness and volatility shall dominate your actions today. So, you would be wise to take valuable inputs and advice from your seniors at work today.

**VIRGO**

Today will be a creative and beneficial day for you at your workplace. In the afternoon, Ganesh says, you will be in your element. With your professional acumen, you will succeed in sharing your ideas with your boss and getting his approval. You will be free in the evening to indulge in lavishing your affection on your beloved.

**LIBRA**

Work is always unrelenting and today, it manages to catch up with you in a big way. Expect to be under some pressure to meet deadlines, says Ganesh. But all it takes is to remain level-headed and shrewd in your ways, and you can turn things around to make it a prosperous and flourishing day.

**SCORPIO**

Being gregarious may just catch your fancy today, says Ganesh. At work, you will remain fussy about assignments and deadlines. Socially, whom you choose to be with will decide who you are, suggests Ganesh. Evening will be spent in the pleasant company of loved ones.

**SAGITTARIUS**

The fire within you is set to flare – professionally and personally. It won't be difficult for you to convince people of your intentions. But Ganesh advises you to seek counsel from your superiors and predecessors before you dive into anything.

**CAPRICORN**

Many a time, we emulate others or get inspired by certain thought-provoking actions which explains most of the initiatives we undertake. Your actions today will be inspired too, says Ganesh. However, later in the day, you are likely to get into arguments that drag you into legal disputes.

**AQUARIUS**

If you're thinking of doing some soul-searching today, the stars completely back you. And yes, remember to take a break – no one deserves it more. Go on a long drive with a buddy if you must. And if you get a chance to travel, grab it! Getting away from the humdrum will clear your mind, says Ganesh.

**PISCES**

A day wherein you will be busy socialising in the company of your near and dear ones, or childhood buddies. Refurbishing and refurbishing your home is also likely to be on the agenda. You may find yourself visiting a holy place as well, says Ganesh.

**AKANKSHA ON SCREEN INTIMACY**

Mumbai: As *Dil Dhokha aur Desire* prepares to premiere on ShemarooMe from February 12, Akanksha Chamola is earning attention not only for her performance but also for her thoughtful approach to sensitive conversations around cinema.

The actress has been widely appreciated for addressing the portrayal of intimacy on screen with maturity, clarity and balance.

According to Hrithik, HRX Films operates under FilmKraft and aims to balance mainstream appeal with meaningful

storytelling. He believes cinema should offer both collective joy and personal catharsis, and his production house tries to bring these two experiences together without compromising artistic honesty.

He also credited his cousin Eshaan for filtering scripts and directors before presenting them to him. Sometimes, Hrithik admits, he may not connect with a story initially. In such cases, Eshaan revisits it months later, allowing Hrithik to see it with fresh perspective and maturity.

Speaking about creative control, Hrithik was clear that imposing ideas on a director is a mistake. He said pushing personal opinions without the director's acceptance is foolish and self-sabotaging.

Only the director understands the complete vision of a film, like an artist seeing the entire painting.

By trusting directors and respecting their vision, Hrithik ensures that creativity flows. For him, collaboration matters.

AGENCIES

Reason Hrithik never forces creative ideas

Mumbai: As *Dil Dhokha aur Desire* prepares to premiere on ShemarooMe from February 12, Akanksha Chamola is earning attention not only for her performance but also for her thoughtful approach to sensitive conversations around cinema.

The actress has been widely appreciated for addressing the portrayal of intimacy on screen with maturity, clarity and balance.

In a recent interaction, Akanksha spoke about the importance of intent when discussing vulnerable subjects. She highlighted how respectfully framed questions create space for honest dialogue rather than discomfort. Acknowledging this, she said that meaningful conversations allow actors to express themselves openly instead of feeling hesitant.

She also opened up about the professionalism involved in filming intimate scenes, stressing that safety, consent and responsibility are essential at every stage. According to her, such moments are handled with care, ensuring that everyone on set feels secure and respected. For Akanksha, maintaining boundaries and mutual trust is non-negotiable.

Further shedding light on the technical side, she explained that these scenes are carefully choreographed and preplanned. They are often filmed quickly with minimal retakes, ensuring emotional authenticity while protecting personal comfort.

With this series, Akanksha continues to choose projects that explore emotional depth and promote responsible storytelling. Her insights reflect how evolving conversations are shaping a more respectful and transparent approach to intimacy in modern cinema.

AGENCIES

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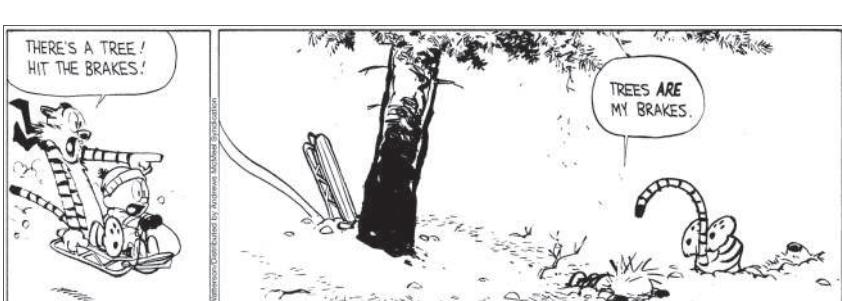
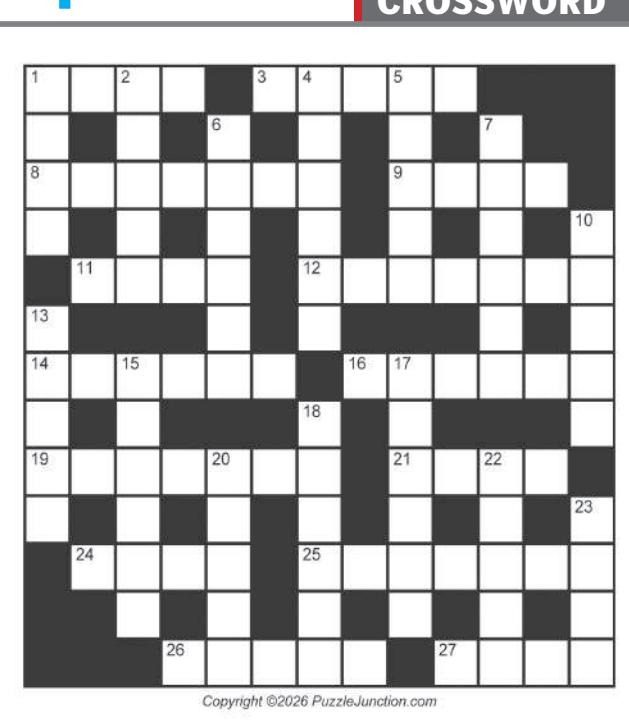
AGENCIES

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE'S MULTILINGUAL DRAMA FESTIVAL CONCLUDES

The Members of Kalakar Theatre troupe of Bhubaneswar staged Hindi play *Bharat Vaakya* at Rabindra Mandap, Friday, on the 4th and final evening of the event. Written by Nibedita Jena, the play was directed by Hara Prasad Pattnaik. Orissa POST Features Editor Bijay Mandal was honoured with International Theatre (IT) Media Samman on the occasion. (R)



PICS: BIKASH NAYAK

PEANUTS**CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****FUN POST**

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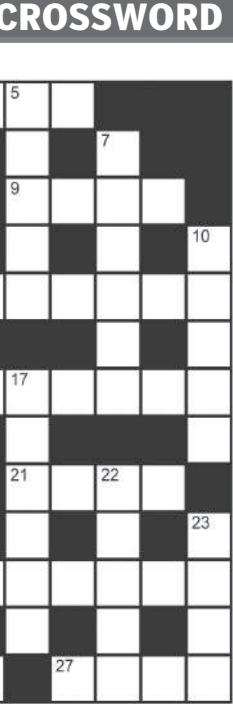
ACROSS

- 1 Unexciting
- 2 Songbird's call
- 3 Origin of the universe theory (3,4)
- 4 Emanation
- 5 One in the dock
- 6 Shade of green
- 7 Buck the odds

DOWN

- 1 Cajole
- 2 Mostel of Fiddler fame
- 3 Up-to-the-minute
- 4 Vantage point
- 5 Wool producer

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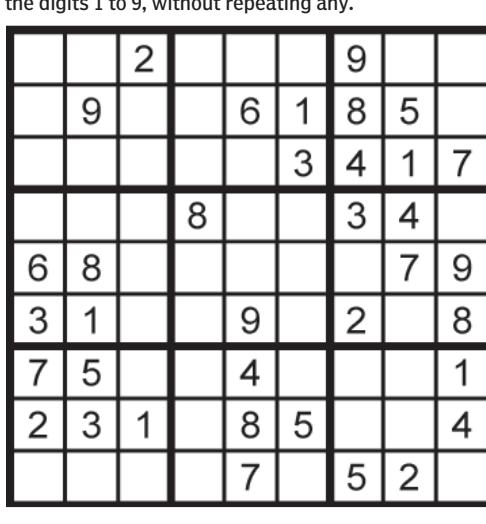
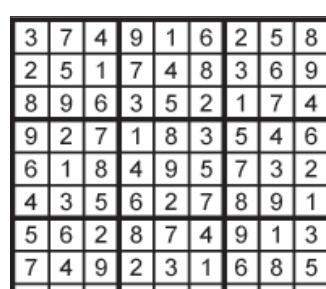
CROSSWORD

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- 6 Cross
- 7 Venomous snake
- 8 Loan shark's interest rate
- 9 Cavalry member
- 10 Like Chippendale furniture
- 11 Compact
- 12 Kind of layer
- 13 Seating request
- 14 Jittery

SUDOKU

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

**SOLUTIONS****CROSSWORD****SUDOKU**

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

Form taskforce to prevent misuse of nat'l emblem: HC

The High Court flags specific instances such as the absence of the motto "Satyameva Jayate" at Indira Gandhi Park, Bhubaneswar, and mistakes in the Odisha tableau during 75th Republic Day Parade in 2024

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Odisha High Court has directed the state government to constitute a state-level taskforce to prevent improper depiction of the national emblem, an adaptation of the Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Harish Tandon and Justice Manash Ranjan Pathak issued the order while adjudicating a petition filed by civil society group Alone Trust, which highlighted repeated errors in the emblem's use.

The HC expressed concern over improper depictions in public buildings, including court precincts, and flagged specific instances such as the absence of the motto "Satyameva Jayate" at Indira Gandhi Park, Bhubaneswar, and mistakes in the Odisha tableau during the 75th Republic Day Parade in 2024, where the emblem lacked the motto and misrepresented the Ashoka Chakras.

It further flagged a signif-



icant mistake in Odisha tableau during the 75th Republic Day Parade, 26 January 2024, as the motto, "Satyameva Jayate" was not written below the profile of a lion capital and four numbers of Ashoka Chakras were not encrypted under each lion in between the elephant and the horse.

The State shall create a State Level Taskforce, which would comprise of a high-ranking Officer of the Home department to act as the Chairman thereof with one member from Police, Transport, Education, Information & Public Relations, Law, Urban and Panchayati Raj to monitor and review any suggestion, objection and/or reporting of the misuse of the State Emblem of India on a monthly basis," the Bench ruled. The state shall make a standard operating procedure (SOP) for the functioning of the said taskforce and would also review the reports of the said taskforce to be submitted on a monthly basis.

The state shall create a unified online reporting portal as a single window for accessibility of every citizen of the country to upload the photos, videos, geo-tagged complaints, which should contain the frequently asked questions (FAQs) illustrating the permissible and the prohibited uses and the timely intervention and the action to be taken shall be uploaded under the action-taking icon.

Such a portal is not only to be integrated with the taskforce but also be integrated with the district e-offices to provide an auto route to the District Magistrates, Superintendents of Police, and the Regional Transport Officers (RTOs).

The convergence and the synergy is to be created in different government departments, which would include the local bodies and the civic bodies for the due implementation of the provisions of the said Act, ensuring not only timely intervention but may prevent any such misuse.

The court further ordered that all institutions using the State Emblem must rectify mistakes within six weeks of receiving communication from the taskforce, ensuring timely intervention and compliance with legal provisions.

People need awareness on digital tools: Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: President Droupadi Murmu Friday expressed concern over rising cyber fraud cases across the country, and stressed the need to create awareness among people about digital tools.

Murmu also said that in order to enhance digital awareness among people, financial literacy should be made a part of the school curriculum.

"Online financial frauds can cause people to lose their life-long earnings and suffer mental and social distress. There are citizens in remote, tribal and rural areas who are not convergent with the digital tools," she said.



Murmu was speaking at the 'Black Swan Summit' here organised by the Odisha government in collaboration with the Global Finance and Technology Network (GFTN).

"There is a need to create awareness among people to be vigilant and alert to prevent such frauds," the President said.

The Centre has taken various measures to prevent and report digital fraud cases, including setting up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System, and the Cyber Fraud Mitigation Centre, she said.

State to formulate fintech policy: CM



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday said his government will come up with its own fintech policy in the coming months.

Addressing the Black Swan India Summit here, Majhi said, "Giving due importance to innovation in the state, our government implemented the IT Policy 2025. In the coming months, a fintech policy will also be introduced. These two policies will play a crucial role in accelerating the innovation ecosystem in the future."

Over recent years, structural reforms have strengthened the state's investment climate while keeping people at the centre of growth, he said.

Majhi said his government has simplified business processes, strengthened single-window systems and introduced policies for IT, electronics, fintech, AI and other emerging technologies.

Stating that Odisha is positioned as India's gateway to

IN SYNC

Kalinga Mahotsav kicks off at Dhauli Peace Pagoda in Bhubaneswar as dancers enthral audience with their mesmerizing act



Asia, connecting the Global South with Indo-Pacific economies, the CM said only in 20 months since his government assumed office, the state has succeeded in creating a business-friendly environment from both economic and industrial perspectives.

He, however, said there is a constant need for innovation, because almost every sector is now closely integrated with technology.

More than 7,000 young men and women from the state will be trained under BharatNetra programme over the next five years, said the CM

The real question before us is not whether technology will transform society, but how we will guide that transformation," he said.

The two-day summit, organised for the first time in the country, witnessed the participation of 1,700 delegates from 24 countries.

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UIDAI clarifies after Aadhaar deactivation concerns

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) Friday clarified reports regarding the deactivation of Aadhaar numbers of some residents of Odisha, stating that the exercise is part of a nationwide database clean-up to prevent misuse of Aadhaar credentials.

According to UIDAI, over 2 crore Aadhaar numbers of deceased individuals have been deactivated across the country to ensure the accuracy of the Aadhaar database and to curb identity fraud and unauthorised access to welfare benefits.

The clarification comes in the wake of recent newspaper reports and social media posts claiming that Aadhaar numbers of some living residents in Odisha were deactivated.

UIDAI explained that it receives information on deceased persons from multiple authorised repositories. Based on this data, Aadhaar numbers are deactivated as a preventive measure. However, in certain cases, inconsistencies in the database or inaccurate information shared by source agencies may have led to the inadvertent deactivation of Aadhaar numbers of living individuals. The authority assured that a robust grievance redressal mechanism is in place.

The clarifications come in the wake of recent newspaper reports and social media posts claiming that Aadhaar numbers of some living residents in Odisha were deactivated.

Addressing parents, the Chief Minister urged them to motivate children according to their abilities, aptitude and interests. He stressed that values, discipline and character are nurtured at home and called for imparting moral education from an early age. "With the right guidance, every child can grow into a confident and capable individual," he said.

Calling upon students to face examinations with a smile rather than fear, Majhi expressed confidence that hard work would be rewarded. "My blessings are always with you. I wish all students great success in their examinations," he added.

School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond, OSEPA Project Director Ananya Das, students from various schools and their parents were present on the occasion.

path of knowledge and continuous learning is what truly prepares you for life," he said, adding that knowledge equips individuals with essential life skills and clarity of purpose.

While engaging with students, Majhi referred to Prime Minister Modi's life journey, struggles and achievements, encouraging students to think ahead, set clear goals and move forward with determination.

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PARIKSHA PE CHARCHA

Study with patience, not pressure: CM Majhi



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Friday watched Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship student interaction programme Pariksha Pe Charcha along with students at the Government High School, Unit-I, Bhubaneswar.

The initiative aims to help students approach examinations with confidence, clarity and a positive mindset. With annual examinations approaching during February and March, stress and anxiety often grip students across schools and colleges. To address this challenge, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Pariksha Pe Charcha, an annual interactive platform that encourages students, parents and teachers to focus on stress-free learning and

holistic development. The ninth edition of the programme for the 2026 academic year was telecast Friday. Interacting with students after the programme, the Chief Minister advised them to study with patience rather than pressure, stating that calm preparation leads to better outcomes. "Self-confidence is the most important key to success. It grows from honesty, discipline and consistent effort," he said.

Majhi emphasized that learning does not depend on a perfect or comfortable environment. "If the will to learn is strong, every environment becomes conducive to education," he remarked, urging students to remain focused regardless of circumstances.

The Chief Minister also cautioned against equating examination results with life's success. "Marks do not define your future. Choosing the

path of knowledge and continuous learning is what truly prepares you for life," he said, adding that knowledge equips individuals with essential life skills and clarity of purpose.

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— Prime Minister, Narendra Modi



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NGT orders probe into Balukhand deforestation



AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: The National Green Tribunal (NGT), Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata, has directed government agencies in Puri district, to constitute a joint committee to investigate alleged deforestation and construction activities in the eco-sensitive zones of Balukhand-Konark Wildlife Sanctuary, which are reportedly causing ecological damage to the fragile ecosystem.

Akhand, the counsel representing the petitioners, had drawn the attention of the tribunal regarding the wanton tree felling, deforestation, land clearing and permanent construction within the Sanctuary and its eco-sensitive zone without permission from the competent authority, causing destruction of natural habitat

The apex green body constituted a Joint Committee comprising representatives of OSPCB, Puri Collector and DFO of Puri Wildlife Division, and directed the panel to conduct a thorough probe

and violation of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

Balukhand-Konark wildlife sanctuary, an ecological hotspot with luxuriant flora and fauna, used to provide a protective barrier to thickly populated human settlements

against tidal surge and cyclonic fury. *Prima facie*, the averments made in the application raise substantial questions relating to the environment arising out of the implementation of the enactments specified in Schedule I to the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010, the NGT stated in an order.

"In view of the averments made in the application, we also consider it appropriate that a Joint Committee be constituted to verify the factual position and suggest appropriate remedial action", the order noted.

"Accordingly, we constitute a Joint Committee comprising representatives of Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB); the Collector and District Magistrate, Puri and the Divisional Forest Officer, Puri Wildlife Division, and direct the same to meet within two weeks, undertake visits to the site, look into the grievances of the applicant, associate the applicant and representative of the concerned project proponent, verify the factual position and suggest appropriate remedial action," it stated. The Collector and District Magistrate, Puri will be the nodal agency for coordination and compliance, NGT ruled while seeking compliance of the report within one month.

State got ₹133cr Central grant for judicial infra: Min

Bhubaneswar: The Centre has provided ₹136.33 crore to Odisha under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for the development of infrastructure facilities for the judiciary in the district and subordinate courts in the last five years, Union Minister of State, Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal told Rajya Sabha Thursday. Replying to a query by BJD member Subhashish Khuntia, the Minister, in a written reply, said the Union Government has taken several steps to improve access to justice delivery in the country, including Odisha. As of December 31, 2025, Odisha has 913 court halls and 156 court halls are under construction.

CLASSIFIED LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF
JUDGE FAMILY
COURT, SAMBALPUR
CIVIL PETITION CASE
NO. 61 OF 2025

Abhipsha Mishra
.....Petitioner

Versus

Lokesh Kumar Purohit
....Respondent

TO

Lokesh Kumar Purohit, aged about 37 years, Son of Late Jagadish Chandra Purohit, Resident of Patarpada (Near Hanuman Mandir), Dist.- Sundargarh- 770001.

NOTICE U/O 5 RULE 20 OF C.P.C.

The above petitioner has filed the above case against you for dissolution of marriage and you are avoiding to receive the notices.

You are hereby directed to appear in this court in person or by a pleader duly instructed on the 27th day of February 2026 at 10.30 A.M. in the fore noon to show cause against the said petitioner failing which the said petition will be heard and determined ex parte.

Given under my hand and seal of the court this the 28th day of January 2026.

Sd./- Judge

JOURNEY FROM CHRONIC PAIN TO IMPROVED MOBILITY

City CARE Hospital introduces AI-powered joint replacement



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: CARE Hospitals, Bhubaneswar organised 'Gratitude and AI Launch', a landmark event celebrating patients who have successfully undergone robotic knee replacement surgeries, while unveiling Artificial Intelligence-powered knee and hip replacement, marking a significant advancement in precision joint care in Odisha.

Among the first AI-enabled joint replacement platforms to be introduced in the state, the technology reduces the need for patients to travel outside the region for advanced orthopaedic procedures, bringing globally aligned innovation closer to home.

Recovered patients were honoured during a gratitude ceremony, recognising their journey from chronic pain to improved mobility. One of the patients shared that the procedure helped them return to daily activities with greater confidence and minimal discomfort. Speaking on the occasion, CARE Hospitals orthopaedics head and Robotic Surgery and Sports Injury chief consultant Sandeep Singh said, "AI-guided joint replacement

enables patient-specific preoperative planning, precise implant selection, reduced surgical time, minimal soft-tissue trauma, and faster recovery, leading to improved clinical outcomes and enhanced patient confidence."

Singh further explained that unlike conventional methods and several existing robotic systems, the AI platform supports knee, hip, shoulder, and unicompartmental joint replacements, features an open and portable architecture, and significantly reduces dependence on high consumable costs, making advanced orthopaedic care more accessible and scalable across Odisha, especially as knee arthritis continues to rise among the ageing population.

Hospitals' zonal chief operating officer Kislay Anand said, "At CARE Hospitals, we adopt innovations that make a real difference to patient care. The introduction of AI-powered joint replacement in Bhubaneswar reflects our commitment to making advanced, precision-driven orthopaedic care accessible to patients in Odisha, while continuing to uphold compassion, safety, and clinical excellence."

The celebrations concluded with a colourful and lively gala night. The event was conducted by the Navy veterans of Batch 01/2001 from Odisha. Sujit Giri, Sushil Kar, Taraprasad Behera, Prakash Kumar Swain, Sujit Misra, Debadatta Das, Bibhu Jena, Sukant Behera, Thakur Jena, and Sushil Patra were among the key organisers of the event.

STA issues advisory to buy, sell motor vehicles

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack/Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: In order to keep a check on the rise of buying and selling of used motor vehicles and create awareness among the public, State Transport Authority (STA) has issued an advisory urging both buyers and sellers to remain vigilant and follow prescribed procedures to avoid fraud and legal complications.

The STA has emphasised that all vehicle registrations must be carried out only through the Regional Transport Office (RTO) or the Transport department's VAHAN portal. Citizens have been strictly advised not to pay money to any middlemen or agents for availing transport-related services.

According to the advisory, used vehicles should be bought or sold only through dealers authorised by the Transport department. Any transaction carried out through unauthorised dealers is illegal under the Motor Vehicles Act (MVA). The STA clarified that dealers involved in used vehicle transactions must possess valid approval from the department.

The authority further stated that when a vehicle owner



BOMB THREAT: Security personnel conduct a thorough search and evacuation drive at District and Sessions Court in Cuttack, Friday, as three district judge courts - Cuttack, Puri and Phulbani - received emails threatening bomb explosions on the premises

OP PHOTO

Healthcare is public duty, not welfare: Deputy CM



NLUO launches MBA Prog in Healthcare Management and Law

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 6: Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo Friday said that healthcare must be viewed as a fundamental public duty rather than a peripheral welfare function, as he formally inaugurated the MBA Programme in Healthcare Management and Law at National Law University Odisha (NLUO).

Speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony, the Deputy CM highlighted the state government's sustained commitment to strengthening the health sector through increased budgetary allocations, expanded insurance coverage, improved hospital infrastructure and a strong emphasis on primary and preventive care.

He referred to the integration of Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana with Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY as a key step towards ensuring universal health coverage in the state.

Singh Deo underlined the growing importance of effective management, sound legal frameworks, ethical governance and clear regulatory mechanisms in the delivery of healthcare services, particularly as systems expand in scale and complexity. He described the newly launched MBA programme as timely and relevant, noting that it seeks to bridge critical gaps between administration, law, healthcare delivery and policy implementation.

Congratulating NLUO on the initiative, he expressed confidence that graduates of the programme would play a significant role in strengthening healthcare systems in Odisha and beyond.

NLUO Vice-Chancellor Ved

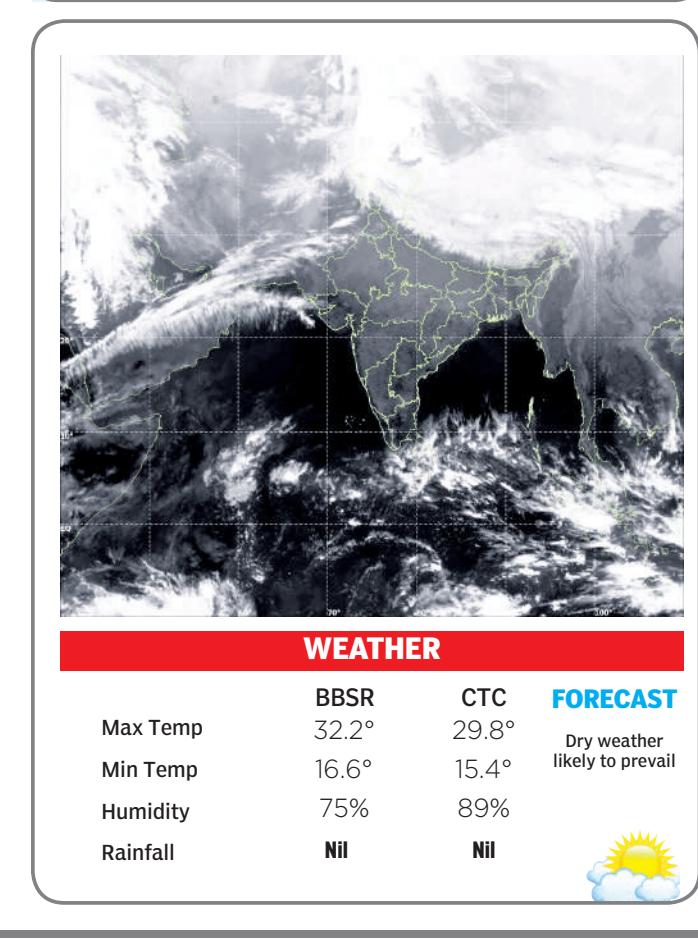
Kumari, senior faculty members, healthcare professionals and policymakers were present at the event. Earlier, Arjyalatha Mishra, Associate Professor and Programme Director, outlined the academic vision of the programme, emphasising NLUO's commitment to interdisciplinary education.

She noted that the curriculum integrates management studies with healthcare law, governance, ethics and hands-on field experience, supported by structured internships and engagement with healthcare institutions.

The keynote address was delivered by Sunil Chandy, former Director of Christian Medical College, Vellore, who highlighted the need for professional management and accountability in healthcare systems. Panel discussions on "Law and Hospitals" and "Law and Health" were also held as part of the programme launch.

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.71 ▲ 0.31	SENSEX	83580.40 ▲ 266.47	GOLD	₹154,424 ▲ 2353
EURO	107.05 ▲ 0.31	NIFTY	25693.70 ▲ 50.90	SILVER	₹244,000 ▲ 185



Proposed 5-star hotel near Similipal under NGT scanner

POST NEWS NETWORK



Baripada, Feb 6: The National Green Tribunal's Eastern Zone bench in Kolkata has directed the state government and concerned authorities to file their responses regarding a proposal to allot land for a five-star hotel project at Laxmiposhi near the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district.

The tribunal admitted a petition challenging efforts by the Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO) to provide land for the project in the Laxmiposhi area near the ecologically sensitive Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR). The matter was heard by a bench comprising Judicial Member Arun Tyagi and Expert Member Dr Afroz Ahmad, which issued notices to the state government and other stakeholders seeking replies.

The next hearing has been scheduled for March 30, 2026, the petitioner's counsel Akash Sharma said.

The case relates to a proposal to allot about 93.280 acres of forest land under Khata No 123, Plot No. 138, in Laxmiposhi area under Shamakhunta tehsil for construction of a five-star "Sonar Bangla" hotel and resort. The site falls within the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) on the

foothills of the Similipal Tiger Reserve and sanctuary.

Environmental concerns were raised over the potential impact of construction on the tiger reserve and its eco-sensitive buffer, prompting protests from various quarters. Environmentalist Rakesh Kumar Mohanty filed the petition, which has been registered as Case No-127/2025/EZ, seeking legal intervention to protect the fragile ecology of the area.

The petitioner argued before the tribunal that preventive intervention was required to protect forest land. Advocate Sharma contended that the disputed land falls within an ESZ and is part of a dense sal forest located between the Similipal Wildlife Sanctuary and the Tiger Reserve area. He maintained that

any construction activity in the hilly and forested terrain would adversely affect wildlife.

Citing official records and reports of the Forest department, Sharma presented data highlighting the environmental sensitivity of the area. He argued that concrete construction within the ESZ of the tiger conservation project would cause serious environmental damage and have a severe impact on wildlife. He also opposed the land transfer process for the proposed hotel project on forest land.

After hearing arguments from both sides, the court issued notices to the respondents. The case, which involves the protection of the Similipal region and its ESZ, is being closely monitored at the local level.

2 hurt in group clash succumb

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bargarh, Feb 6: Two youths critically injured in a group clash Thursday near Hatapada Sai Temple under Town police limits here succumbed to their injuries, police said Friday.

The deceased were identified as Dillip Luhu, 24, of College Road in Bargarh, and Suraj Barik, 24, of Gobindapali. Dillip succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at the Bargarh district headquarters hospital late Thursday night. Suraj died Friday morning at a private hospital in Burla.

Tension prevails in the area following the incident, and police have deployed additional forces to maintain law and order. Another injured youth, Ritik, is undergoing treatment at a hospital in Burla, and his condition remains critical, sources said.

Town police registered a murder case and launched an investigation at the spot with the help of a scientific team. No arrests have been made so far. The motive behind the incident is yet to be ascertained, though police suspect previous enmity or a dispute linked to illegal activities like narcotics trade. Additional SP Shiba Prasad Biswal said multiple angles are being examined and efforts are on to arrest the accused at the earliest.

According to police, the victims were standing near the temple when a rival group arrived armed with sharp-edged weapons Thursday evening. After a brief altercation, the assailants attacked the youths indiscriminately in a crowded area before fleeing the scene.

Villagers lift boycott on ostracised family after intervention of police

Chhatrapur : The family of P Narayan Reddy of Basanapalli village was reunited with the community Friday following the intervention of Chhatrapur Inspector In-Charge Sabysachi Malla. The family residing under Chhatrapur police limits had faced social ostracism since November last year after village committee members accused them of involvement in a financial dispute they allegedly did not commit. According to sources, several women from Basanapalli regularly met at Reddy's residence in connection with a micro-group chit fund that served as a financial support system for them. However, the money was allegedly taken in October 2023 by another villager, Bandana Choudhury, who later absconded with Rs 14 lakh.

Instead of pursuing recovery from Choudhury, the village committee held Reddy responsible and demanded that he repay the amount. When he failed to do so, the committee imposed a social boycott on his family. After the family sought police assistance, IIC Malla intervened and convened a meeting with village committee members in the presence of Basanapalli Sarpanch Bhagaban Behera. Following discussions, the committee agreed to withdraw the boycott and accept the family back into the community. Despite ongoing efforts by the district administration to raise awareness and eradicate social ostracism, such cases continue to be reported from parts of Ganjam district.

Karnataka traders draw praise for ginger purchases in Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, Feb 6: While the state government and the Koraput district administration continue to outline plans on paper to ensure better markets, fair prices and livelihoods for farmers, traders from Karnataka are seen putting those principles into practice on the ground.

Several traders from Karnataka have begun directly purchasing ginger from farmers in the district at Rs 30 per kg, following what observers describe as a "quick purchase, quick processing and quick returns" model that benefits both farmers and traders. The approach has drawn appreciation locally, with farmers reporting timely payments and assured off-take of their produce.

Intellectuals and the people in

the know say the initiative should

serve as a lesson for farmer pro-



ducer organizations operating under the supervision of the district horticulture department, ORMAS, Mission Shakti, the Odisha Livelihoods Mission and various voluntary organizations.

Koraput district, known for its GI-tagged ginger, has recorded a bumper harvest this year. However, administrative apathy and weak marketing mechanisms have forced many farmers to sell their produce at low prices, a situation that has repeatedly made headlines.

In the Nandapur block headquarters, agricultural trade has now taken on a new form. Traders from Karnataka are buying ginger directly from farmers and local retailers, processing it at temporary facilities

they have set up in the area, and transporting large consignments to Karnataka. The development has brought visible relief to farmers and highlighted gaps in the existing official marketing system.

They are purchasing crushed ginger from farmers and local small traders at prices ranging from Rs. 25 to Rs. 30 per kilogram. The ginger is then cleaned, peeled, cut into pieces and dried before being transported to various spice and pharmaceutical companies in Karnataka.

Karnataka-based traders said their target is to procure about 200 metric tons of ginger. They stated that to create a proper market system, ensure quick transactions, secure better prices for farmers and guarantee prompt payments, land has been taken on rent in Nandapur for three months for processing purposes. They added that local men and women have been employed for ginger processing activities.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada, Feb 6: President Droupadi Murmu Friday appealed to tribals to speak up and raise their issues with the government during her visit to Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district.

The President also underscored the importance of education and advised them to avail benefits of government schemes. Murmu, who spent the night at a forest bungalow inside the national park, inaugurated three 4G mobile towers at Gudugudia, Astakunara and Barsia.

These towers will provide connectivity to nearly 26 villages covering a population of around 6,000 inside the park, which is surrounded by hills, waterfalls, forests and wild animals.

Another tower installed at

Constable held for bid to outrage scribe's modesty

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, Feb 6: A police constable posted at Tantipala Marine police station has been arrested by Kendrapara Town police for allegedly assaulting and attempting to outrage the modesty of a woman reporter under the pretext of marriage.

According to SDPO Jyoti Ranjan Gauda, the 23-year-old reporter, a resident under Marshaghai police jurisdiction, filed a complaint Thursday stating that constable Smruti Ranjan Khuntia had assaulted and attempted to outrage her modesty February 1. He allegedly even threatened her with dire consequences if she refused a physical relationship.

Acting on the complaint, Kendrapara Town police registered a case and arrested the accused constable. Both the accused and the victim were sent for medical examination at the District Headquarters Hospital.

Kendrapara SP Siddharth Kataria stated that the constable will be produced before the SDJM Court of Kendrapara and will be suspended for his alleged heinous act.

After the command for auto-launch was given, the two-stage solid-propelled missile took off on a designated flight path and homed onto the pre-designated target area in the Bay of Bengal with accuracy.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation

Prez interacts with tribals, highlights education



Nanna inside the forests could not be operated during the President's visit, they added.

While interacting with the tribals, the President told them that they should speak up and inform the government about the problems they face in forests.

"Unless you speak, who will know the problems? The tribals generally remain silent and

speak less about their issues," Murmu said, adding that tribal mothers should be aware of their rights and ensure that their children study.

Noting that education can change the lives of tribals, Murmu said, "I have not come here to just deliver speeches." "I want to understand your problems," she said, adding

that it is important for the unemployed youth to learn to be self-reliant with the help of their skills and abilities. In a post on X, the President of India said, "President Droupadi Murmu interacted with women and youth of tribal communities at Similipal, Odisha. The President underscored the importance of education and advised them to work hard and become active participants in the nation's development journey."

In the morning, the President had an informal chat with the local people and distributed 100 blankets among the tribals.

Murmu is the first President to spend the night at Similipal National Park, officials said, adding that elaborate security arrangements were made for her visit and entry of visitors to the forests was restricted since February 4.

Missing Class X girl dies in hosp

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 6: A Class X student, who went missing on her way to school Wednesday and was later found unconscious in a forest under Bisra police limits, succumbed during treatment at Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) early Friday. The cause of death remains unclear, police said.

The incident occurred in Jamberia village under Bisra police limits in Sundargarh district. The minor girl, a student of Sanambua Government High School, left home Wednesday at around 9:30am on a bicycle to attend school but did not reach the campus.

School authorities informed her family at about 3:30pm that she was absent, prompting her family members and villagers to search in nearby areas. Later, some locals found her bicycle abandoned near the Bagdega forest road.

Agni-3 is one of the sophisticated and accurate missiles of its class and has already been inducted into the armed forces. It is capable of carrying a payload weighing 1.5 tonnes to a distance of more than 3,000 km.

She was first admitted to the Bisra community health centre and later referred to Rourkela Government Hospital (RGH) after her condition deteriorated. However, she died there at around 3am Friday while undergoing treatment.

Police seized her bicycle, school bag and a bottle suspected of containing poison from the spot where she was found. Though preliminary investigation suggests possible poisoning, police said no conclusion has been reached. The girl's father, Pahlu Mahato, alleged that she was abducted on her way to school, sexually assaulted and left in the forest. Family members and local residents have demanded a thorough investigation.

A case (38/26) has been registered in this regard at Bisra police station. A scientific team has examined the spot.

SEAFARER MISSING Naveen urges Centre to intervene

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 6: BJD chief Naveen Patnaik Friday expressed concern over the disappearance of an Odisha seafarer near Mauritius since February 3 and sought the Centre's intervention to trace him.

The seafarer, identified as Sarthak Mohapatra, went missing February 3 while onboard a vessel in mid-ocean near Mauritius. "Deeply concerned about the disappearance of Cadet Sarthak Mohapatra from #Odisha. My thoughts are with his family," Patnaik wrote on X.

He urged the Directorate General of Shipping, and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to extend urgent assistance and coordinate with all stakeholders to support the family and expedite search efforts.

Patnaik also prayed for Sarthak's safe return.

Following information about the incident, the Odisha government has taken up the

matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs, the MEA, the Ministry of Shipping and the Directorate General of Shipping, seeking an immediate inquiry, said principal resident commissioner Vishal Gagan.

An official from the shipping company Thursday visited Sarthak's home and met his family members.

Sarthak's mother Rashmita Mohapatra has lodged a missing person report at Saheed Nagar police station here.

Meanwhile, ministers at both the state and Union levels have written to Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal, requesting urgent intervention to trace

and rescue the seafarer.

Odisha Skill Development Minister Sampad Chandra Swain said Sarthak's mother, Rashmita Mohapatra, personally met him, describing the family's anguish. In his letter to Sonowal, Swain emphasised the need for "personal intervention in this alarming situation" to locate Sarthak.

Similarly, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan expressed concern over the cadet's sudden disappearance, highlighting the "immense distress faced by the family" and seeking immediate assistance.

Both ministers have urged all possible support for search and rescue operations.

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

For & on behalf of President of India, Chief Engineer (CON) S.E.Railway, Garden Reach, Kolkata-700043 invites E-Tender for the under mentioned work. Following tender has been uploaded on website www.ireps.gov.in The tender will be closed at 12:00 hrs. on due date : e-Tender Notice No. : 4612-GRC-CE-C-01-01-2026; Brief Description of

Work : Mechanical works at upcoming C&W examination and ROH facilities at Barpali loading Bulb in connection with Mahanadi Coalfields Limited Siding work of South Eastern Railway; Approx.

Cost : ₹ 29.64 Crore; Bid Security Deposit: ₹ 16,31,800.00; Completion period of the work: Six (06) months from the date of issue of Letter of Acceptance (LOA).

Tender closing Date & Time : At 1530 hrs. on 24.02.2026.

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.

Divisional Railway Manager (Elect-G), Sambalpur

Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (Under the aegis of Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India)

15-A, Sector-07, Dwarka, New Delhi - 110075
Advt. No. : CCR/11011/01/2026/01

Subject : Filling up of 01 (One) post of Director at CCRT Headquarters, New Delhi - reg.

Applications are invited from willing and eligible candidates for the post of Director in the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training, New Delhi by Composite Method : Deputation (including short-term contract) plus promotion : failing which by Direct Recruitment basis as per the Recruitment Rules of CCRT in the Pay level-12 (Rs.76,800-2,05,200) as per 7th CPC. The vacant details are as under:

St. No. Name of No. of Post Pay Level & Scale Mode of Recruitment

1. Director 01 Pay level - 12 (Rs.78,800-2,09,200) as per 7th CPC Composite Method : Deputation (including short-term contract) plus promotion : failing which by Direct Recruitment

The prescribed Application Format is available on CCRT website ccrtindia.gov.in Interested/eligible candidates may submit the applications in prescribed format along with all the relevant documents to Dy Director (Admin), CCRT, 15-A, Sector-7, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 Through Proper Channel.

The last date for receipt of duly filled in Application form is 60 (Sixty) days from the date of publication of Advertisement in Employment News. The closing date of the week in which the advertisement is published in the Employment News shall apply.

Dy. Director (Administration), CCRT, New Delhi

ccbc

FOCUS GEOPOLITICS

INDIA'S DILEMMA



Foreign-policy sophistication is where governments accept the need to modify domestic policies to suit their partners, as the security and economic benefits outweigh the loss of absolute sovereignty

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has issued a battle cry in the global fight against deglobalization. In a historic speech at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, he called on the world's "middle powers" to take a new approach to revisionist powers, a list that now includes not only China and Russia, but also the United States. In an era of economic nationalism, Carney thinks that middle powers must band together to uphold a rules-based international order.

Can India, the world's largest middle power, reinvent its foreign policy to meet this moment? Doing so would certainly be to the country's benefit, as its interests are fully aligned with Carney's proposed approach. India's economic success over the last three decades was born out of engagement with the world economy: the miracle of services exports, built on Western technology, financing, and markets.

US President Donald Trump's capricious trade policy took aim at those commercial ties, dealing a serious blow to India. The India-US trade deal that Trump recently announced will supposedly lower US tariffs on India's goods exports from 50% – among the highest imposed by his administration – to 18% in exchange for India agreeing to halt Russian oil imports and reduce trade barriers. But many questions remain unanswered, and the lack of a rules-based order means that trade friction between the two countries will continue.

In this environment, deepening ties with the rest of the OECD economies, which boast a combined GDP of roughly \$38 trillion, holds immense potential for India. Indian heft would also help stabilize the international order. Logic dictates that India should focus its diplomatic engagement here, forging the commercial and

technological links required to drive its economic growth. Its new free-trade agreements with the European Union and the United Kingdom are steps in this direction.

But this approach is inconsistent with the conventional wisdom of India's foreign-policy establishment. Many in India have interpreted Carney's call as a vindication of its traditional non-alignment doctrine. Some commentators have seized on the "middle power" rhetoric to argue for a return to the vision of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that India should stand aloof from global affairs, hovering above great-power rivalries.

Where does this thinking come from? It reflects deep-seated anti-colonial, anti-Western sentiment. In fact, while India's stated position for decades was non-aligned, its operational bias tilted toward the Soviet Union.

The Indian state's strategic memory is long: China's attack on India in 1962, and the Soviet Union's support for India in the 1971 war with US-backed Pakistan that established an independent Bangladesh, are not historical footnotes. For many in the establishment, they remain formative events. Alongside this, the Indian establish-

ment has long had a penchant for economic nationalism, with an ever-present tactical willingness to use state power to "protect" domestic firms and workers.

Former Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh, as well as former foreign ministers Jaswant Singh and Yashwant Sinha, spent years trying to awaken India's foreign-policy and security establishment to post-Soviet realities. They recognized that, in the 21st century, India's natural partner is the West. Their impact upon mainstream beliefs was limited. Trump's behaviour has reinforced skeptics' view that the West is unreliable, and that "strategic autonomy" is India's only safe harbour.

To anticipate how Indian foreign policy will work, we should categorize state capability in foreign policy into three modes. At the most basic level, a state may practice strategic autonomy and make no deals. Policymakers may engage in moral posturing and give stirring speeches while eschewing the compromises required for deep engagement with alliance partners. This would be a bit like a judge who delivers lectures but refuses to issue enforceable orders.

The writer is Co-Founder of XKDR Forum, a non-profit research organization in Mumbai.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Ajay Shah

**AUTHORITIES
ARE ALLERGIC
TO MODIFYING
DOMESTIC
POLICY TO
ACCOMMODATE
EXTERNAL
PARTNERS**

SPECTRUM FOREIGN POLICY

Indo-US alliance: A strategic illusion



Bhabani Shankar
Nayak

**THE US HAS
NEVER BEEN
A GENUINE
FRIEND OF INDIA;
INSTEAD, IT HAS
REPEATEDLY
USED ITS
IMPERIAL POWER
TO RESTRAIN
INDIA'S RISE**

The hugging, hobnobbing, and digital display of friendship on social media between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump appear to be designed mainly for public consumption, without any substantial achievement for Indians or the Indian economy. The much-talked-about, so-called non-existent free trade deal between the US and India reflects unfair and unequal trade relations between the two countries. Trump reportedly promised to reduce US tariffs on Indian exports to 18% in return for India's promise to reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers on US goods and services to zero. Such a trade arrangement is likely to undermine India's productive capacities in various sectors and drain Indian wealth and human resources in favour of the American economy. The US ruling elites and their corporations seem to view India merely as a market, without any genuine friendship or commitment to stand together during times of crisis or need.

History reveals that the American ruling elites and their imperialist system have never truly stood with any-

one. When it comes to India's national interests, US power elites have consistently acted against India and Indian interests, seeking to undermine those interests and exploit crises by accelerating instabilities and promoting military conflicts. They have attempted to checkmate India's industrial and technological progress while simultaneously using the technologically advanced and skilled Indian workforce to establish, shape, and develop Silicon Valley and advance their own technological dominance.

The US has never been a genuine friend of India; instead, it has repeatedly used its imperial power to restrain India's rise. Therefore, India must remain clear-eyed and realistic while developing alliances with the US. It is a strategic illusion to expect significant gains from an Indo-US alliance.

The US is attempting to bully, pressure and trap India in various ways to join US-led alliances like as a junior partner, not only to contain China but also to limit India itself. By falling into this US trap, the government is not only undermining India's independent foreign policy but also creating conditions that could

weaken the Indian economy and pave the way for American dominance over Asia.

The Indian government and the Indian people must remain vigilant against all American attempts in the form of trade deals and military alliances.

One only needs to look at how American imperialism and its European allies have devastated Ukraine and then abandoned it in the midst of a military and humanitarian crisis, where Russians and Ukrainians are suffering directly and people across Europe are paying the price of the war on a daily basis.

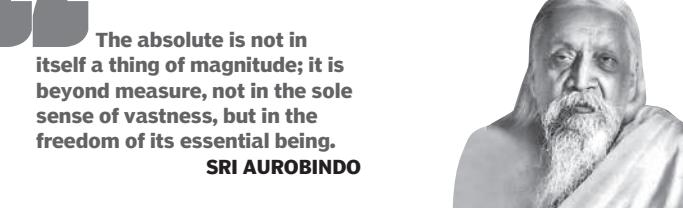
Similarly, American imperialism has destabilised Pakistan by using its military as a proxy to contain India, while also undermining the Pakistani people. The US is manufacturing conflicts and is currently involved in numerous wars and interventions around the world to sustain its imperialist system and maintain the dominance of American capitalism, which is increasingly weakening due to its own internal contradictions.

India and its current government must learn from history to understand the dangers of forming any kind of alliance with the US. India must revive

and follow its time-tested non-aligned foreign policy strategies and its traditions to uphold its independence, while promoting internationalism based on solidarity with peoples and nations suffering under imperialist domination and exploitation.

American imperialism has often aligned itself with autocratic, reactionary, and undemocratic regimes while undermining liberal and secular democracies. The state-led, corporate-driven model of planned American capitalism and its market-centered democracy are not compatible with India's aspirations for inclusive and democratic development. Therefore, it is essential to oppose unfair trade agreements and imperialist military alliances between India and the US for the sake of India and Indians. India must not forget to celebrate its historic struggles against imperialism, as well as its longstanding tradition of international solidarity with other anti-imperialist movements around the world.

The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University.



Tightening Screws

Scratch the surface of sarkari rules, and they quickly become about power, career pathways, and the familiar tug-of-war between the Centre and the states.

The Ministry of Home Affairs' latest directive fits that pattern neatly. IPS officers from the 2011 batch onwards will now need at least two years of central deputation at the SP or DIG level to be empanelled for senior posts like Inspector General at the Centre. No central stint, no climb up the ladder.

This marks a quiet but important shift. For years, district policing was seen as the real proving ground, while central postings were useful but optional. That balance has now flipped. Central experience is no longer a value-add but a prerequisite.

Officially, the reason is straightforward. Central forces and agencies are short of officers at the middle and senior levels. Vacancies are mounting, and the Centre believes states aren't sending enough suitable officers. The solution, then, is to make deputation unavoidable.

But the implications go well beyond staffing gaps. Making central deputation mandatory risks skewing senior leadership towards officers with stronger bureaucratic exposure than sustained field experience. That may not sit well in a country where policing challenges are anything but desk bound.

There's also a clear contradiction with the Supreme Court's direction to gradually reduce IPS deputation to the CAPFs and create space for cadre officers. The Centre's push for more IPS officers into these roles sits awkwardly with that intent.

And then there's federalism. States have always been protective of their IPS officers, for both administrative and political reasons. Tying promotions to central postings looks less like neutral reform and more like the Centre tightening its grip over police careers.

The irony is hard to miss. Officers now need central experience to move up, but actually getting that experience still depends on state governments releasing them. That is never assured.

From Patna to paradise

It wasn't a rumour. In the run-up to the New Year, a group of IAS and IPS officers from Bihar went abroad on approved leave, fanning out to destinations including the US and Bali. The trips were officially sanctioned and fully within the rules, and in some cases stretched to 42 days, long enough for the files back home to feel truly abandoned.

No laws were broken, no procedures bypassed. The paperwork was in order, permissions granted, and the system did exactly what it was designed to do. This wasn't a case of babus slipping out unnoticed. Everything was neat, legal and impeccably documented.

And yet, context has a way of ruining a good technical defence. Bihar isn't exactly coasting. Administrative pressure, law-and-order challenges and routine governance headaches are the state's permanent background score. Against that, the sight of a significant chunk of senior bureaucracy holidaying overseas was bound to jar.

No one disputes the right to a break. But when too many senior officers are simultaneously off the grid, the optics shift from "well-earned leave" to "collective getaway." That's when public patience thins, even if the rulebook stays silent.

The babus are back now, passports tucked away and inboxes overflowing. One hopes they returned refreshed. Next destination: Arctic cruises, perhaps!

PSU power scare

When you head a Maharatna heavyweight like SAIL, even a minor tech glitch can spark major conspiracy theories.

That's exactly what played out on the last working day of January, when the name of SAIL Chairman and Managing Director Amarendu Prakash briefly disappeared from the Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) website. In Delhi's tightly wound PSU ecosystem, that was enough to set alarm bells ringing. Speculation spread rapidly, was he being shown the door, or was it some big decision about to drop?

For much of the day, the rumour mill worked overtime, and industry watchers indulged in a bout of enthusiastic kite-flying. Ironically, Prakash's details remained unchanged on SAIL's own website throughout. But the PESB portal, often treated as the final authority on top PSU appointments, had glitched.

The brief disappearance gave fresh ammo to critics who have, from time to time, hinted at a premature end to Prakash's tenure. Supporters, meanwhile, endured a few hours of unnecessary suspense.

Context matters here. Prakash has been under pressure in recent weeks and firmly in the public spotlight, making him an easy target for speculation. Some insiders point to vested interests that have been eager to cast doubts over his leadership. The technical lapse on the PESB site simply handed them a convenient trigger.

By evening, the mystery resolved itself. The missing name was quietly restored, and it was back to business at SAIL headquarters.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect

WISDOM CORNER

“The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays.”

SØREN KIERKEGAARD

“All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.”

EDMUND BURKE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1613: Michael Romanov, founder of the Romanov dynasty, became tsar of Russia.

1835: Sinclair Lewis, an American novelist and social critic who punctured national complacency with his broadly drawn, widely popular satiric novels and who in 1930 became the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, was born.

1940: The animated film Pinocchio had its world premiere, and it became one of Disney's most beloved classics, known for its brilliant animation and compelling story.

1964: British Invasion launched with Beatles' arrival in US. The musical British Invasion began when the Beatles landed in New York City this day in 1964, and two nights later, as Beatlemania stormed America, their performance on The Ed Sullivan Show was watched by 73 million viewers.

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

HERE NOW
OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate,
Bhubaneswar-751010

Sanctity of Parliament

Sir, The Opposition must respond with clarity and responsibility to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla's claim that he had information suggesting Congress members were planning to physically harm Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address on the motion of thanks to the President. If credible, such intelligence points to a disturbing erosion of parliamentary norms and a grave threat to democratic functioning. Parliament cannot be reduced to a political boxing arena driven by disruption and confrontation. The House represents the collective will of nearly 140 crore citizens and stands as the institutional backbone of the world's largest democracy. Any hint of violence within its walls weakens public trust and damages India's democratic image. At the same time, allegations of this magnitude demand transparency and institutional scrutiny, not partisan exploitation. The Opposition must unequivocally reject intimidation and insist on an impartial inquiry. The sanctity of Parliament must remain inviolable, sustained by restraint, accountability and respect for constitutional spaces.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Overwhelming favourites

Sir, Cricket's marquee tournament, the T20 World Cup gets underway Saturday and, rest assured, a high octane entertainment is guaranteed for fans across the globe for 30 days. India are the overwhelming favourites to defend the title; the Suryakumar Yadav-led team should be high on energy and spirits. On paper, India has a dream top and middle order supported exceedingly well by a superb bowling attack making it the strongest among the 20 participating teams. The wherewithal to stand up to pressure, the familiarity of playing in the Indian sub-continent, and the crowd support should hold Team India in good stead. If everything goes according to plan, and players play to their form, it should be Men in Blue on the winners' podium on 8 March.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

2025 BOAT ACCIDENT IN BAHRAICH

Process begins to resettle 136 families

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bahraich (UP), Feb 6: The process for allotting plots to 136 families from Nepal-bordering Bharthapur village, which was hit by a boat accident last year, formally began after approval from the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet, officials said Friday.

The families will be rehabilitated in a fully equipped colony to be developed at Semrahnna village along the National Highway, as per the directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

District Magistrate Akshai Tripathi told reporters that after Cabinet approval for the displacement and rehabilitation of 136 families of Bharthapur, the notification was published in the gazette Thursday.

"A colony will be developed at Semrahnna village along the National Highway. The process of construction of houses, identification and allotment of agricultural land has been initiated," he said.

Tripathi recalled that after the October 29, 2025, boat tragedy in Bharthapur, the chief minister conducted an aerial survey November 2 and visited the village to express condolences to the affected families.

October 29 last year, a boat carrying villagers returning from a weekly market capsized in the Kaudiyala River. Thirteen people were rescued, but nine people, including women and children, drowned. The bodies were recovered over several days, while two



children remain missing.

"We have requested the chief minister to visit for the bhoomi pujan (ground-breaking ceremony), but no formal programme has been communicated yet," he said, adding that the rehabilitation process has been set in motion as per government directives.

Under the government Housing Scheme, each family will be allotted a permanent house to ensure a safe and dignified life, the DM said.

The proposed colony will have proper drainage, concrete roads, green spaces, LED street-lights, drinking water facilities and other essential infrastructure. Schools and healthcare facilities for residents and livestock will also be available nearby, he added. The Cabinet approval and initiation of land

identification and allotment have brought cheer among the affected villagers.

Displaced residents Santosh Kumar, Kandhai Lal, Lalita Prasad and Rohit Kumar expressed gratitude to the CM, saying the move would enable them and future generations to lead a normal life near markets and the highway.

However, a few elderly villagers, emotionally attached to their ancestral land, are still reluctant to relocate, though others are trying to persuade them, officials said.

Bharthapur village, located in Mihinpura tehsil of Bahraich district, is geographically vulnerable. It is surrounded by the Gerua and Kaudiyala rivers on two sides, dense forests to the north and the Nepal border. With no road connectivity, res-

idents depend entirely on boats and must traverse forest trails amid the threat of wild animals.

During his visit November 2, 2025, Adityanath handed over ex gratia cheques of Rs 4 lakh each to the bereaved families and assured them of full government support. He had directed officials to immediately relocate those forced to live amid dense forests to safer locations and suggested that the new colony be named after Bharthapur.

Following Cabinet approval in the last week of January, the administration has expedited rehabilitation efforts. Preparations, including arrangements for a helipad, are being made in anticipation of a possible visit by the chief minister for the foundation-laying ceremony, though no official schedule has been announced so far, officials said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: An artificial intelligence-based intrusion-detection system to monitor the movement of lions has been sanctioned for the railway section located within Gujarat's Gir National Park and Lion Wildlife Sanctuary, the government informed Parliament Friday.

In a written reply to questions regarding plans for constructing an elevated rail corridor through the Gir forest to protect Asiatic lions, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told the Rajya Sabha that besides maintaining speed restrictions and the construction of underpasses, an AI-based intrusion-detection system has also been sanctioned.

"The existing railway network passing through Gir forest area is Metre Gauge (MG) section. For the safety of wildlife, the trains are operated at slow speed in identified lion passing corridors. Also, two lions' underpasses are existing and work of construction of five other lions' underpasses has been taken up," he added.

"In addition, work for implementation of an Artificial Intelligence based Intrusion Detection System (IDS) for monitoring lion movement has been sanctioned covering 115 km in the Damanagar-Pipavav section of the Bhavnagar Division of West-



In a written reply to questions regarding plans for constructing an elevated rail corridor through the Gir forest to protect Asiatic lions, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told the Rajya Sabha that besides maintaining speed restrictions and the construction of underpasses, an AI-based intrusion-detection system has also been sanctioned

ern Railway, located within the Gir National Park and Lion Wildlife Sanctuary," the minister said.

He said the system is designed to generate alerts for loco pilots, station masters and the control room about the movement of lions near railway tracks for taking timely preventive action.

Regarding the coordination between the Indian Railways and the forest department, Vaishnaw said review committees - a circle-level committee, a divisional-level committee and a range-level committee - have been established.

"The meetings of said committees are conducted quarterly, bi-monthly and monthly respectively. The issues discussed in the meetings are resolved proactively by Railways," he said.

UP expedites setting up of ABC centres, shelter homes



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

According to the government, the effective system of Dog Shelter Homes and ABC centres will ensure public safety and equally strengthen animal welfare.

In municipal corporation areas, Dog Shelter Homes will be developed along with the already operational or proposed ABC centres.

Each municipal corporation is to provide suitable land and complete all necessary administrative formalities, the statement said.

The government has clarified that the entire process is in accordance with Supreme Court guidelines and animal welfare standards.

The government has instructed that a separate Detailed Project Report (DPR) be prepared for the shelter homes, the statement said.

According to the proposals received, the estimated cost per shelter home ranges from Rs 4.7 crore to Rs 5.31 crore.

The DPR includes key aspects - the capacity of the shelter home, infrastructure, veterinary facilities, food supply, cleanliness, security arrangements, and the deployment of trained staff.

At the government level, these DPRs have been granted in-principle approval, and the next phase of the process has now begun according to the Supreme Court directions, the statement added.

Some districts have identified land for the ABC centres while others are yet to clear land-related legal formalities, the government added.

The wetland in Kutch dis-



PTI PHOTO

Chhari-Dhandh wetland draws visitors from 52 countries

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 6: Gujarat's Chhari-Dhandh wetland, recently designated as a Ramsar Site, has emerged as a global ecological hotspot with over 80 per cent of its visitors being tourists from more than 52 countries, officials said Friday.

State Forest and Environment Minister Arjun Modhwadia Friday presented to Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar the certificate of global Ramsar Site status designated to Chhari-Dandi January 31.

Patel congratulated the minister and the forest department team on the achievement, an official release stated.

The wetland in Kutch dis-

trict was declared Gujarat's first conservation reserve in 2008, when Narendra Modi was serving as the chief minister of the state, under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Since then, it has emerged as a preferred destination for bird lovers, researchers, and ornithologists from across the world, as more than 80 per cent of visitors to the reserve are foreign tourists, mostly from the Nordic countries, the United States and the United Kingdom, the release said.

Visitors from more than 52 countries have so far come to catch a glimpse of this unique wetland, it said. "Ramsar recognition has further reinforced

Chhari-Dhandh's standing on the global conservation map, highlighting India's commitment to protecting ecological sensitive wetlands through science-based governance and international cooperation," the release said.

Ecologists regard Chhari-Dhandh - spread over 22,700 hectares and encompassing 12 villages - as one of Asia's most important wetlands for migratory avifauna, supporting large congregations of waterfowl.

Ornithological surveys have documented more than 50,000 waterbirds in the Banni wet-

lands, including reports of more than 40,000 cranes at a single site.

Around 283 bird species have been recorded in and around Chhari-Dhandh, including 11 globally threatened species and nine near-threatened species, underlining its high conservation value, the release said.

Chhari-Dhandh records the highest bird diversity in Kutch, with 187 bird species, accounting for more than 35 per cent of the state's avifaunal diversity.

In April 2025 alone, an estimated 500-600 Grey Hypocolius were sighted in the reserve, it said.

Wanted UP criminal marries in Maharashtra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shahjahanpur (UP), Feb 6: A man wanted by Uttar Pradesh Police in connection with an assault and vandalism case allegedly got married in Maharashtra's Satara district even as a local police team was present in the state to arrest him, officials said Friday.

The accused, Akshay Kadam, carries a reward of Rs 25,000 on his arrest in a case registered under Tilhar police station in Shahjahanpur district.

Police said Kadam is among five persons accused of attacking a hotel owned by BJP leader Divakar Singh at Nagariya



reached the spot, and attempted to force a security guard into a car. While two of the accused have been arrested and sent to jail, three, including

Kadam, remain absconding.

Despite a police team being dispatched to Maharashtra to track him down, Kadam's wedding was solemnised at a marriage lawn in Satara district Thursday, police sources said.

A video purportedly showing the wedding ceremony at a banquet lawn in Mumbai has also surfaced on social media. The footage allegedly shows cut-outs bearing photographs of the accused and his bride at the venue and investigators are verifying the clip, they added. (PTI has not independently verified the content of this video.)

Superintendent of Police

Rajesh Dwivedi said a local police team was in Maharashtra, but the accused managed to evade arrest.

"Our team is in Satara. However, before the police could conduct a raid, the accused fled from the spot. We will arrest him soon," Dwivedi told PTI.

BJP leader Divakar Singh questioned the police's functioning, alleging that the accused was able to marry without hindrance despite the presence of a police team in the state.

Police said efforts are underway to arrest Kadam and the other absconding accused.

**OFFICE OF THE DEAN & PRINCIPAL,
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No.1064//MCB-2026//Welfare//Berhampur Dated 28th January, 2026

For publication in Newspaper Two Daily Odia and One English Newspaper
Advertisement for the Post of Medical Officer (Contractual) at ART Centre

The suitable and eligible candidates are invited to attend walk-in interview for the post of Medical Officer at the ART (Anti-Retroviral Therapy) Centre on a contractual basis under the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP-V).

Name of the Post: Medical Officer (Contractual)

Place of Posting: ART Centre, MKCG Medical College, Berhampur

Remuneration Details: Consolidated remuneration of Rs.72,000/- per month, as per NACO/SACS norms which will be revised time to time.

Number of Posts: 01

Entry Age Limit: The age for the post of Medical Officer should be between 21 years to 69 years as on 31.12.2025

Essential Qualification: MBBS with working knowledge of computers. MS office, usage of internet and electronic mail

Date of Walk-in Interview: 16-02-2026

Reporting Time: 11.00A.M.

Interview Time: 11.30 A.M.

Venue: Office chamber of Dean & Principal, MKCG Medical College, Berhampur

For Detail go through our website www.mkgcmc.org.

Sd/- Dean & Principal
MKCG Medical College, Berhampur
OIPR-10001/10013/1/25-26/0015

national

of the day quote

UDF will accept Jamaat-e-Islami support, says party holds no communal agenda



There will be a change in the world order, and India will be at the forefront. We are the fastest-growing economy, the fourth-largest economy, and we are going to become the third-largest economy

RALPH JOSHI | UNION MINISTER

Why didn't BJP MPs from Karnataka raise this issue forcefully in Parliament? Why didn't BJP ministers from Karnataka oppose high fare slabs at the Union level? Why is the BJP Karnataka acting as a spokesperson for Delhi instead of standing with Bengalureans?

SIDDARAMAIAH | CHIEF MINISTER, KARNATAKA

SHORT TAKES

Shah chairs security review meet in Jammu

Jammu: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday chaired a security review meeting here with Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi and senior officials from the security establishment in attendance, to assess the prevailing security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. The meeting assumes significance amid stepped up anti-terror operations that led to neutralisation of four hardened Pakistan-native terrorists linked with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) following nearly a dozen encounters in Kathua, Udhampur and Kishtwar districts of Jammu region over the past two weeks.

Women lawyers protest at Tis Hazari

New Delhi: Several women lawyers Friday held a protest at Tis Hazari district court complex demanding 50 per cent reservation for them in all law related jobs, empanelments, and bar bodies. The protest, which was held near the civil side of the court complex, was addressed by the General Secretary of Pragatisheel Mahila Sangathan (PMS), Poonam Kaushik, and Chander Nigam. The demand charter seeks 50 per cent reservation for women lawyers in all relevant government and private panels, and in appointments made by or under the authority of high courts, district courts, legal services authorities, tribunals, bar bodies, local commissioners, and similar bodies. The charter also calls for setting up an academic cell or mentorship panel to support women lawyers by providing structured training, mentorship, and financial security.

ED attaches assets of former TDB official

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Friday said it has attached immovable assets worth Rs 40 lakh of a former administrative official of the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) and his wife as part of a money laundering investigation against them. A provisional order for attaching the two properties of Jayaprakash J and Sreeja Jayaprakash located in the Kollam district has been issued Wednesday under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the agency said in a statement. The money laundering case stems from an FIR of the Kerala Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau filed against Jayaprakash, former administrative officer of the Nilackal Devaswom, and other officials of the TDB.



The highlight of the DMK government's achievement is the Kalaignar Urimai Thittam providing ₹1,000 monthly to 1.30 crore women. Tamil Nadu leads India with a 13.19 per cent growth rate

UDHAYANIDHI STALIN | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, TAMIL NADU

DELHI SECOND MOST POLLUTED CITY: CREA

Delhi ranked as India's second most polluted city in January, with a PM2.5 level of 169 micrograms per cubic metre, nearly three times the National Ambient Air Quality Standards limit, behind Ghaziabad, which topped the list at 184 and breached daily standards all month



SC: Police can't arrest to 'simply ask questions'

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and NK Singh said the power of arrest under provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 must be interpreted as a strict objective necessity and not as a subjective convenience for the police officer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: The Supreme Court has said the arrest of a person cannot be for simply asking questions, holding that arrest by a police officer is a mere statutory discretion which cannot be termed as mandatory.

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and NK Singh said the power of arrest under provisions of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 must be interpreted as a strict objective necessity and not as a subjective convenience for the police officer.

"It does not mean the police officer can arrest to simply ask questions. However, it means that the police officer must satisfy himself that the investigation, qua an offence punishable with imprisonment up to seven years, cannot proceed effectively without taking the concerned individual into custody. Any interpretation to the contrary would clearly frustrate the purpose and legislative intent of Sections 35(1) (b) and Sections 35(3) to 35(6) of the BNSS, 2023," it said.

The bench has passed the order while hearing an appeal against the order of the



Allahabad High Court and was deciding a question whether notices under Section 35(3) of the BNSS, 2023 are to be mandatorily issued in all cases related to an offence punishable with imprisonment up to seven years.

The top court said the power of arrest under the provisions pursuant to a notice issued under Section 35(3) of the BNSS, 2023 is not a matter of routine but an exception, and the police officer is expected to be circumspect and slow in exercising the said power.

"An arrest by a police officer is a mere statutory discretion which facilitates him to conduct proper investigation in the form of collection of evidence and, therefore, shall not be termed as mandatory," it said.

The top court said the police officer shall ask himself the question as to whether an arrest is a necessity or not before undertaking the said exercise.

"For effecting an arrest, qua an offence punishable with imprisonment up to seven years, the mandate of Section 35(1) (b)(i) of the BNSS, 2023 along with any one of the conditions mentioned in Section 35(1) (b)(ii) of the BNSS, 2023 must be in existence," it said.

The bench in its order passed in January but uploaded re-

cently said even if the circumstances warranting an arrest of a person are available in terms of the conditions mentioned under Section 35(1)(b) of the BNSS, 2023, the arrest shall not be undertaken unless it is absolutely warranted.

"Suffice it to state that an investigation can go on even without an arrest. While undertaking the exercise of collecting the evidence for the purpose of forming his opinion over the commission of a cognisable offence, a police officer shall pose a question to himself on the necessity of an arrest. This safeguard is provided as, in any case, the power to arrest an accused person is always available with a police officer even after he records his reasons, in writing, for not doing so at an earlier stage," the bench held.

The top court noted that an investigation by a police officer generally begins with the recording of information regarding an offence and it is a process which is primarily aimed at the ascertainment of facts and circumstances surrounding an alleged crime and involves the police officer proceeding to the spot of occurrence to collect evidence and ends with the formation of an opinion for filing of chargesheet.

BLO suffers cardiac arrest in West Bengal

FAMILY BLAMES SIR WORK PRESSURE, POLITICAL SPARRING ERUPTS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 6: A 58-year-old booth level officer (BLO) died of cardiac arrest in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, triggering a political slugfest with the ruling TMC blaming work pressure linked to the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls, while the BJP accused the state government of politicising a personal tragedy.

The deceased, Maya Mukhopadhyay, was a primary school teacher at the Shripur Namupada Shishu Shiksha Kendra under Hariharpara block and was recently assigned BLO duties for Booth No. 251 amid the ongoing SIR exercise. She collapsed at home Thursday night and was declared dead after being taken to a hospital, family members said.

Her family alleged that Mukhopadhyay was under severe mental stress after being entrusted with BLO responsibilities and feared backlash from villagers if their names were deleted from the voter list during the revision process.

"After being made a BLO, my mother was unable to cope with the mental pressure. She had been unwell and was even admitted to the ICU at Murshidabad Medical College and Hos-

pital earlier," her younger son Rubel Mondal told reporters.

He claimed that the booth under her charge had around 830 voters and over 320 hearing notices had been issued as part of the SIR process. "She kept saying that if names were deleted, villagers might come and attack our house. She lived in constant fear," Mondal said.

Her family members also said Mukhopadhyay had age-related ailments and was reluctant to take up BLO duties but had no option but to comply with administrative orders.

Hariharpara BDO Jam Bhutia confirmed the death and said the administration was looking into the matter. "She died of a cardiac arrest. We have been informed that she was unwell. A representative has been sent to gather details," he said.

Trinamool Congress MLA from Hariharpara, Niyamat Sheikh, alleged that the manner in which the SIR process was being implemented had created panic among BLOs. "She was fine earlier, but after getting the BLO assignment, she remained terrified. Several BLOs have approached us saying they cannot handle the pressure but are continuing out of fear of losing their jobs," he claimed.



Civic apathy claims life

BIKER DIES AFTER PLUNGING INTO 15-FOOT UNCOVERED DJB PIT IN WEST DELHI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: In a chilling instance of civic negligence, a 25-year-old biker lost his life after falling into an uncovered 15-foot pit dug by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for a sewage project in west Delhi's Janakpuri area, police said Friday.

The incident occurred on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday when Kamal Dhyani, an assistant manager at the call centre of a private bank in Rohini, was returning home. The pit, dug just a day earlier, was allegedly inadequately secured, leading to the fatal fall. The family alleged gross police inaction, claiming that despite visiting several police stations throughout the night, no timely search operation was launched - a delay they believe could have saved his life.

Kamal's body, with his helmet still on, was found lying beside his mud-smeared mo-



torcycle at the bottom of the pit after a woman called the police control room at 8.03 am Friday.

What was supposed to be a day of celebration for the family turned into tragedy as Kamal's parents were preparing to celebrate their 28th wedding anniversary Friday, but instead were left to perform their son's last rites the same day.

A case under section 105 (culpable homicide) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered at the Janakpuri Police Station against the contractor and concerned officials. The Delhi government has suspended three DJB engineers and or-

dered a probe into the incident.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar said that around 1.35 am, Kamal's brother, Karan, along with some friends, approached the Vikaspuri Police Station while searching for him.

He added that since Kamal had made his last phone call from the District Centre area, the family went to Janakpuri.

At 2.50 am, complainant Karan Dhyani walked into Janakpuri Police Station and reported his brother missing," the DCP said. Police then traced the missing man's mobile phone location, which showed near Possangipur Park in Janakpuri.

"We are investigating all aspects of the incident. This road has been closed for the past few days, and the pit was dug on Thursday. It is possible that the person used to take this route every day for commuting and was unaware of the pit," he said.

"We are investigating all aspects of the incident. This road has been closed for the past few days, and the pit was dug on Thursday. It is possible that the person used to take this route every day for commuting and was unaware of the pit," he said.

The Commission had Wednesday issued a notification for the civil services examination. As many as 933 vacancies, including 33 posts reserved for PwBD candidates, will be filled through the test.



Firefighters douse a fire that broke out at an NDMC godown, near Safdarjung flyover, in New Delhi, Friday PTI PHOTO

UPSC revamps exam centre allocation for PwBD candidates

The redesigned portal aims to reinforce integrity across various stages of the examination process while simplifying the application experience for candidates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: In a significant reform aimed at supporting persons with benchmark disabilities (PwBD), the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has overhauled its examination centre allocation framework.

The Commission has launched a series of technological interventions for the civil services examination-2026 and the Indian Forest Service examination 2026, with a focus on enhancing candidate accessibility and strengthening examination security.

Under the revised mechanism, there will be no capping



Ajay Kumar said, "An analysis of examination centre data over the past five years revealed

very early stage due to high application volumes, creating difficulties for PwBD candidates."

"With the revised mechanism, every PwBD candidate will be assured of their preferred examination centre, ensuring greater ease and convenience while appearing for UPSC examinations," he said.

Kumar said that the Commission has adopted the use of the latest technology to ensure a free, fair, inclusive, and accessible examination process, with a strong focus on enhancing candidate convenience and ease of participation, while ensuring that selections are made strictly on the basis of merit.

As part of its ongoing ef-

orts to improve efficiency, transparency and candidate convenience, the UPSC has introduced a revamped Online Application Portal for the submission of applications and conduct of examinations.

The redesigned portal aims to reinforce integrity across various stages of the examination process while simplifying the application experience for candidates, the statement said.

The Commission had Wednesday issued a notification for the civil services examination. As many as 933 vacancies, including 33 posts reserved for PwBD candidates, will be filled through the test.

national



BB The existing railway network passing through Gir forest area is Metre Gauge (MG) section. For the safety of wildlife, the trains are operated at slow speed in identified lion passing corridors. Also, 2 Nos. of lions' underpasses are existing and work of construction of 5 Nos. of lions' underpasses has been taken up

ASHWINI VAISHNAV | RAILWAY MINISTER

SIR: FINAL VOTER LIST FOR UP APRIL 10

The final electoral rolls of Uttar Pradesh will now be published April 10 instead of March 6, the Election Commission (EC) has said. In a letter to the state chief electoral officer (CEO) Thursday, the poll panel said it has considered his request made February 2 "and also upon consideration of other relevant factors", it has decided to revise the schedule of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in Uttar Pradesh



of the day quote

We are in Parliament before Modi and are aware of its rules. The Congress made the biggest sacrifices in the freedom struggle and gave birth to Parliament. If anyone says there is danger to Modi in Parliament, then it is rubbish



SAJAY RAUT | SHIV SENA (UBT) LEADER

An unparalleled moment of appreciation for Assam's beloved Gamusa. In today's episode of #ParikshaPeCharcha2026, Adarniya Shri @narendramodi Ji shared that the Gamusa is his all-time favourite possession



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CHIEF MINISTER, ASSAM

The tripartite agreement between the Centre, the Nagaland government and the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) was a major breakthrough in addressing issues of eastern Nagaland



PEMA KHANDU | CHIEF MINISTER, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

AAP leader shot dead

DGP says police have got many leads

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Chandigarh, Feb 6: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Lucky Oberoi was shot dead by an unidentified assailant outside a gurdwara in Punjab's Jalandhar Friday, shortly after he came out of the shrine after paying obeisance, police said.

The incident took place around 7:30 am, when Oberoi was leaving the gurdwara in Jalandhar's Model Town area.

Opposition parties -- Congress, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -- slammed the AAP government, led by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, over the incident, alleging that the state's law and order has collapsed under its rule.

CCTV footage showed as Oberoi (43) came out of the gurdwara and sat in his car -- a Mahindra Thar -- an assailant wearing a black hoodie approached him on foot, opened indiscriminate fire and fled along with an accomplice, who was waiting for him on a two-wheeler at a short distance.

Oberoi suffered multiple bullet injuries and was rushed to a hospital in an unconscious state. He subsequently succumbed to the injuries, ACP, Jalandhar, Parminder Singh, said over the phone.

The window panes of Oberoi's sports utility vehicle

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(SUV) and another car parked nearby were shattered due to the firing.

Satwinderpal Singh alias Lucky Oberoi was the AAP in-charge of a ward in Jalandhar Cantonment and a financier by profession.

Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav visited the crime scene and held a review meeting with senior officers. Yadav said the investigators have got many leads.

An unverified social me-

dia post purportedly by foreign-based gangster Jograj Singh alias Joga Pholriwal claimed responsibility for the incident. Several allegations were levelled against Oberoi in the post, which mentioned that he was killed due to personal enmity.

It was also claimed that the incident was linked to a dispute pertaining to the presidency of a college.

Responding to reporters' questions in Jalandhar on whether the incident could be

India-Bangladesh ties independent of third countries: Government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: India's relationship with Bangladesh is "independent of its relationship with third countries" and New Delhi continues to monitor developments having a bearing on its national interests, taking all necessary measures to safeguard them, the government told Parliament Friday.

Asked if the shooter and his accomplice have been identified, Yadav said he cannot share details of the investigation, but stressed that they have got many leads.

Asked about the social media post in the name of Pholriwal, he said, "We will track the IP (internet protocol) address. Whosoever has committed the crime will be given exemplary punishment."

The DGP said the chief minister has taken updates on the case.

He said police teams have collected mobile-tower dumps to advance the investigation through a technical analysis.

The assailants might have carried out reconnaissance of Oberoi's movements, police sources said.

Jalandhar Police Commissioner Dhanpreet Kaur said preliminary investigations have found that the assailant and his accomplice, both wearing black hoodies, fled the spot on a Honda Activa.

A case has been registered under sections 103(1) (murder), 3(5) (common intention) and 61(2) (criminal conspiracy) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and sections 25 and 27 of the Arms Act at the Division 6 police station in the Jalandhar Commissionerate.



of this situation, which could be detrimental to the country.

"India and Bangladesh, as neighbouring countries, share deep historical, geographical, cultural, linguistic and social linkages. Our bilateral relations are focused towards people-centric development. Several exchanges and meetings under institutional bilateral mechanisms have continued to take place between both the countries," Singh said.

The MoS further said India's relationship with Bangladesh is "independent of its relationship with third countries".

The government continues to monitor developments having a bearing on India's national interests and takes all necessary measures to safeguard them, he added. The MEA was also asked whether the government has held any discussions with the interim government of Bangladesh regarding reported "public killings of minority citizens, particularly Hindus, in that country".

"India has consistently raised the matter of safety and security of minorities with the authorities in Bangladesh on all relevant occasions, including at the highest level.

India trashes Pak's claims of Indian link to Islamabad bombing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: India Friday categorically rejected Pakistan's allegations of an Indian link to the suicide bombing at a mosque in Islamabad that killed at least 31 people.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), describing the attack as "condemnable", said it is unfortunate that, instead of seriously addressing the problems plaguing its social fabric, Pakistan chose to "delude" itself by blaming others for its home-grown ills.



The Indian government was asked in the Lok Sabha whether the government has reviewed India's strategic, financial and operational engagement in the Chabahar Port project in Iran in view of the "risk of renewed or expanded US sanctions" and any steps been taken to reduce the exposure of Indian entities, including India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), to potential secondary sanctions.

"An Indian company, India Ports Global Limited (IPGL), through its wholly owned subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ), started operating the port in 2018. IPGL signed a ten-year contract with the Ports and Maritime Organisation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for equipping and operating the Shahid Beheshti Terminal of Chabahar Port May 13, 2024,"

"A round of negotiations happened in Oman. Our foreign minister said and emphasised that these negotiations focussed on nuclear issues, we are waiting for the result of the negotiations. After that we will decide..." Fathali said.

The powerful explosion took place at Khadijah al-Kubra mosque-cum-imambargah in the Tarlai area of Islamabad, police said in a statement.

"The bombing at an Islamabad mosque earlier today is condemnable and India condoles the loss of life it has caused," the MEA said.

"It is unfortunate that, instead of seriously addressing the problems plaguing its social fabric, Pakistan should choose to delude itself by blaming others for its home-grown ills," it said.

"India rejects any and every such allegation, which is as baseless as it is pointless," it added.

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, without providing any evidence, alleged that India and Afghanistan were linked to the attack.

In a social media post, he claimed that it has been proved the terrorist involved in the attack travelled to and from Afghanistan.

"The collusion between India and Afghanistan is being revealed," he alleged.

Iran opens to working with India on Chabahar port: Iranian envoy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Describing Chabahar port as "vital" for regional connectivity, Iranian envoy Mohammad Fathali here Friday said Tehran believes it should "expand" its ties with India and other countries on this issue, his remarks coming in the backdrop of recent changes in US policies on sanctions.

At a press conference in Delhi, he was asked about the future of the Chabahar Port project.

"About the port of Chabahar, you know that the port of Chabahar is vital. And it can play a good role for accessing Afghanistan, and Central Asia. And, we have a good relation with some countries, particularly India. And, we believe that we should boost, expand our relation on this issue," Fathali said.

The Chabahar Port project was conceptualised to provide much-needed connectivity to Afghanistan for its reconstruction and economic development and for boosting trade and economic linkages with Central Asia. His comments also come in the backdrop of recent changes in US sanctions or tariff policies on India's participation in the Chabahar project.

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through its wholly owned subsidiary, India Ports Global Chabahar Free Zone (IPGCFZ), started operating the port in 2018. IPGL signed a ten-year contract with the Ports and Maritime Organisation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for equipping and operating the Shahid Beheshti Terminal of Chabahar Port May 13, 2024,"

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7 more bodies found, toll mounts to 25

Shillong: The death toll in the explosion in an illegal coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills mounted to 25 Friday following the recovery of seven more bodies. Director General of Police Nongrang said. The explosion occurred Thursday at the mine in the Thangsku area of Umsngat village, prompting the authorities to begin large-scale search and rescue operations involving multiple agencies.

Eighteen bodies had been found today, taking the total number of deaths to 25. Out of these, 12 bodies have been identified," Nongrang told PTI. Search operations are continuing at the site as teams of the State Disaster Response Force, Special Rescue Team and the National Disaster Response Force were pressed into service. Medical teams and ambulances have also been deployed, officials said.

The court said no person, much less like the father of the woman, could be allowed to threaten the life and liberty of the petitioners, who did not require any social approval for their personal decisions and choices

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Consenting adults have the constitutional right to marry each other and neither the society nor the state machinery or their parents can interfere in their decision, the Delhi High Court has held.

The court passed the order on a petition filed by a couple seeking protection from the woman's father, who did not approve of her choice.



walk through their entire journey of life by entering into the sacred thread of marriage, no one, much less the society, the state machinery or even their parents or relatives or friends can cause interference to the decision of the petitioners in any manner whatsoever from now on," the court said in the order passed February 2.

"In fact, sanctity has to be given to their decision of entering into marriage, especially

since the petitioners are consenting adults who incontrovertibly have the constitutional right to choose their respective life partners," it added.

The couple married in July 2025 in accordance with Hindu rites and ceremonies at an Arya Samaj mandir and then registered the same before the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) concerned.

The couple had alleged that the woman's father was unhappy with the marriage and was threatening them.

The court said no person, much less like the father of the woman, could be allowed to threaten the life and liberty of the petitioners, who did not require any social approval for their personal decisions and choices.

Extending police protection to the couple, Justice Saurabh Banerjee said the right to marry is an incident of human liberty and choice, which is an integral facet of Article 21 of the Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"Since the petitioners here-in are both major and are well within their rights to marry each other, and who being consenting adults, have willingly chosen to hold their hands and

international



Panama is a dignified country and will not allow itself to be threatened by any country on earth
JOSE RAUL MULINO | PRESIDENT, PANAMA

DRIVERLESS TAXI IN DUBAI

Dubai has launched fully autonomous RT6 taxi vehicles developed by Baidu Apollo Go as part of its smart mobility ecosystem. The move paves the way for the public launch of the service in the first quarter of FY 2026



EPSTEIN LINKS

Norwegian crown princess issues apology

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Illegal migrants and dangerous criminals will now be removed and deported back to Angola, Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. I will do what it takes to restore order and control to our borders

SHABANA MAHMOOD | HOME SECRETARY, UK

Social media addiction can have detrimental effects on the developing minds of children and teens

HENNA VIRKKUNEN | EU'S EXECUTIVE VP FOR TECH SOVEREIGNTY, SECURITY AND DEMOCRACY

We used to prepare for natural disasters. Now we prepare for our own federal government

MIKE JOHNSTON | DENVER MAYOR



It is important for me to apologize to all of you whom I have disappointed. Some of the content of the messages between Epstein and me does not represent the person I want to be. I also apologize for the situation I have put the Royal Family in, especially the King and Queen
METTE-MARIT'S | CROWN PRINCESS, NORWAY

Oslo, Feb 6: Norway's crown princess issued an apology Friday to those she has "disappointed" following days of scrutiny of her contacts with the late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, and said she was sorry for the situation she had put the royal family in.

Crown Princess Mette-Marit's communications and contacts with Epstein have put her in the spotlight in recent days, adding to the embarrassment to the royals just as her son went to trial this week for multiple offences including charges of rape.

The Epstein files contained several hundred mentions of the crown princess, who said in 2019 that she regretted having had contact with Epstein, Norwegian media reported.

The documents, which include email exchanges, showed that Mette-Marit borrowed an Epstein-owned property in Palm Beach, Florida, for several days in 2013. Broadcaster NRK reported that the stay was arranged through a mutual friend, which was later confirmed by the royal household.

The royal palace said Friday that Mette-Marit wants to talk about what happened and explain herself in more detail,

but is unable to at present. It added that she is in a very difficult situation and "hopes for understanding that she needs time to gather her thoughts."

It also issued a statement from

the crown princess herself, her second in a week, in which she reiterated her deep regret for her past friendship with Epstein.

"It is important for me to apologize to all of you whom I

have disappointed," she said. "Some of the content of the messages between Epstein and me does not represent the person I want to be. I also apologize for the situation I have put the Royal Family in, especially the King and Queen."

Mette-Marit said in a statement issued shortly after the latest Epstein files were released that she "must take responsibility for not having investigated Epstein's background more thoroughly, and for not realising sooner what kind of person he was." She added: "I showed poor judgment and regret having had any contact with Epstein at all."

Trump deletes racist post about Obamas following backlash

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 6: President Donald Trump's social media post featuring a video about election conspiracy theories and a racist depiction of former President Barack Obama and his wife, Michelle Obama, as primates in a jungle has been deleted.

The Republican president's Thursday night post was deleted Friday and blamed on a staffer after widespread backlash, from civil rights leaders to veteran Republican senators, for its treatment of the nation's first Black president and first lady.

The deletion, a rare admission of a misstep by the White House, came hours after press secretary Karoline Leavitt said there was nothing offensive about the post.

After calls for its removal for being racist -- including by Republicans -- the White House said a staffer had posted the video erroneously and it had been taken down. The post was part of a flurry of social media activity on Trump's Truth Social account that amplified his false claims that the 2020 election was stolen from him.

Nearly all of the 62-second clip, which was among dozens of Truth Social posts from Trump overnight, appears to be from a conservative video alleging deliberate tampering with voting machines in battleground states as the 2020 presidential votes were tallied.

At the 60-second mark is a quick scene of two primates, with the Obamas' smiling faces imposed on them.

Those frames were taken from a separate video, previously circulated by an influential conservative meme maker. It shows Trump as "King of the Jungle" and depicts a range of Democratic leaders as animals, including Joe Biden, who is white, as a jungle primate eating a banana.

Iran-US N-talks start positively

Tehran's clerical leadership remains deeply worried that Trump may still carry out his threats to strike Iran after a military buildup by the US Navy near Iran

REUTERS



Iran says talks with US were a good start

Iran's top diplomat says talks will continue

Tehran rejects negotiating its missile programme

Muscat, Feb 6: Nuclear talks between Iran and the United States held in Oman Friday were a good beginning and will continue, Iran's foreign minister said, after growing concerns that a failure in the high-stakes negotiations could set off another Middle East war.

"It was a good start to the negotiations. And there is an understanding on continuing the talks. Coordination on how to proceed will be decided in the capitals," the minister, Abbas Araghchi, told Iranian state TV. "If this process continues, I think we will reach a good framework for an understanding."

Officials from both sides, who held indirect talks through Oman's mediation in Oman's capital Muscat, will return home for consultations, Araghchi said.

While both sides have indicated readiness to revive diplomacy over Tehran's long-running nuclear dispute with the West, Washington wanted to expand the talks to cover Iran's ballistic missiles, support for armed groups around the region and "treatment of their own people", US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday.

Araghchi told Iran's state news agency IRNA that "any dialogue requires refraining from threats and pressure", adding that Tehran "only discusses its nuclear issue. We do not discuss any other issue with the US."

Iranian officials have repeatedly said they will not discuss Iran's missiles -- one of the biggest such arsenals in the region -- and have said Tehran wants recognition of its right to enrich uranium. For Washington, carrying out enrichment inside Iran is a red line. "The lack of trust is a huge challenge during the talks and it should be overcome," Araghchi said.

In June, the US struck Iranian nuclear targets, joining in the final stages of a 12-day Israeli bombing campaign. Tehran has since said its uranium enrichment work has stopped.

The United States, its European allies and Israel accuse Tehran of using its nuclear programme as a veil for efforts to try to develop the capability to produce weapons.

Trump has called a massive "armada", has followed a bloody government crackdown on nationwide protests in Iran last month, heightening tensions between Washington and Tehran.

Trump has warned that "bad things" would probably happen if a deal could not be reached, ratcheting up pressure on the Islamic Republic in a standoff that has led to mutual threats of air strikes.

World powers and regional states fear a breakdown in the negotiations would lead to another conflict between the US and Iran which could spill over to the rest of the oil-rich region.

Iran has vowed a harsh response to any military strike and has cautioned neighbouring Gulf Arab countries hosting US bases in the oil-rich region that they could be in the firing line if they were involved in an attack.

Negotiators in Oman will have to navigate Iran's red line on discussing its missile programme to reach a deal and avert future military action. Tehran has flatly ruled out talks on its "defence capabilities, including missiles and their range."

The United States, its European allies and Israel accuse Tehran of using its nuclear programme as a veil for efforts to try to develop the capability to produce weapons.

The US naval buildup, which

Deputy chief of Russian military intel shot, wounded in Moscow

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow, Feb 6: A deputy chief of Russian military intelligence was shot and wounded in Moscow Friday in an attack that follows a series of assassinations of senior military officers that Russia blamed on Ukraine.

Lt Gen Vladimir Alekseyev was shot several times by an unidentified assailant at an apartment building in Moscow's northwest and hospitalised. Investigative Committee spokesperson Svetlana Petrenko said in a statement.

Petrenko didn't say who could be behind the attack on Alekseyev, who has served as the first deputy head of Russia's military intelligence since 2011.

The shooting came a day after Russian, Ukrainian and US negotiators wrapped up two days of talks in Abu Dhabi aimed at ending the nearly four-year conflict in Ukraine. The Russian delegation was led by the military intelligence chief, Adm Igor Kostyukov.

Since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine nearly four years ago, Russian authorities have blamed Kyiv for several assas-

sinations of military officers and public figures in Russia. Ukraine has claimed responsibility for some of them. It has not yet commented on the shooting of Alekseyev.

In December, a car bomb killed Lt Gen Fanil Sarvarov, head of the Operational Training Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces' General Staff.

In April, another senior Russian military officer, Lt Gen Yaroslav Moskalik, a deputy head of the main operational department in the General Staff, was killed by an explosive device placed in his car parked near his apartment building just outside Moscow.

A suspected perpetrator was quickly arrested.

Days after Moskalik's killing, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he received a report from the head of Ukraine's foreign intelligence agency on the "liquidation" of top Russian military figures, adding that "justice inevitably comes", although he didn't mention Moskalik's name.

In December 2024, Lt Gen Igor Kirillov, the chief of the military's nuclear, biological and chemical protection forces, was killed by a bomb hidden on an electric scooter outside his apartment building. Kirillov's assistant also died.



USA's Matthew Greiner slides down the track during a men's Luge training session at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy

PTI PHOTO

Lahore skies colourful as Basant returns



Lahore, Feb 6: A burst of colour lit up Lahore's night sky overnight as Pakistan's cultural capital relaunched the Basant kite-flying festival after nearly two decades.

Authorities said Friday that the celebration has been allowed only under strict safety regulations, warning that the use of hazardous kite strings that endanger lives could lead to arrests.

Kite-flying had been banned in the province since 2005 following a series of fatal accidents. Razor-sharp metal or glass-coated strings used in competitive kite fighting killed about a dozen people, mostly motorcyclists and bystanders two decades ago, prompting the

government to impose broad restrictions across Punjab and effectively halt Basant.

This year, officials say strict safety measures are in place.

Motorcyclists are required to install tall, antenna-like metal rods on their bikes to prevent airborne strings from causing injury. The provincial govern-

ment also declared a two-day public holiday to reduce traffic and lower accident risks.

The government of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif recently lifted the ban, emphasising that the festival's revival would be strictly regulated and violators could face fines or imprisonment.

As midnight marked the start of the two-day celebration, rooftops across the city came alive with families and friends launching vibrant kites into the cool night air.

"We're finally seeing it again after so many years," said Ashfaq Ahmed, 23, flying a kite from his rooftop in Lahore's old city. "If people avoid dangerous strings, hopefully this joyful festival can continue safely in the future."

UK court rejects Nirav's plea

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 6: The High Court in London Friday rejected fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi's plea to delay his trial in the Bank of India unpaid loan case because he is suffering from severe vision loss, clinical depression and prison constraints.

The 54-year-old, fighting extradition to India in the estimated \$2 billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) fraud and money laundering case, appeared via video link from HMP Pentonville prison in north London for a pre-trial review in the unrelated \$8-million Bank of India case.

Judge Simon Tinkler concluded that the prisoner faced no "substantial disadvantage" and would have "equality of opportunity in an adversarial process" for the eight-day trial to proceed, starting March 23.

"Unfortunately, I regard the application that is made as part of a repeated pattern of delay, non-compliance and general muddying of the case by Mr Modi," Justice Tinkler ruled.

"I appreciate that Mr Modi is in a difficult circumstance, given the constraints imposed on him in prison. This is, however, a situation in which many litigants find themselves... It seems to me that the threshold for adjournment of a trial which is imminent and for which the claimant [Bank of India] has been waiting for many years in order to receive what it says it is entitled to from Mr Modi is not something that should be subject to further delay," he said.

business

of the day quote

Assocham believes that this prudent monetary framework will reinforce market confidence, boost manufacturing and trade activities, and enhance India's global competitiveness

NIRMAL KUMAR MINDA | PRESIDENT, ASSOCHAM

India's deep-tech ecosystem is at a pivotal moment, driven by supportive policies, sustained R&D investments, and a strong entrepreneurial aspiration among our youth

NATARAJAN MALUPILLAI | GROUP CEO, IITM RESEARCH PARK

This policy step will enhance access to long-term, stable financing for REITs, complementing traditional capital market funding and broadening the financing ecosystem for income-producing real estate"

AMIT SHETTY | EMBASSY REIT CEO

Q3 RESULTS**Tata Steel profit grows multifold**

New Delhi: Tata Steel Friday posted multifold jump in consolidated profit to ₹2,730.37 crore in the December quarter, on the back of increased income. It had reported a profit of ₹295.49 crore in the October-December period of the preceding 2024-25 financial year, the company said in an exchange filing. The company's total income rose to ₹57,503.49 crore during the quarter from ₹53,869.33 crore in the year-ago period. Tata Steel group is among the country's top global steel companies with an annual crude steel capacity of 35 million tonnes per annum.

Kalyan Jewellers profit rises 90%

Mumbai: Jewellery retailer Kalyan Jewellers India Friday reported a 90.36 per cent growth in consolidated net profit to ₹416.29 crore. The company's net profit stood at ₹218.68 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal year, Kalyan Jewellers said in a statement. Revenue from operations of the company grew 42.11 per cent during the quarter under review to ₹10,343.41 crore compared to ₹7,278.09 crore in the year-ago period. Total revenue from international operations during the third quarter of FY26 saw a 38 per cent growth to ₹1,164 crore as against ₹842 crore a year earlier.

MRF net profit surges over 2X

New Delhi: Tyre maker MRF Friday posted over two-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to ₹692 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025. The company had reported a net profit of ₹315 crore for the October-December quarter of the last fiscal. Its revenue from operations increased to ₹8,050 crore in the period under review against ₹7,001 crore in the year-ago period, MRF Ltd said in a regulatory filing. The company said its board has approved a second interim dividend of ₹ per share for the financial year ending March 31, 2026.

NSE profit slumps

New Delhi: Leading stock exchange NSE Friday reported a 37 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated profit after tax at ₹2,408 crore in the quarter ended December 2025. The exchange had posted a PAT (profit after tax) of ₹3,834 crore in the corresponding period last year. Total income for the October-December quarter of FY26 fell 9 per cent to ₹4,395 crore, from ₹4,807 crore in the year-ago period, NSE said in a statement.



By extending start-up recognition for eligible deep tech ventures to 20 years and raising the turnover threshold to ₹300 crore, this policy doesn't just add a label, it improves time horizons, capital efficiency, and investability for deep tech in India

AMIT CHAND | FOUNDER, BYT CAPITAL

OIL, GAS BLOCK AUCTION DEADLINE EXTENDED FOR FOURTH TIME

The government has extended the deadline for submitting bids for India's largest oil and gas acreage offering for a fourth time, granting potential investors an additional three months, the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons said. "Bid submission closing date for OALP Bid Round X (has been) extended till May 29, 2026," DGH said on its website



₹ falls 31 paise to close at 90.65/\$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: The rupee declined 31 paise to settle at 90.65 against the US dollar Friday, weighed down by geopolitical uncertainties over the US-Iran talks, and a sharp rise in global crude oil prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.28 against the greenback and oscillated between the high of 90.18 and the low of 90.83 during the session. It eventually settled at 90.65, down 31 paise from its previous close.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 97.81.

Silver, gold extend losses for 2nd day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 6: Precious metal prices declined sharply in the national capital Friday, with silver dropping nearly 5 per cent to ₹2,55 lakh per kg, while gold slipped to ₹1.57 lakh per 10 grams as investors kept booking profits for the second straight day.

According to the All India Sarafha Association, the white metal plunged ₹13,000, or 4.85 per cent, to ₹2,55,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Thursday's closing level of ₹2,68,000 per kg. Similarly, gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell ₹3,400, or 2.12 per cent, to ₹1,57,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes), compared with the previous close of ₹1,60,600 per 10 grams.

PROFIT BOOKING

Large government borrowings and the central bank's forex market interventions have sapped rupee liquidity from the markets, pushing up bond yields. "While uncertainty remains on the growth-inflation figures as we await the new series, the uptick in commodity prices and weaker currency may pose upside risks to inflation," said Upasna Bhardwaj, chief economist at Mumbai-based Kotak Mahindra Bank. "We therefore see limited room for additional easing on the repo rate front, with RBI's focus expected to be on ensuring stability on the liquidity front in the year ahead," she said.

TRADE DEALS EASE PRESSURE

RBI keeps interest rates steady

The RBI retained its neutral policy stance, signalling rates will stay low for some time

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 6: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept its key repo rate unchanged Friday, buoyed by a positive economic outlook and reduced pressures following trade deals with the US and Europe.

The conclusion of a free trade pact with the EU and a tariff deal with Washington, likely to be finalised by March that includes a reduction in US tariffs on Indian imports, will ease a key pressure point for India's economy and markets.

The RBI's six-member monetary policy committee voted unanimously to keep the repo rate at 5.25%, in line with the consensus view in a Reuters poll.

"The MPC noted that since the last policy meeting, external headwinds have intensified though the successful completion of trade deals augurs well for the economic outlook," Governor Sanjay Malhotra said in his policy statement.

The monetary policy stance was retained at "neutral", suggesting rates will stay low for some time to come.

The current policy rate is appropriate, Malhotra said, adding that inflation was benign and future rate moves would depend on the outlook for growth and inflation.

The central bank has now cut rates by a total of 125 basis points since February 2025, the

The Reserve Bank of India has cut rates by 125 basis points since last February

Repo rate

Source: LSEG Data; MoSPI, India | Reuters, Feb 6

most aggressive easing since 2019. It cut rates by 25 basis points at its last meeting in December.

India remains one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, bolstered by strong domestic demand, public infrastructure spending and a relatively resilient services sector.

The economy is expected to grow 7.4% in the current financial year and the government's economic adviser has forecast growth at 6.8%-7.2% next year.

While trade tensions with the US have been a drag on the world's fifth-largest economy, the US has agreed to cut tariffs on Indian imports from nearly 50% to 18% in exchange for India halting Russian oil purchases and lowering trade barriers.

Inflation in India has been low and expected to average close to 2% in the current financial year, below the central bank's target of 4%. In December, retail inflation stood at 1.33%, the highest in three

The MPC noted that since the last policy meeting, external headwinds have intensified though the successful completion of trade deals augurs well for the economic outlook

SANJAY MALHOTRA | GOVERNOR, RBI

RBI keeps repo rate unchanged

Monetary policy committee decision was unanimous

Policy stance retained at "neutral"

Governor says inflation remains benign

months. India's benchmark 10-year bond yield rose after the RBI did not announce any liquidity supporting measures. The rupee was 0.1% lower, while benchmark equity indexes recouped losses and were last trading little changed.

EASING CYCLE ON PAUSE

Economists expect the RBI to stay on hold in the near term, aligning with several Asian central banks, including South Korea and Indonesia, which have signalled pauses in their easing cycles amid inflation concerns and external pressures.

"We expect the central bank

to remain on an extended pause amid a positive cyclical up-cycle and gains from the successful conclusion of US trade negotiations," said Radhika Rao, senior economist at DBS Bank in Singapore.

GROWTH STRONG, STABLE INFLATION

The central bank did not provide a full-year GDP forecast for the next financial year as a new data series will be rolled out in February.

The central bank, however, expects growth in the April-June 2026 quarter at 6.9% and at 7% in the subsequent three

BIZ BUZZ

Vedanta Aluminium boosts billet production to 830 KTPA



New Delhi: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest aluminium producer and the country's leading billet manufacturer, has expanded its billet production capacity at its Jharsuguda operations in Odisha, the world's largest aluminium plant, taking the total billet production capacity to 830 KTPA and placing it among the largest billet manufacturing operations globally. This significant scale-up strengthens the company's ability to supply high-quality products to customers worldwide, broadens its value-added product (VAP) portfolio, and further reinforces its role in supporting India's fast-growing extrusion and downstream sectors. Vedanta Aluminium's billets, available in diameters ranging from 5 to 12 inches, are key semifinished products used in extrusion processes to create precision-engineered profiles. These profiles support critical industries including infrastructure, transportation, renewable energy, electrical systems, consumer goods, and packaging. The expansion adds 250 KTPA of new capacity to the existing 580 KTPA billet infrastructure, bringing the total to 830 KTPA. This positions Jharsuguda among the largest aluminium billet production sites globally and reinforces Vedanta Aluminium's leadership in the Indian market, where it already supplies over half of the country's domestic billet demand.

Green Steel milestone for AM/NS India

New Delhi: ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) has become the country's first integrated steel producer to receive Green Steel certification under the Ministry of Steel's new Green Steel Taxonomy. AM/NS India's Hot Rolled (HR) coils and sheets have achieved a four-star rating, and Cold Rolled (CR) coils and sheets have achieved a three-star rating. Dilip Oommen, CEO, ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS India) said, "India's Green Steel Taxonomy sets a clear direction for the future of the steel industry and its decarbonisation. AM/NS India has been manufacturing low carbon steel with measurable efforts to reduce its carbon footprint, and the new framework further supports this commitment. The certification reflects our progress in this journey, underpinned by focused investments in low carbon processes and clean energy. The recognition demonstrates our focus on delivering our brand promise - 'Smarter Steels, Brighter Futures'. This development also reinforces the important role steelmakers are playing in supporting national climate objectives while remaining globally competitive."

MRF net profit surges over 2X

New Delhi: Tyre maker MRF Friday posted over two-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to ₹692 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025. The company had reported a net profit of ₹315 crore for the October-December quarter of the last fiscal. Its revenue from operations increased to ₹8,050 crore in the period under review against ₹7,001 crore in the year-ago period, MRF Ltd said in a regulatory filing. The company said its board has approved a second interim dividend of ₹ per share for the financial year ending March 31, 2026.

NSE profit slumps

New Delhi: Leading stock exchange NSE Friday reported a 37 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated profit after tax at ₹2,408 crore in the quarter ended December 2025. The exchange had posted a PAT (profit after tax) of ₹3,834 crore in the corresponding period last year. Total income for the October-December quarter of FY26 fell 9 per cent to ₹4,395 crore, from ₹4,807 crore in the year-ago period, NSE said in a statement.

Govt drops small car concession

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 6: India has scrapped a planned concession for small cars in upcoming fuel-efficiency rules after automakers including Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra argued it would benefit only one company, a government document shows.

A September draft had proposed leniency for petrol cars weighing 909 kg (2,004 lb) or less - a carve-out widely seen as favouring Maruti Suzuki, which controls 95% of India's small-car market.

India's Power Ministry has now removed that exemption and tightened other parameters, increasing pressure on all automakers to ramp up electric and hybrid car sales, according to the latest 41-page draft reviewed by Reuters.

The new rules curb over-compensation for vehicle weight, aim to level the field between light and heavy fleet manufacturers, and are designed to deliver real-world efficiency gains, the document said.

They introduce "a substantially steeper reduction pathway" for emissions, it added. The power ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

NEW FUEL EMISSION RULES**PROMOTING ELECTRIC, HYBRID MODELS**

Transport accounts for about 12% of India's energy use and is a major driver of petroleum imports and carbon emissions. Passenger vehicles make up nearly 90% of transport-related emissions, the document says.

Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency norms dictate permissible CO2 emissions across a manufacturer's fleet of passenger cars weighing less than 3,500 kg (7,716 lb). Updated every five years, they push automakers towards cleaner technologies including electrification, compressed natural

gas and flex-fuel.

The new rules will apply from April 2027 for five years and are central to automakers' product and powertrain investment plans.

It was not immediately clear when the rules will be finalised.

The September draft would have allowed fuel-consumption targets to rise faster with vehicle weight, easing compliance for makers of heavier cars such as Mahindra, Tata and Volkswagen, while tightening demands on lighter-fleet players such as Maruti. That imbalance prompted the carve-out.

The revised plan reduces the extent to which heavier vehicles

gain more relaxed targets.

"Manufacturers with heavier fleets ... are required to achieve stronger intrinsic efficiency improvements," the document said.

A credit system will reward companies that sell more EVs and plug-in hybrids, and pooling of fuel-consumption performance between companies will be allowed. Non-compliance will draw penalties of up to ₹550 per car.

The revised plan aims to cut average fleet emissions to about 100 grams/km over the five years to March 2032 from 114 grams/km. With credits, that could fall to as low as 76 grams/km if electric models reach 11% of total car sales by 2032.

Forex kitty jumps by \$14.361 bn to new peak of \$723.774 bn

Mumbai: India's forex reserves jumped by another \$14.361 billion to a new all-time high of \$723.774 billion during the week ended January 30, the Reserve Bank said Friday. In the previous reporting week, the forex kitty had increased by \$8.053 billion to \$709.413 billion, surging past the earlier all-time high of \$704.89 billion recorded in September 2024. For the week ended January 30, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$493 million to \$562.392 billion, the data released by the central bank showed.

Value of gold reserves soared by \$14

U-19 WORLD CUP

Blue Colts cement dominance

Sooryavanshi fires India to record-extending sixth title with a knock for the ages

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Harare, Feb 6: Cricket's latest wunderkind Vaibhav Sooryavanshi played arguably the most breathtaking knock in the history of U-19 World Cup to fire India to a record-extending sixth title with a 100-run drubbing of England in the summit clash here Friday.

Sooryavanshi's 80-ball 175, which comprised a record 15 sixes and as many fours, propelled India to an imposing 411 for 9 after England opted to bowl first.

Bruised and battered following Sooryavanshi's brutal onslaught, England's innings ended at 311 in 40.2 overs after being set an improbable target of 412 against a well-rounded bowling attack.

Caleb Falconer top-scored for England with a scintillating 67-ball 115, leaving a lasting impression on the biggest stage while helping his side reduce the margin of defeat.

This was after the 14-year-old Sooryavanshi produced a knock for the ages and raced to the three-figure mark in a mere 55 balls to become the second fastest centurion in this competition.

The triumph, which ensured India's continued dominance in the age-group showpiece, could be attributed to a robust domestic structure, vast talent pool, exposure to advanced coaching, high-quality preparation, and passion for the game among the country's youth.

India last won the tournament in 2022.

Once India crossed 400 in the



final, they were the overwhelming favourites to emerge victorious, and that is exactly how the script panned out, with the bowlers performing as a collective outfit.

To some extent, the achievement bore resemblance to the exploits of world-class Indian U-19 teams of the past that featured the likes of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, but this side led by Ayush Mhatre has carved a niche of its own, especially in terms of sheer ruthlessness, and no one exemplifies that better than that raging force called Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

Sooryavanshi's knock is the record for the best individual score in a U-19 World Cup final and is also the highest team total in the summit showdown of the tournament.

The opener exploded when it mattered the most, reaching his fifty in just 32 balls and continued in the same vein to torment

the English bowlers with his wide range of strokes. His second fifty came off just 23 balls.

As many as 150 off his 175 runs came off boundaries thanks to his 15 sixes and as many fours during a knock in which he literally toyed with the opposition attack and turned the Harare Sports Club into his playground.

He now holds the record for most sixes in a Youth ODI innings, surpassing his own 14 maximums against UAE at ICA Dubai in December.

Sooryavanshi now also has the fastest 150 (off 71 balls) in U-19 cricket, bettering the 98 balls taken by England's Ben Mayes against Scotland at the same venue earlier in the competition.

To put things into perspective, Vedant Trivedi saw Sooryavanshi celebrate both his 100 and 150 while facing only four balls between the two landmarks.

Such was Sooryavanshi's onslaught that India's run rate was around 10 at the halfway mark and the projected total was 500 at that stage of the game.

However, the boy from Bihar's Samastipur, after leaving the cricket world awestruck in little less than two hours, got out in the 26th over while trying to scoop Manny Lumsden, only to get his glove for wicketkeeper Thomas Rew to

Runs-	175
Balls-	80
6s-	15
4s-	15
SR-	218.75

complete a catch down the leg side off a short of a length ball from around the wicket.

Relieved, the England players ran towards Sooryavanshi to congratulate him for playing an innings that one doesn't get to see often in a World Cup final.

Sooryavanshi put on 142 runs in just 19 overs with



his skipper Ayush Mhatre, who departed following a 51-ball 53 immediately after bringing up his half-century.

By clearing the ropes repeatedly, Sooryavanshi aggregated a staggering 22 sixes in this edition alone, leapfrogging South Africa's Dewald Brevis, whose record of 18 sixes had stood since 2022.

Sooryavanshi has also become the youngest centurion in the history of the tournament.

Brief Scores:

India: 411/9 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Sooryavanshi 175, Ayush Mhatre 53; James Minto 3/63, Sebastian Morgan 2/74) beat **England:** 311 all out in 40.2 overs (Caleb Falconer 115, Ben Dawkins 66; RS Ambris 3/56, Deepesh Devendran 2/64) by 100 runs

YOUNG PRODIGY

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi blazed away to the second fastest hundred in the history of the U-19 WC, quickest by an Indian

The 14-year-old, who made 175 off 80 balls, now has the fastest 150 (off 71 balls) in U-19 cricket

He now also has the most sixes for anyone in a Youth ODI innings, surpassing his own 14 maximums

He aggregated a staggering 22 sixes in this edition alone, leapfrogging South Africa's Dewald Brevis

He sits third on the list of most runs scored by an Indian in a single U19 WC campaign, behind only Sarfaraz Khan (566) and Shikhar Dhawan (505)

Sooryavanshi has also become the youngest centurion in the history of the tournament

Accolades pour in

India's cricketing talent shines! Proud of our U-19 team for bringing home the World Cup. The team has played very well through the tournament, showcasing exceptional skill. This win will inspire several young sports persons too. Best wishes to the players for their upcoming endeavours

Narendra Modi | Prime Minister

So proud of this young group and the fearless cricket they played. Well done to the entire team, including coaches



and support staff. Enjoy the moment! When you have a Sooryavanshi, a timeless blockbuster is expected! Well done, Vaibhav!

Sachin Tendulkar | India legend

Proud of you boys! The bright future is here! #IndiaU19



Gautam Gambhir | head coach

Congratulations to the U-19 Indian team for lifting the World Cup once again. Our domination in the age group cricket and beyond continues. Well done to the whole squad and the support staff

Virat Kohli | Indian player

Absolutely incredible @vaibhavsoorya09 What a special mentality you have, to do this in a final CLASS



Suryakumar Yadav | T20 captain, India

Everyone's tweeting about him, I may as well too... This kid, wonder boy, he's gonna win an IPL before he finishes school



Dale Steyn | pace great, South Africa

T20 WORLD CUP CAMPAIGN BEGINS TODAY

Defending champions India look for winning start vs USA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 6: The weight of expectations will sit lightly on their shoulders when a marauding India open their T20 World Cup campaign against a spirited USA here Saturday, hoping to become the first team to defend the coveted crown.

World number one India have only gone from strength to strength despite losing two pillars in Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli from their title-winning campaign of 2024, ratcheting up an overall nine series wins since, including a rampant run in the Asia Cup last year.

The final pieces of the puzzle have also fallen in place for them with skipper Suryakumar Yadav making a strong comeback after a horrendous run with the bat in 2025. Ishan Kishan has made an explosive return as well to claim the opening slot as wicketkeeper-batter.

An on-song Ishan will pair up with Abhishek Sharma, who is marked for excellence and domination in the world event given his pedigree and batting approach tailor-made for the slam-bang format.

India's run-up to this tournament has been compared to the Australia of 2007 ODI World Cup, a different era and in a different format. But the notion gets fuel from the fact that there isn't a single base that they have not covered.

Suryakumar's return to form, the assurance of Tilak Varma in the middle and the rich arsenal of all-rounders in Hardik Pandya, vice-captain Axar Patel and Shivam Dube makes this batting line-up incredibly tough to stop.

Also in the ranks is Rinku Singh, another batter of high calibre who would have his task cut-out as a finisher.

Jasprit Bumrah has been handled with utmost care as India have come to realise his true value and requisite presence for big-ticket events.



Young India speedster Harshit Rana was Friday ruled out of the T20 World Cup because of a knee injury sustained in a warm-up game with skipper Suryakumar Yadav admitting that he was "not looking good". Fellow pacer Mohammed Siraj has been drafted in to replace Rana in the squad, according to BCCI sources

There is no double thought that we have been playing good cricket. But at the same time, you have to be in the present

SURYAKUMAR YADAV | SKIPPER, INDIA

He will have the tidy Arshdeep Singh for company with the new ball, while Harshit Rana's presence could also extend that batting line-up.

When in flow, Rana can crank up pace a notch or two above 140kmph which again provides another dimension to this Indian fast-bowling attack.

In Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy, India have two of the world's best spinners for the format but their challenge would be to overcome the dew factor, which the legendary MS Dhoni has singled out as the trouble that could irritate the co-hosts.

In their bid to ensure the best possible squad of 15 is available for this tournament, selectors and team management have

Men in Blue chase historic milestones

- First team to defend T20 World Cup
- First men's team to lift T20 WC on home soil
- First team to win three T20 World titles
- Men, women's team simultaneously holding T20 WC title

meticulously carved out this group.

It doesn't include either Shubman Gill or Yashasvi Jaiswal, and India's pursuit of excellence could also keep the mercurial Sanju Samson off the playing eleven.

INDIA SQUAD: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Ishan Kishan (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Axar Patel (vc), Shivam Dube, Hardik Pandya, Washington Sundar, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Varun Chakravarthy

BADMINTON ASIA TEAM C'SHIPS

Men lose 1-3 to Korea, Women fail title defense

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Qingdao (China), Feb 6: India's title defence in the women's team event came to a disappointing end after a 0-3 loss to a second-string China, while the men's side suffered a 1-3 defeat to Korea in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Team Championships here Friday.

Indian women had won a historic gold medal in the previous edition in 2024, but the absence of talismanic PV Sindhu due to a niggle made the task of defending the title a tough one.

Later in the day, the men's team, sans Lakshya Sen and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, was no match for Korea. India opted not to field top singles player Lakshya, who was apparently carrying some pain in his back.

In the first doubles, India missed Satwiksairaj who returned home to attend his father's first death anniversary. In his absence, Chirag Shetty partnered Hariharan Amskarun but they succumbed 11-21 13-21 against Song Hyun Cho and Kim Won Ho.



authority on the sport, as the duo, along with Vishal Singh, also earned India the team gold in the event.

The 22-year-old Rudrankksh,

who endured the disappointment of missing the Paris Olympics despite earning a quota place for the country, underlined his class by topping the qualification round with a super 632.1, as two more Indians - Babita (628.0, fifth) and Vishal (624.6, eighth) - also advanced to the eight-shooter final.

Rudrankksh began the final on a slow note, sitting sixth after the first set of five shots in the 'competition' stage, but quickly found his rhythm in the next series to move up to second. From there, he never looked back during the 'elimination' round.

This was Rudrankksh's maiden individual gold at the conti-

nental level, having previously claimed the mixed team top-podium spot in Jakarta in 2024.

The team of Rudrankksh (632.1), Babita (628.0) and Vishal (624.6) aggregated 1884.7 points to secure gold, pushing Kazakhstan (1879.4 points) and Japan (1877.2) to second and third spots respectively.

In the junior men's 10m air rifle event, India made a clean sweep of the podium, with Himanshu (250.0) clinching gold, followed by Ansh Dabas (247.9) and Suresh Pranav (246.8). The team gold also went to India as Himanshu, Pranav and Abhinav Shaw aggregated 1887.8, finishing well ahead of Kazakhstan (1851.3).

Rudrankksh began the final on a slow note, sitting sixth after the first set of five shots in the 'competition' stage, but quickly found his rhythm in the next series to move up to second. From there, he never looked back during the 'elimination' round.

This was Rudrankksh's maiden individual gold at the conti-

BOXAM ELITE INT'L

Pugilists confirm 19 medals in Spain

The Indian women's team has confirmed 12 medals, while the seven male boxers progressed to the semifinals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

La Nucia (Spain), Feb 6: Former world champion Nitu Ghonghas, Asian Games bronze medallist Preeti Pawar and Jadumani Singh punched their way into the semifinals, as Indian boxers assured themselves of 19 medals at the Boxam Elite International here.

Indian women had won a historic gold medal in the previous edition in 2024, but the absence of talismanic PV Sindhu due to a niggle made the task of defending the title a tough one.

Later in the day, the men's team, under the guidance of new head coach Santiago Nieva, has confirmed 12 medals, while the seven male boxers progressed to the semifinals.

Nitu (51kg) was in imperious form, shutting out Canada's McKenzie Wright with a commanding unanimous decision win to secure her place in the last four.

Preeti (54kg) followed with a clinical showing against Spain's Maria Gonzalez, forcing an abandonment in Round 3 after dictating the contest with sustained pressure.

Poonam (54kg) added another emphatic 5-0 victory over

Thailand's Natnicha Chongprongklang, while Priya (60kg) and Pranjal (65kg) registered unanimous wins against Spain's Laura Galano and Czech boxer Viktorie Jilkova, respectively.

Kajal (65kg) edged out Kazakhstan's Akbar Ichshanova 4-1 in a tightly contested bout.

In the men's competition, Jadumani Singh (55kg) continued his fine run, outclassing Peng Chia-Feng of Chinese