



### Healing heroine

Actress Sreeleela adds another feather to her cap after graduating with an MBBS degree

LEISURE | P2



### Rahman prioritises law

BNP chairman Tarique Rahman says that he prioritises law and order in Bangladesh “at any cost”

INTERNATIONAL | P10



### Gold first choice

Gold remains most trusted investment for young Indians, with majority choosing it as preferred investment

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### Pramod’s history book

Odisha's Pramod Bhagat clinches his fourth consecutive men's SL3 gold medal and his sixth overall world title at BWF Para World C'ships

SPORTS | P12

## India, Pak set for World Cup blockbuster

**Colombo, Feb 14:** India and Pakistan will clash in the Twenty20 World Cup in Colombo Sunday, still feeling the aftershocks of a tumultuous fortnight in which Pakistan’s boycott threat - later reversed - nearly blew a hole in the tournament’s marquee fixture.

With bilateral cricket a casualty of their fraught relations, emotions run high whenever the bitter neighbours lock horns in multi-team events at neutral venues.

India’s strained relations with another neighbour, Bangladesh, have further tangled the geopolitics around the World Cup. When Bangladesh were replaced by Scotland in the 20-team field for refusing to tour India over safety concerns, the regional chessboard shifted.

Pakistan decided to boycott the Group A contest against India in solidarity with Bangladesh, jeopardising a lucrative



fixture that sits at the intersection of sport, commerce, and geopolitics.

Faced with the prospect of losing millions of dollars in evaporating advertising revenue, the broadcasters panicked. The governing International Cricket Council (ICC) held hectic behind-the-scenes parleys and eventually brokered a compromise to salvage the tournament’s most sought-after contest. Strictly on cricketing merit, however, the rivalry has been one-sided. Defending champions India have a 7-1 record against Pakistan in the tournament’s history and they underlined that dominance at last year’s Asia Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Mr Epstein saw the news debates. Now he wants a fresh start. Rebirth in India

# AI film school trains next gen of Hollywood moviemakers

**Los Angeles, Feb 14:** Laid-off and sidelined by last year’s production slowdown, Hollywood visual effects veteran Michael Eng discovered a gap in his resume while perusing job listings in Los Angeles -- experience in machine learning.

Eng turned to Curious Refuge, an online school teaching filmmaking powered by AI, in a bid to reinvent his career amid the industry’s rapid technological shift.

Launched in May 2023, Curious Refuge’s well-regarded AI film academy has become a training ground for Hollywood workers racing to adapt as generative technology reshapes production, fueling new career paths even at a time when some in the industry fear losing their jobs to AI.



**UNSAFE ON ROAD:** One person died and three others were injured after a slab of the girder bridge of under-construction metro rail line 4 collapsed on a few vehicles in Mumbai’s Mulund area Saturday afternoon (Report on P8)

## Textile parks across state

*Odisha’s push to build multiple textile parks across districts such as Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Bolangir, Cuttack, Ganjam and Jagatsinghpur signals a deliberate shift from resource-led growth to jobs-led industrialisation. The announcement made by CM Mohan Charan Majhi, anchored by a ₹100-crore textile park in Keonjhar and a technical textile park in Bhadrak, aims to bring employment closer to home for youth who currently migrate to other states. With MoUs worth ₹7,800 crore already signed, the state is betting on modern infrastructure and logistics to create steady, women-friendly manufacturing work and diversify local economies beyond mining.*

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday announced that multiple textile parks will be established across Odisha, marking a significant step toward strengthening the state’s industrial base and generating large-scale employment.

While laying the foundation stone for a ₹100 crore Textile Park and a ₹187 crore Disaster Recovery and Data Center in the campus of Dharanidhar University in Keonjhar district, the Chief Minister said that, in



addition to a Technical Textile Park in Bhadrak, dedicated textile and apparel parks will be set up in Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Bolangir, Ganjam, Cuttack, and Jagatsinghpur.

“Our youth have been strengthening the textile industry in other states. Now, similar opportunities will be created in Odisha so that people can work closer to home,” Majhi said.

Reaffirming the government’s commitment to diversified industrial development, the Chief Minister said Keonjhar would no longer be known only for mining and steel.

“We are committed to transforming it into a multi-sector industrial hub. Our vision is to build a ‘Golden Keonjhar,’” he added.

The proposed Textile Park,

to be developed with an investment of ₹100 crore, is expected to create employment opportunities for nearly 1,200 young men and women.

With modern infrastructure and logistics support, Hindalco Industries will establish a garment manufacturing unit over seven acres of land, producing approximately 2.4 million garments annually.

Highlighting the transformative potential of the sector, the Chief Minister said the textile industry offers significant employment opportunities, particularly for women and youth.

He also noted that during the O-Tex Textile Conclave held in Bhubaneswar in July last year, 33 MoUs worth ₹7,800 crore were signed, creating employment potential for more than

53,000 people across the state.

On the occasion, Majhi also laid the foundation stone for a Disaster Recovery and Data Centre project worth ₹187 crore, to be implemented by the Electronics & IT department through the Odisha Computer Application Centre.

The facility will serve as a backup to the State Data Centre in Bhubaneswar, ensuring uninterrupted delivery of digital government services during natural disasters or cyber threats.

The centre will also support data localization efforts and strengthen the resilience of the state’s digital governance framework. Keonjhar was selected for the project as it falls under a low seismic risk zone (Zone II), making it suitable for critical digital infrastructure.

Emphasizing balanced regional development, the Chief Minister said ₹312 crore has been allocated for temple development in the district, while projects worth ₹1,900 crore were launched during the Mar-kar festival.

“A prosperous Odisha will be built through the prosperity of its districts. Industrial growth and digital empowerment are key drivers of our journey toward a developed India,” Majhi said.

### VALENTINE’S DAY SHOCKER

## Man shoots girlfriend, then himself inside car

AGENCIES

**Noida, Feb 14:** A 32-year-old man allegedly shot his 26-year-old girlfriend before turning the gun on himself inside a parked car in Sector 107 here, police said Saturday.

The bodies were found inside the car parked near pillar number 84 on Dadri Road under the limits of Sector 39 police station Saturday morning.

Police said they were alerted about the car, which had the registration number DL-14CL6473, prompting a team to respond to the scene.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Manisha Singh told PTI, “A boy and a girl were found inside the car with gunshot wounds to their heads. A pistol was found in the boy’s hand, and the car was locked from the inside. Prima facie, it appears to be a case of suicide.”

The deceased have been identified as Sumit, a resident of Trilokpuri in Delhi, and Rekha, a resident of Sector 101 in Noida. Their families have been notified, officials said.

Senior police officials and a forensic team inspected the scene. An inquest report was prepared, and the bodies have



A file photo of Rekha and Sumit

been sent for post-mortem examination, police stated.

According to reports, initial probe indicates that this is a case of a murder-suicide where the man first killed the woman and turned the pistol towards himself.

The man also left behind a note which stated that him and the woman had been dating for the last 15 years and that the woman had promised to marry him. However, he later found out that she was going to marry someone else.

## Russia killed Navalny with frog toxin, say 5 European nations

**LONDON:** Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a lethal toxin from the skin of dart frogs, five European countries said Saturday, blaming the Russian state for the attack.

The foreign ministries of the UK, France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands said analysis of samples from Navalny, who died two years ago, “have conclusively confirmed the presence of epibatidine.” It is a toxin found in poison dart frogs in South America that is not found naturally in Russia, they said.

They said in a joint statement that “Russia had the means, motive and opportunity to administer this poison.” They said they were reporting Russia to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. **P10**



Curious Refuge founders, Caleb and Shelby, pose in this undated handout image received by Reuters

shown on the Nasdaq’s seven-story-tall LED video screen in Times Square when the com-

pany went public in September. “AI genuinely changed my life,” Molnar said.



# leisure

## FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
One more hectic day! Today you will be busy trying to figure out solutions to your problems, both at home and office. Your superiors give you some leeway and it will be quite a consolation, says Ganesha. Experienced people will give you highly esteemed advice.

**TAURUS**  
This is a great day for showcasing your administrative and organizing abilities, says Ganesha. Go all out and put in all you have, at your workplace or in your business. You can be sure of impressing your colleagues and superiors, partners and competitors and gaining their admiration and support. Just one thing. Do not over do anything.

**GEMINI**  
You may come up with a precise understanding of others today, says Ganesha. You will browse through dozens of show-rooms for that perfect, and expensive, gift for your beloved. You will also work towards achieving your long-term goals. Ganesha wishes you good luck.

**CANCER**  
Today, you and your soul mate will be rolling in the hay; there will be little time or inclination to do anything else. In fact, you will show such single-minded devotion to the act of rolling as if the future of the world lies in the haystack. Your mind can think of nothing more, and nothing less.

**LEO**  
Try and put on some protective gear today – maybe a suit of armour should do fine, says Ganesha. For, you may find some need for it on this day of mixed fortunes as you miss out the expected and come face-to-face with the unexpected. Manage through the day somehow, since the day's distress will eventually give way to an evening of ecstasy and a night of pleasant surprises, portends Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Surf's up as you enjoy an unexpected achievement! But your joy ride today may well be spent in vexing about the problems you have. Expect to gain new money for a new venture. Your business will rise atop the highest wave today, foretells Ganesha.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha feels the day will be beneficial for you when it comes to transactions with the government. But you already expect that. It is more than likely that public servants will have encouraging and optimistic achievements lined up for their efforts.

**SCORPIO**  
Ganesha feels that you may be confronted with vital decisions at work. You will need to trust the opinions of your close friends and peers so that you may take informed decisions. Keep your mind away from negative thoughts and delegate responsibilities accordingly.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
It is not your nature to warm the bench, but you will wake up feeling lazy and laid-back today, says Ganesha. This may be due to the fatigue of some recent endeavours. For a change, you will try and delegate your work and responsibility to those around you.

**CAPRICORN**  
People may call you a busy bee, but that you admittedly will be, says Ganesha. Work will demand your undivided attention, but the good thing is you will quickly get done with pending work one by one. In fact, you will be left with plenty of time in the evening which you are likely to spend romancing with your sweetheart. In fact, if you are lucky enough, your affair could take a new turn today as a physical relation is on the cards.

**AQUARIUS**  
Amid all the boring work buzz, you will manage to sustain your sense of humour. And, why not? After all, you are an expert at inducing a laugh riot! You are in a gregarious mood and that explains it. This also makes you a welcome guest at any party you may wish to grace.

**PISCES**  
Today is a day of mixed fortunes. So, while you may not win a gazillion dollars in the daily lottery, you might just end up winning a return air ticket to Timbuktu. No one has really been there, but it is better than nothing. However, the distress of those lost dollars is likely to be eased by the ecstasy awaiting you in the evening.



## ALBA, CASH WARREN AGREE DIVORCE DEAL

Jessica Alba and Cash Warren have finally agreed divorce terms, over one year after she filed papers with the court. The former couple first separated in 2024 with Jessica filing for divorce in January 2025 and now Cash has filed his own papers with the court, seeking approval for the deal he and Jessica have agreed.

## HALLE BERRY IS FEELING EXCITED TO BE ENGAGED

Hollywood actress Halle Berry recently confirmed that she's engaged to her partner of five years, Van Hunt - but Halle never actually planned to tie the knot again. A source told People: "After Van proposed, Halle needed a few months to get comfortable with the idea of getting married again."



# SREELEELA'S REINTRODUCTION

**MUMBAI:** Actress Sreeleela has now added another feather to her cap after graduating with an MBBS degree after 6 years of hard work.

Many photos and videos from the convocation ceremony at the DY Patil University in Mumbai surfaced on social media.

Now, the *Dhamaka* actress has compiled an emotional note on social media, and looking back at her long yet fulfilling journey.

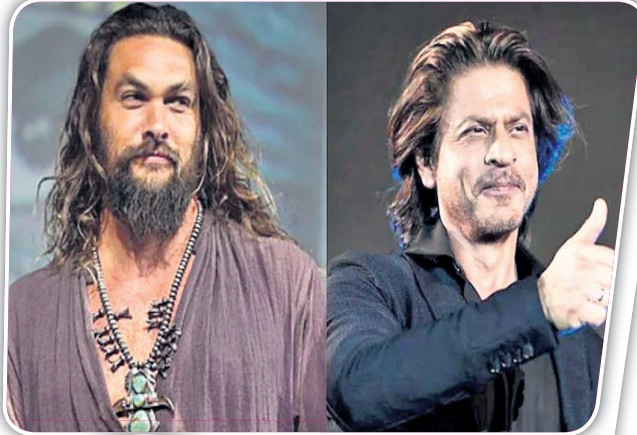
Posting a couple of pictures from the graduation ceremony, Sreeleela wrote on her official Instagram handle, "A milestone. A journey—one that you were a part of, knowingly or unknowingly. A sacred space that became

my serene escape from the facade... a place where I could simply be me. Your girl kept her promise. (sic)"

She shared that this journey was more than just about a degree. It was about "growth, faith, tears, and resilience."

Expressing her gratitude to all those who believed in her and supported her through all this, she added, "To my family, my friends, and my work friends—especially for accommo-

dating my exams and standing by me through the chaos—thank you from the bottom of my heart To everyone who believed in me when I was still learning to believe in myself... thank you." **ANS**



## SRK handsome, better actor than me: Momoa

**MUMBAI:** Jason Momoa has shown his admiration for Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan. The Hollywood actor recently spoke about King Khan during promotions for his new film, *The Wrecking Crew*, and had only kind words to share. The two actors have crossed paths a few times, including

Joy Awards in Saudi Arabia. During an interaction for his upcoming film *The Wrecking Crew*, Jason Momoa was asked about Shah Rukh Khan. He responded with a smile, saying, "Yes, he's very handsome. He's extremely handsome," as quoted by India Today. He then spoke about their bond and respect for each other's work.

"Just two mutual friends and fans of each other's work. He is just a sweetheart. He was very much a gentleman. He's a better actor and better performer than I am," the Hollywood actor added.

*The Wrecking Crew*, an American buddy cop action comedy, was released on Prime Video January 28. Along with Jason Momoa, the film stars Dave Bautista, Claes Bang, Temuera Morrison, Jacob Batalon, Frankie Adams, Miyavi, Stephen Root and Morena Baccarin. It is directed by Angel Manuel Soto and written by Jonathan Tropper. The film is produced by 6th & Idaho Productions, Hard J Productions and Reunion Pacific Entertainment. **AGENCIES**

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**MUMBAI:** Actress Mrunal Thakur made a candid confession about her relationship status to Akshay Kumar during her recent appearance on the game show *Wheel of Fortune*, where she was accompanied by her *Do Deewane Seher Mein* co-star Siddhant Chaturvedi and director Ravi Udyavar.

She revealed that she is not in any relationship at the moment.

During the fun episode, Akshay teasingly asked Mrunal, "Mrunal, there's a lot of buzz about you on social media, so what's your current status?"

Mrunal promptly responded to this, saying, "Single, ready to mingle." Her response immediately sparked excitement amongst the audience.

Recently, a lot of buzz has

## MRUNAL MAKES CONFESSION

been going on social media about Mrunal's alleged Valentine's Day wedding with Southern star Dhanush.

Now, it seems like Mrunal has finally broken her silence on the matter, clarifying that these were nothing more than baseless speculations.

Coming to *Do Deewane Seher Mein*, the makers have already added to the excitement surrounding the project by unveiling the gripping trailer of the drama.

The preview introduces us

# ‘Comparison is the thief of joy’

**MUMBAI:** As *Do Deewane Seher Mein* gears up for its February 20 release, actor Sandeepa Dhar is striking an emotional chord with her candid thoughts on sibling comparisons — a theme that lies at the heart of the film. Starring alongside Mrunal Thakur, Dhar explores a layered sister dynamic that promises to resonate deeply with audiences.

Taking to social media, Sandeepa shared a poignant note that instantly connected with many. "Look at your brother/sister, how well they..." she began, adding that the unfinished sentence alone is enough to trigger memories for most people. Reflecting on how common such comparisons are — whether with siblings, cousins or even friends — she pointed out that the "Sharma ji ka beta"

meme did not appear out of nowhere.

Elaborating on her character she wrote, "Playing Naina taught me that comparison is the thief of joy. Naina feels the pressure to maintain an impossibly high standard. Roshni feels like she will never measure up. It turns siblings into rivals. It makes love conditional. It creates wounds that take years to heal."

She further highlighted how casual remarks from parents, teachers or relatives — a simple "be like your sister" at the dinner table — can evolve into an internal voice that lingers for years. Ending her note with a question, she asked followers, "Growing up, were you Naina or Roshni?" **AGENCIES**



to two incomplete individuals who don't seek to complete each other. However, they eventually learn to understand one another, strengthening their bond.

This is the first time that Mrunal has been paired on screen opposite Siddhant.

Presented by Zee Studios and Bhansali Productions and jointly produced by San-jay Leela Bhansali, Purna Singh, Umesh Kumar Bansal, and Bharat Kumar Ranga, along with Ravi Udyawar Films, "Do Deewane Seher Mein" is likely to reach the cinema halls on February 20. **ANS**



## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

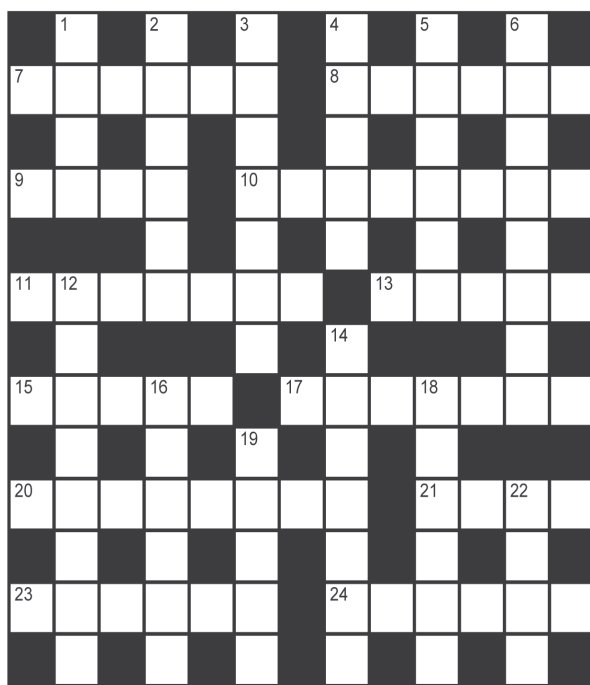


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



- |                      |                            |                       |
|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Across</b>        | 20 Pilgrim                 | 5 American elk        |
| 7 Annoying           | 21 School group?           | 6 Kind of table       |
| 8 Flabbergasted      | 23 Northern                | 12 Otis's             |
| 9 Sleeveless garment | 24 Cereal fruit            | invention             |
| 10 Fantastic         | <b>Down</b>                | 14 Chinese dish (4,3) |
| 11 Notwithstanding   | 1 Like the Sahara          | 16 Tone down          |
| 13 Lightheaded       | 2 Circus tent (3,3)        | 18 It can be English  |
| 15 Stretched tight   | 3 Rabble-rouse             | 19 Whimsical          |
| 17 Tolerate          | 4 Prince William's brother | 22 Insignificant      |

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## SUDOKU

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

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

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

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

### SUDOKU

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



## SELF-CONFIDENCE IS KEY TO SUCCESS: CM TO STUDENTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Jajpur, Feb 14:** Self-confidence is the key to success, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi told students while attending the platinum jubilee celebration of PM SHRI NC Government High School in Jajpur Saturday.

Terming the occasion as historic, the CM said that since its establishment in 1945, the school has played a vital role in shaping a generation of responsible citizens and has become a strong pillar of education in the district. He said that the institution has created a golden chapter in the educational landscape of the region.

Expressing satisfaction over the inclusion of the school in the PM SHRI Yojana, the CM said that it is being developed as a model institution with modern infrastructure, digital classrooms and smart learning facilities. He said that this school will emerge as a model of quality education with modern facilities and will focus on holistic development.

Emphasising on the overall development of students, the CM said that the purpose of education is not just to score marks or create jobs, it is to build the character of the children and teach them various life skills. Referring to the NEP 2020, he said that there is a need to focus on the creativity, efficiency, decision-making ability and problem-solving skills of the children. “Self-confidence is the key to success,” the CM said and urged the students to dream big and adopt duty, dedication, and determination as their philosophy of life.

As the matriculation exams are approaching, the CM conveyed his best wishes to the students and advised them to prepare with patience. He told the students that success requires continuous effort and failure should be considered as a stepping stone to success. Reiterating the government's commitment to strengthening the education system, the CM highlighted that the state has given priority to education with the highest budgetary allocation. Assuring students and parents of the government's continued support, the CM said that building a prosperous Odisha depends on providing quality education and opportunities to its children. He asserted, “A prosperous Odisha will be built by our children.”

## Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang cancels India visit for AI summit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 14:** Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has cancelled his visit to attend the India AI Impact Summit, the company said Saturday.

The company will, however, send a delegation of senior officials led by its Executive Vice-President Jay Puri.



“Due to unforeseen circumstances, Jensen Huang is unable to travel to India at this time,” the company said in a statement. Nvidia is one of the key players that dominate the AI ecosystem due to its fast processing GPU servers.

India AI Impact Summit is scheduled to be held at Bharat Mandapam here from February 16-20.

A senior NVIDIA delegation, led by Executive Vice President Jay Puri, will be on the ground to celebrate India's exceptional AI researchers, startups, developers, and the partners building the nation's AI infrastructure,” the statement said.



**SHOW OF STRENGTH:** In this image posted Saturday, ships from the navies of India, Japan and Indonesia participate in a trilateral exercise in the Andaman Sea

PTI PHOTO

# US military preparing for weeks-long Iran ops

REUTERS

**Washington, Feb 14:** The US military is preparing for the possibility of sustained, weeks-long operations against Iran if President Donald Trump orders an attack, two US officials told Reuters, in what could become a far more serious conflict than previously seen between the countries.

The disclosure by the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the planning, raises the stakes for the diplomacy underway between US and Iran.

US and Iranian diplomats held talks in Oman last week in an effort to revive diplomacy over Tehran's nuclear programme, after Trump amassed military forces in the region, raising fears of new military action.

US officials said Friday the Pentagon was sending an additional aircraft carrier to the Middle East, adding thousands more troops along with fighter aircraft, guided-missile destroyers and other firepower capable of waging attacks and defending against them. Trump, speaking to US troops Friday at a base in North Carolina, said it had “been difficult to make a deal” with Iran. “Sometimes you have to have fear. That's the only thing that really will get the situation taken care of,” Trump said.

Asked for comment on the preparations for a potentially



An upside-down US flag flutters at the former US Embassy in Tehran

**It had been difficult to make a deal with Iran. Sometimes you have to have fear. That's the only thing that really will get the situation taken care of**

**DONALD TRUMP | US PRESIDENT**

sustained US military operation, White House spokesperson Anna Kelly said, “President Trump has all options on the table with regard to Iran.”

“He listens to a variety of perspectives on any given issue, but makes the final decision based on what is best for our country and national security,” Kelly said. The Pentagon declined to comment.

US sent two aircraft carriers to the region last year, when it carried out strikes against Iranian nuclear sites. However, June's ‘Midnight Hammer’ operation was essentially a one-off US attack, with stealth bombers flying from US to strike Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran staged a very limited retaliatory strike on a US base in Qatar.

The planning underway this time is more complex, the officials said. In a sustained campaign, US military could hit Iranian state

and security facilities, not just nuclear infrastructure, one of the officials said. The official declined to provide specific detail.

Experts say the risks to US forces would be far greater in such an operation against Iran, which boasts a formidable arsenal of missiles. Retaliatory Iranian strikes also increase the risk of a regional conflict.

The official said the US fully expected Iran to retaliate, leading to back-and-forth strikes and reprisals over a period of time.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to bomb Iran over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and crushing of internal dissent. Thursday, he warned the alternative to a diplomatic solution would “be very traumatic, very traumatic”. Iran's Revolutionary Guards have warned that in case of strikes on Iranian territory, they could retaliate against any US military base.

## Choudwar jailbreak fugitive held in UP

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** Odisha Police Saturday arrested one of the two prisoners who had escaped from Choudwar Circle Jail in Cuttack during last year's Durga Puja celebrations. The arrest was made in Uttar Pradesh.

The fugitives, Madhukanta Kumar and Raja Sahani, both from Bihar, had escaped the high-security jail on the intervening night of October 2-3.

Kumar was arrested from a guest house at an ashram in Vrindavan, Uttar Pradesh, a senior police official said.

“A special team from the Commissionerate of Police, Bhubaneswar-Cuttack, arrested Kumar from the guest house of an ashram at Virndavan in Uttar Pradesh after sustained efforts,” Commissioner of Police S Dev Datta Singh told reporters.

Kumar, a resident of Begusarai district, was arrested in a dacoity and murder case and lodged at Choudwar jail.

Separate police teams were formed to track the fugitives across Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Nagaland, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Kumar had been staying in Vrindavan under the alias Basu Pande. He was produced in a UP court before being brought to Odisha on a transit remand, Singh said.

Odisha Police had announced a cash reward of Rs 50,000 for anyone providing credible information on the two prisoners.

Singh assured that police would soon nab the other fugitive.

## Cabinet okays tenders for integrated barrage project



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** The state Cabinet, headed by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, approved key proposals, including three tenders related to the Integrated Anandpur Barrage Project that involves construction of barrage on Bairarini river and its distribution system to provide irrigation facilities to 60,000-hectare of agricultural land in Keonjhar and Balasore districts, Saturday.

“Under the project, construction of barrage and strengthening of Salandi river system and distribution system of 3,000 hectare of CCA through open canal system have been completed. The distribution system in remaining 57,000 ha has been decided to be taken up through underground pipeline system to overcome delay in land acquisition process,” the Water Resources department said in a statement.

The state Cabinet has approved three tenders for the

## 6-yr-old boy dies during MRI scan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Noida, Feb 14:** A six-year-old boy has died allegedly during an MRI procedure at a private diagnostic centre in Greater Noida, with his family accusing the facility of negligence and administration of expired medicine or an overdose, officials said Saturday.

The facility was sealed Friday, and a four-member committee was formed to probe the incident, Dr Chandan Soni of the Gautam Buddha Nagar Health Department told PTI.

“The exact cause of death is not known yet and will be determined after completion of the enquiry,” Soni said.

The incident occurred Thursday when the child, a resident of Dungarpur village, was taken to the diagnostic centre located in the Pie-3 area for an MRI scan.

Family members claimed that the boy was in normal health before the procedure, but negligence by the centre led to his death.

The boy's father, Vicky, has lodged a complaint at the Beta-2 police station against the diagnostic centre. “An FIR will be registered after the report of the medical enquiry is received,” the police said.

# How Epstein used Nobel Peace Prize glamour to entice elites

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Stavanger (Norway), Feb 14:** Jeffrey Epstein repeatedly played up his ties to the former head of the Nobel Peace Prize committee in invitations to and chats with elites like Richard Branson, Larry Summers, Bill Gates and Steve Bannon, a top ally of President Donald Trump, the Epstein files show.

Thorbjorn Jagland, who headed the Norwegian Nobel Committee from 2009 to 2015, turns up hundreds of times in the millions of documents about the former US financier and convicted sex offender that were released by the US Justice Department last month.

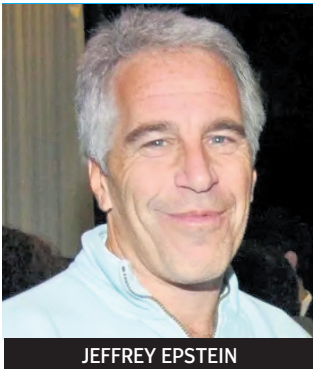
Since the release, Jagland, 75, has been charged in Norway for ‘aggravated corruption’ in connection with an investigation

prompted by information in the files, the economic crime unit of Norwegian police Okokrim said.

Okokrim has said it would investigate whether gifts, travel and loans were received in connection with Jagland's position. Its teams searched his Oslo residence Thursday, plus two other properties in Risor, a coastal town to the south, and in Rauland to the west.

His attorneys at Elden law firm in Norway said Jagland denies the charges and was questioned by the police unit Thursday.

While there is no evidence in the documents seen so far of any outright lobbying for the Nobel Peace Prize, Epstein repeatedly played up hosting Jagland at his properties in New York and Paris in the 2010s.



**From an interesting guest to a subject of banter with Bannon**

In September 2018, during Trump's first term and in an apparent allusion to his interest in the peace prize, Epstein had a varied text-message exchange with Bannon, at one point writing - in one of many messages with untidy grammar: “donalds



head would explode if he knew you were now buds with the guy who on monday will decide the nobel peace prize.”

“I told him next year it should be you when we settle China,” he added, without elaborating.

In one email from 2013, mixing in investment tips and

praise for PR tips, Epstein told British entrepreneur and magnate Richard Branson that Jagland would be staying with Epstein in September that year, adding, “if you are there, you might find him interesting.”

A year after she left a job as White House counsel to President Barack Obama, in 2015, Kathy Ruemmler got an email from Epstein saying: “head of nobel peace prize coming to visit, want to join?”

In 2012, Epstein wrote to former Treasury Secretary and Harvard University president Larry Summers about Jagland, saying, “head of the nobel peace prize staying with me, if you have any interest.”

In that exchange, Epstein referred to Jagland - also a former Norwegian prime minister and former head of the Council of

Europe, a human rights body - as “not bright” but someone who offered a “unique perspective.”

The financier wrote to Bill Gates in 2014, saying that Jagland had been reelected as head of the Council of Europe.

“That is good,” Gates wrote. “I guess his peace prize committee job is also up in the air?”

During Jagland's tenure as chair of the committee, it gave the peace prize to Obama in 2009 and to the EU in 2012.

Jagland was brought into Epstein's orbit by Terje Rød Larsen, a Norwegian diplomat who helped broker the Oslo Peace Accords between Israel and Palestinians. Larsen and wife are also facing corruption charges in Norway due to their association with Epstein.





20TH TOSHALI SWADESHI MELA KICKS OFF

# Handloom products reflect state’s glorious heritage: Min



*Fair to run until February 26, featuring 905 stalls and participation by weavers and artisans from 20 states*

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** Odisha’s handloom and handicraft products carry a distinct appeal that reflects the state’s rich heritage and cultural identity, Deputy Chief Minister KV Singh Deo said while inaugurating the 20th Grand Toshali Swadeshi Mela at Janata Maidan Saturday.

He said the primary objective of the fair is to strengthen the economic prospects of weavers and artisans while celebrating the enduring legacy of the state’s handloom and handicraft sectors.

Handlooms, Textiles and Handicrafts Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta expressed pride in Odisha’s weavers and artisans. He noted that while

TWELVE ARTISANS WERE FELICITATED IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HANDLOOM AND HANDICRAFT SECTOR

AN MOU WAS SIGNED BETWEEN THE DIRECTORATE OF HANDICRAFTS AND CSIR-IMMT, BHUBANESWAR TO STRENGTHEN TECHNICAL COLLABORATION.

ANOTHER MOU WAS INKED WITH INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PACKAGING, MUMBAI TO SUPPORT PACKAGING AND VALUE ADDITION INITIATIVES

weavers have become torchbearers of the state’s weaving legacy, handicraft artisans have emerged as ambassadors of excellence in art. The government, he added, remains committed to strengthening their livelihoods.

On the occasion, 12 artisans were felicitated for their contributions. Two MoUs were signed between the Directorate of Handicrafts and the CSIR-IMMT, Bhubaneswar, and the Indian Institute of Packaging, Mumbai. Additionally, two MoUs were

signed between the Directorate of Handlooms and Textiles and the ICAR-National Institute of Natural Fibre Engineering and Technology, along with Odisha University of Technology and Research, Bhubaneswar.

Department’s Commissioner-cum-Secretary Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar delivered the welcome address, while Director of Handicrafts Nivedita Prusty proposed the vote of thanks.

Among those present were Ekamra-Bhubaneswar MLA Babu Singh, regional coordinator of Swabalambi Abhiyan Sarada Satpathy, renowned Bandha artist and Padma Shri awardee Sarat Kumar Patra, Additional Secretary Pratap Chandra Hota, and Director of Handlooms and Textiles Surya Narayan Pattanayak.

The fair, which began Saturday, will continue until February 26. This year, a total of 905 stalls have been set up, with weavers and artisans from 20 states participating in the event.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** The Cyber Crime and Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has arrested a youth from Bhopal for allegedly cheating a senior citizen of the City out of ₹81,30,082 in an online investment scam, police said Saturday.

The accused was identified as 24-year-old Aakash Kaushik, a resident of Bhopal district.

According to police, Aakash allegedly duped complainant Niranjan Boitai (61) by adding him to a fake stock market investment group on WhatsApp and promising high returns.

Police said the victim was persuaded to install a fraudulent trading application and transfer money to multiple bank accounts. The complainant reportedly transferred ₹81,30,082 before the platform became inaccessible.

During the investigation, police found that transactions worth around ₹13 lakh were routed through a bank account linked to the accused at YES



Bank. Officials also examined transaction records from ICICI Bank and Axis Bank.

On February 12, acting on a reliable tip-off, the investigating team conducted a raid at Aakash’s residence in Bhopal and arrested him.

Police seized two mobile phones, identity documents

**₹18.9L investment fraud: man nabbed**

**BHUBANESWAR:** Badagada Police under Bhubaneswar UPD arrested a man for allegedly cheating investors of Rs 18.9 lakh by promising higher returns through investments in government and power sector projects, officials said Saturday. The accused has been identified as Onkar Prasad Pattnaik (44), who has been forwarded to judicial custody. During investigation, police found that Pattnaik along with his associates allegedly lured one of the complainant’s husband and relatives by assuring high returns from investments linked to government projects including one in OPGC. Police said Pattnaik and his brother Jyoti Ranjan Pattnaik allegedly collected Rs 18,90,000 from multiple persons through bank transactions. When the victims demanded refund, the accused allegedly abused and threatened them with serious consequences. The police arrested the accused near Apollo Hospitals here after following on a tip off February 13. Pattnaik confessed to his involvement in the crime during interrogation, police said.

members of the alleged cyber fraud network and recover the defrauded amount.

# Min directs to accelerate devpt works at block level

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** Minister for Panchayati Raj, Drinking Water and Rural Development Rabi Narayan Naik, Saturday chaired a high-level review meeting with Chief Development Officers (CDO-cum-EOs) and Block Development Officers (BDOs) to assess the progress of major rural development programmes across the State. The meeting was held at the MGNREGA Society Conference Hall, SIRD Campus.

The review focused on the implementation of Bikashita Gaon Bikashita Odisha (BG-BO), Antyodaya Gruha Yojana, MGNREGA and rural connectivity projects aimed

at improving infrastructure, housing and livelihood opportunities in villages.

Addressing the officers, the minister emphasized the need for accelerated execution of projects during the remaining period of the financial year and urged officials to approach the assigned targets with greater ambition and commitment. “If we work with sincerity and speed, we can achieve much beyond our targets. Let us send a strong signal that we are capable of delivering more for rural Odisha,” the Minister said. The Minister urged the officers to promptly inform the Department about any operational bottlenecks requiring intervention and assured personal

support, including field-level visits wherever necessary, to facilitate timely resolution.

Commissioner-cum-Secretary Girish S.N. highlighted that the Bikashita Gaon Bikashita Odisha initiative has the potential to significantly transform rural infrastructure. Stressing on inclusive development, he directed that all unconnected villages be brought under full connectivity within a defined timeframe. Reaffirming that the department stands firmly behind the field officers, he encouraged them to share implementation challenges openly for their timely redressal. Director, Special Projects, Siddharth Shankar Swain stressed the importance of completing documentation and bill submissions for finished works so that financial records accurately reflect progress on the ground. As a result, review process would become more meaningful.

The meeting was attended by senior departmental officers along with 30 CDOs and 38 BDOs from across the State, who participated in detailed discussions on improving delivery at the grassroots level.

The review concluded with a collective commitment to accelerate rural development works and strengthen efforts towards building a Bikashita Odisha through efficient and accountable governance at the block and village levels.

## Minority family denied burial

**BHUBANESWAR:** A Christian family in Kapena village, Umakote block, Nabarangpur district, Odisha, has been allegedly denied the right to bury a deceased relative, sparking outrage and concerns over the safety and dignity of the Christian minority in the region. Pallab Lima, National President of the Rastriya Christian Morcha, strongly condemned the incident, describing it as a blatant violation of human rights. According to Lima, tensions in Kapena village have escalated due to targeted attacks on the Christian community, including the forced closure of prayer halls and repeated harassment.

## CLASSIFIED LOST

I, Smt. Sukanti Giri (52), W/o - Sripat Giri of Village - Hijili, P.S. - Bangriposi in the district - Mayurbhanj have lost my original dalil of Mouza khatian No.160/70, Plot No.-490/607. Accordingly I have lodged an FIR at Bangriposi P.S. (Station Diary No. 011/13.2.26) and made an affidavit before Notary Public Bangriposhi. Sd./- Sukanti Giri.

On dtd.10.01.2026 at 4.15 P.M. one Rupesh Kumar Agrawal, S/o. Late Ghasiram Agrawal of Village/ P.S. - Lathor, Dist. - Balangir appeared at P.S. and presented a Written Report bearing G.D.No.015 that his original Land Sale Deed Bearing Regd.No.903/2010, Sub-Registry Office- Patnagarh of Mouza Pipalbahal Khata No. 108/329 Plot No. 282/1169,285 and 286 which was Regd. On 22.4.2010 kept in a wooden box was damaged by white Ants and cannot be traced out. Rupesh Kumar Agrawal

## CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE AWARENESS DAY CARE Hospitals honours CHD warriors

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** CARE Hospitals, Bhubaneswar observed Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) Awareness Day with a felicitation ceremony honouring courageous CHD warriors and their inspiring journeys toward recovery and resilience. The initiative aimed to raise awareness about congenital heart conditions, encourage early diagnosis, and celebrate the strength of young patients and their families.

Highlighting the growing burden of the condition, doctors noted that nearly 8 out of every 1,000 babies in India are born with congenital heart disease. With approximately 2.4 to 2.5 crore births recorded annually in the country, this translates to an estimated 1.8 to 2 lakh newborns affected every year.

Speaking on the occasion, Soumyakanti Mohapatra, Senior Consultant, Paediatric Cardiology said, “Congenital heart disease affects nearly two lakh newborns in India each year, yet many cases go



undiagnosed in the early days of life. Parents must be aware of early warning signs such as rapid breathing, bluish lips or nails, difficulty in feeding, excessive sweating during feeds, or poor weight gain.”

Adding to this, Mahendra Prasad Tripathy, Clinical Director & Head of the Department - Cardiology said, “Strengthening neonatal screening protocols and improving access to specialised paediatric cardiac care are critical steps in reducing preventable complications.”

Kislay Anand, Zonal Chief Operating Officer, CARE Hospitals stated, “This day is a tribute to the incredible courage of our young CHD warriors and their families.”

## Govt sets deadline for land patta & RoR corrections

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** The state government has directed officials to complete all pending corrections related to land pattas and Record of Rights (RoR)—particularly Column-2 entries—within a fixed timeline in mission mode across all districts of Odisha. District Collectors have been asked to personally monitor the progress.

In a letter issued February 13, Additional Chief Secretary of the Revenue and Disaster Management department Arbinda Kumar Padhee directed officials to dispose of all pending cases without procedural delay and ensure time-bound resolution.

Following a tehsil-wise review, Padhee expressed satisfaction over the proactive progress made in districts such as Nuapada district, Koraput district, Boudh district, Kalahandi district, Malkangiri district and Sambalpur district. However, concern was raised over delays and unsatisfactory performance in some other districts.

## BJD targets BJP over spl status promise

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** The Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Saturday intensified its criticism of BJP, questioning its commitment to a decade-old promise to secure special category status for Odisha.

BJD MP Sasmit Patra, speaking at a press conference here, said the demand remains unresolved despite the BJP’s 2014 manifesto pledging to work towards granting the status for the state’s overall development.

“The Odisha BJP in 2014 promised that it would strive for the special category status for the state. It’s been two years they are in the government, but they haven’t moved an inch on the special category status for Odisha,” the BJD MP alleged.

Patra referred to recent parliamentary disclosures indicating that the Union government has no proposal under consideration, arguing that this weakens the credibility of the “double-engine” governance claim.

“This raises a big question on the double-engine BJP government, which said that if it



came to power, it would work towards the special category status for Odisha,” he said.

The MP urged the BJP government led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to adopt a Cabinet resolution formally seeking Special Category status from the Centre on behalf of the people of the state.

“The demand for special status is not mere politics; it is intrinsically linked to the state’s long-standing developmental and economic concerns,” Patra said.

# Odisha CEO engages radio broadcasters over SIR

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** With the objective of ensuring all eligible citizens in the state are included in the electoral roll and to strengthen a transparent electoral process, a state-level capacity building workshop for radio broadcasters was held at the conference hall of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Odisha Saturday.

The programme was organised by The Sociogenic Foundation and Outreach in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Odisha.

Addressing the gathering as the chief guest, Odisha Chief Electoral Officer RS Gopalan stressed the importance of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral roll. He emphasised that for strengthening democracy, it is essential that every eligible Indian citizen’s name is included in the voter list. He advised officials and broadcasters to remain vig-



ilant so that no eligible voter is left out and no ineligible person is included in the rolls.

Key discussions during the workshop included the process through which every Indian citizen who has attained 18 years of age can register as a voter. Participants were also briefed

on procedures for correcting errors in the voter list and filing claims and objections.

Highlighting the importance of media outreach, officials noted that radio remains a powerful medium for disseminating accurate information and spreading awareness

among the public. The workshop focused on encouraging radio broadcasters to actively inform citizens about their constitutional rights and electoral responsibilities.

During the interactive session, radio broadcasters engaged directly with CEO Gopalan on SIR mapping and discussed the functionality and wider use of the ECI Net App developed by the Election Commission to facilitate electoral services.

Representatives and broadcasters from various radio stations across the state participated in the workshop and gained insights into several technical aspects related to elections.

Among those present were Additional CEO Sushant Kumar Mishra, Deputy CEO Laxmi Prasada Sahu, Financial Advisor Sanjay Kumar Lugun, senior radio broadcaster Ashok Panigrahi, and Public Relations Officer Bijayananda Mallik, along with other officials.

WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	32.7°	29.4°	Dry weather likely to prevail
Min Temp	15.9°	13.8°	
Humidity	69%	75%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	




## Hubby among 5 held for woman's murder



“

Spirituality is indeed the master key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinitive is native to it.



SRI AUROBINDO

## Enforced Reverence

There is always a shortage of nationalism in our country, because there seems to be so much demand for it. In all of my decades I had not known of a demand for Vande Mataram to be tagged on to the national anthem but now we are told this is to be the case.

There are six stanzas to the song which will have to be memorised for those of us who do not know them. The recitation will have to be 3 minutes and 10 seconds long, as the Ministry of Home Affairs(MHA) has ordered. It is unclear in the orders whether this singing is voluntary (like Aadhaar) or compulsory (also like Aadhar).

This confusion arises from the wording. The MHA tells us that ‘it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of occasions on which the singing — as opposed to the playing — of official version of National Song can be permitted’, but it helpfully adds that ‘there is no objection to the singing... as long as it is done with due respect’. There are no guidelines on what constitutes due respect but we will no doubt find out soon what constitutes violation. The more nationalistic among us will educate those who are less so.

Why I say it is unclear whether it is voluntary or not is because the order adds that ‘the National Song may be sung on occasions which, although not strictly ceremonial, are nevertheless invested with significance because of the presence of Ministers etc’ and further that ‘mass singing is desirable.’ What does the ‘etc’ include or exclude? What is the true interpretation of ‘desirable’?

Again, we shall find out what happens when someone chooses to interpret the words ‘may’ and ‘desirable’ as being indicators of voluntary action. But all this is ultimately beside the point. The point, the main one, is that there is always a shortage of nationalism in our country and this is one way in which the shortage can be met. And it is also the case that this sort of thing works as our history tells us.

Exactly 50 years ago, in 1976, the then government added ‘fundamental duties’ to the constitution. These duties are to ‘promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women’. Who can deny that this has happened? India would not be the global example for brotherhood and the safety of women if these instructions had not come to us.

There is also on the list ‘protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures’ and, my favourite, ‘develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform’.

These duties were added because nationalism was in high demand and short supply in 1976 and that is the case of the present as well.

Cynics and haters of the present dispensation will argue that there are other ways to show love of nation. That anthems and slogans are peripheral to national progress. That we would be better off as a nation if we were also to behave better in traffic, for instance, and we were to not litter. The national song talks about rivers and it would be difficult to name a country where the waters are filthier than the ones here.

We could show our patriotism through refusing to take or give bribes. Or through not attempting to cheat on taxes, something that comes so naturally to the most patriotic among us that it is a wonder tax evasion has not been included in fundamental duties.

There is a long list of things that can be added here, but, as our government and its defenders will likely say: these are things that the citizens of many nations can do. They are not special.

We need something unique and distinct to show our love. That is precisely what this new order has given us. ‘Whenever the official version of the National Song is sung or played’, the MHA order cautions, ‘the audience shall stand to attention’. Perhaps what this means is that once it has been determined by the venue that the song is to be played, the audience must comply and then participation is no longer voluntary. If that is the case, then what is the difference between song and anthem? One does not know, but our government in its wisdom surely does.

There is more: ‘In all schools, the day’s work may begin with the community singing of the National Song.’ In my opinion this is necessary to instill the same levels of patriotism in the next generation as are to be found in our generation, and the one before ours. There are other benefits as well.

The unemployed will utilise their spare time memorising the six stanzas. They will further be productive by policing the crowd to see who is unobservant and straying from ‘proper decorum’. Reports of them doing so violently should start reaching us at any moment now. The lazy will stand an additional 3 minutes and 10 seconds and improve their fitness.

The nation progresses.

### WISDOM CORNER

“

The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.

HENRIK IBSEN

“

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is only putting out the lamp because the dawn has come.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

“

Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot that it do singe yourself.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1927: The silent film It was released in American theaters, and Clara Bow, the star, became Hollywood's first "It girl."
- 1933: An assassin's bullet meant for the U.S. president-elect, Franklin D. Roosevelt, wounded Mayor Anton J. Cermak of Chicago, who died three weeks later.
- 1965: Canada officially adopted the Maple Leaf Flag following a royal proclamation.
- 1989: Under President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet Union withdrew its last troops from Afghanistan after occupying the country since 1979.

FOCUS

SUSTAINABILITY

ENERGY SOVEREIGNTY



The sun and wind are available to most countries, and they are especially strong in India. Drawing more on these sources would not only reduce dependence but also drive electrification, which is key to sustaining the industries and technologies of the future

No sooner had the recent draft India-US trade agreement been made public than it was met with outcries from the Indian commentariat. The biggest bone of contention was the US requirement that India phase out its oil imports from Russia. These had risen from 2% of total oil imports in 2021 to 36% by 2024, reflecting the massive discount on Russian oil – about \$35 per barrel below Brent – following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

In fact, with the discount declining to about \$2 recently, oil imports from Russia have fallen accordingly. But controversies over the provenance of oil imports (be they from Russia, Iran, or Venezuela) are likely to continue, calling attention to the deeper, underlying problem afflicting India’s economy: energy dependence.

Consider energy imports as a share of total energy consumption for India and China over the course of their recent economic history. Not only is India heavily dependent on imported energy, but its dependency has risen from 10% of energy consumption in 1990 to over 35% in 2023. By contrast, while China has also been quite energy dependent, it has been much less dependent than India at comparable points in its development.

The upshot is that economic dynamism and growing prosperity have made India more, not less, dependent on imported energy. But now that geopolitical wrangling increasingly shapes international trade, India must reduce this dependence to maximize its strategic autonomy.

One option would be to invest more in hydrocarbons, as the United States under President Donald Trump has done. But another option is

to embrace the Chinese approach and become a renewables-based electro-state. This has many advantages. The sun and wind are available to most countries, and they are especially strong in India. Drawing more on these sources would not only reduce dependence but also drive electrification, which is key to sustaining the industries and technologies of the future: data centers, electric vehicles, drones, AI, and so forth.

Moreover, India has two other compelling reasons for shifting strategically from hydrocarbons toward renewables-based electricity. The first is pollution. The domestic social costs of burning coal and oil have been devastating, as a recent World Bank study demonstrates. New Delhi, an “open-air gas chamber,” is a grim reminder of the consequences of doubling down on hydrocarbons. Thus, a shift to using more coal is inadvisable, even leaving aside the fact that \$40-60 billion in thermal power investments are already stranded or at risk, and that new plants will only add to this burden as solar-plus-batteries outcompetes coal.

To be sure, the move to renewables does risk trading oil dependence for technology dependence, since China controls over 80% of solar manufacturing and dominates battery supply chains. But that brings us to the second reason to make the shift: cheaper electricity will be crucial to seizing India’s last opportunity to revive manufacturing. In A Sixth of Humanity: Independent India’s Development Odyssey, Devesh Kapur and one of us (Subramanian) show that manufacturing has been hampered by electricity costs that have been twice as high as they should be, and double those found in competitor countries.

India’s governmental and industry commitments to renewables are undeniable, and it has added renewable capacity at a brisk pace, including 50 gigawatts in 2025. Its potential for solar and wind is well-established, and its green hydrogen auctions have fetched globally competitive prices. But serious structural and institutional problems threaten to stymie progress. The most important is the fragmentation of decision-making and

governance across the central government and each of the 28 state governments, with the latter controlling the critical distribution sector.

As mostly public-sector monopolies, Indian distribution companies (“discoms”) are chronically in financial straits, owing to populist political pressures that keep prices well below cost. After operating at a loss for many years, discoms overall have accumulated roughly \$75 billion in debt.

As a result, they have been unable to buy power from renewable generators, which in turn have over 50 GW of excess supply. They also are poorly positioned to ramp up investment in the grid and storage systems (\$50 billion is needed by 2035) without which India cannot possibly become an electro-state. Currently, some 60 GW of power is impeded by inadequate transmission capacity.

If India is going to overcome its energy dependence, it must accelerate its transformation into an electro-state – starting immediately. The central government is moving in the right direction, but much bolder reforms are required, especially on the part of state governments. The dominance of inefficient, poorly managed public-sector monopolies must be addressed. Fostering competition and creating rival institutions that are nimble enough to facilitate the technology transition will be essential. The slower India goes, the more vulnerable it will be to shifting geopolitics of energy.

Navneeraj Sharma is an energy economist. Arvind Subramanian is a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

SPECTRUM

ENVIRONMENT

## Sacred spaces, sustainable spirits

“

Temples have long served as the heart of Indian social and spiritual life, offering a sanctuary of peace and a conduit for divine communion. Millions flock to these sacred places seeking solace, guidance and a sense of belonging. Yet, paradoxically, these centers of spiritual purity have inadvertently become significant contributors to environmental pollution. The massive influx of devotees brings with it a logistical nightmare of waste management. From the plastic bags used for ‘Prasad’ to the non-biodegradable cutlery used in community kitchens, the sheer volume of single-use materials discarded within and around temple premises often contradicts the very sanctity these institutions represent. The serene atmosphere is frequently marred by the sight of overflowing bins and plastic-choked water bodies, creating a stark disconnect between the holiness of the ritual and the unholiness of its physical aftermath.



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

BY INTEGRATING MODERN WASTE MANAGEMENT WITH ANCIENT WISDOM, OUR PLACES OF WORSHIP CAN ONCE AGAIN BECOME BEACONS OF PURITY

Despite this challenge, temples hold a unique and powerful position in the social hierarchy that makes them ideal catalysts for environmental change. They are not

just places of worship but influential community hubs that command immense respect and authority. When a religious institution speaks, people listen with a depth of devotion that no government mandate can replicate. By adopting sustainable practices, temples can transform from being creators of waste into powerful role models for eco-friendly living. They have the potential to lead by example, proving that spirituality and environmental stewardship are two sides of the same coin. A temple that embraces a ‘zero-waste’ philosophy sends a resounding message to its devotees: that honoring the Creator is impossible without honoring the Creation.

The Odisha State Pollution Control Board (OSPCB) has recognized this potential with its recent, comprehensive public notice aimed at eliminating single-use plastics from temple premises. This notification is a landmark step towards maintaining temple sanctity while addressing the scourge of plastic waste. The guidelines are specific and actionable, targeting devotees, vendors and administrators alike. Devotees are encouraged to return to traditional, sustainable alter-

natives like bamboo baskets and ‘patra danas’ (leaf plates) for their offerings. Vendors are instructed to abandon plastic cutlery and carry bags of less than 120 microns in favor of compostable and biodegradable materials such as wood, paper and metal. Crucially, the burden of implementation is shared by temple administrations, who are tasked with providing separate color-coded bins for dry and wet waste and ensuring that ‘bisarjan’ or the disposal of offerings occurs in barricaded areas of ponds to facilitate easy cleanup.

However, the path from policy to practice is often fraught with hurdles. The primary challenge in implementing these guidelines lies in the deeply ingrained habits of both the vendors and the visiting public. Furthermore, the sheer scale of operations in major temples makes monitoring and enforcement a Herculean task. Convincing the managing committees of these temples is the linchpin of this entire initiative. These committees must be engaged not through the cold language of environmental regulation, but through the warm lens of spiritual duty and heritage preservation. They must be

convinced that the accumulation of plastic waste is a form of ‘ashuddhi’ or impurity that diminishes the spiritual vibration of the temple. By showcasing successful models where temples have significantly reduced their carbon footprint while enhancing the devotee experience, the PCB can provide a roadmap for others to follow. Financial incentives, recognition for ‘Green Temples’, and technical support for waste processing can further ease this transition.

In conclusion, the notification by the OSPCB is a visionary document that seeks to reclaim the ecological integrity of our sacred spaces. To ensure its success, we must move beyond mere compliance and strive for a genuine cultural shift. Temples must become the vanguards of a new environmental theology, where every ritual is performed with an awareness of its impact on the Earth. By integrating modern waste management with ancient wisdom, our places of worship can once again become beacons of purity, not just in the spiritual sense but in a very literal, physical one.

The writer is former college Principal and founder of Supporting Shoulders

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)



OrissaPOST

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### Intent matters

Sir, The relocation of the Prime Minister’s Office to the newly inaugurated ‘Seva Teerth’ marks more than a physical shift; it signals a moral transition from colonial legacy to a governance culture rooted in service and self-reliance. From this new office, the first four decisions echoed its spirit — empowerment of the poor, women, youth and farmers — the foundational pillars of a Viksit Bharat. The approval of the PM Relief scheme granting Rs 1.5 lakh to accident victims, the Rs 2 lakh crore Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, and Rs 10,000 crore support for start-ups underline a governance model centered on dignity and opportunity. The Prime Minister’s message to all who enter the building — to pause and reflect each day on how their actions will ease the life of an ordinary citizen — sets a high ethical benchmark. Yet buildings alone cannot transform governance. It is the conscience of those who work within that will determine whether Seva Teerth becomes merely an address or a living temple of public service.

RS Narula, PATIALA

### Dhaka realignment

Sir, The resounding two-thirds victory of Tarique Rahman’s BNP has delivered a decisive political mandate in Bangladesh. More than 60 per cent of voters have also endorsed sweeping constitutional reforms in a referendum held alongside the polls, lending the transition a level of public legitimacy. For Bangladesh, India and other neighbours, the outcome offers rare strategic relief after years of political uncertainty. From New Delhi’s perspective, the BNP’s clear win creates space to recalibrate a relationship central to India’s regional security interests, but badly strained since the removal of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina. Historically, India’s ties with the BNP have been uneasy. Yet the party’s current distancing from Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, a pro-Pakistan force, removes a major obstacle to cooperation. Rahman’s promise of inclusiveness, minority protection and strategic non-alignment among India’s neighbours is pragmatic. With the Awami League barred from contesting, the BNP has emerged as a familiar and workable partner for regional engagement.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE



# 10-month-old becomes Kerala's youngest organ donor

The government issued an order to accord state honours at the girl's funeral, which is scheduled for Sunday

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 14:** A day after she became the youngest organ donor in the state, people from various walks of life, including Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, expressed deep sorrow over the death of a 10-month-old girl and hailed her parents' decision to donate her organs.

They described the parents' generous gesture as an "extraordinary act of compassion and a message to all humanity." Aalin Sherin Abraham, who



was critically injured in a road accident near Pallam in Kottayam February 5, was declared brain dead Thursday at a private hospital in Kochi.

With her parents' consent, six of her organs were donated, making her the youngest organ donor in the state, officials said.

In a social media post, Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar said he was "deep-

ly moved" by the decision of Arun Abraham and Sherin Ann John, who chose to donate six organs of their daughter after she tragically lost her life in an accident.

"Through their selfless decision, they have gifted life and hope to others. May little Aalin's soul rest in eternal peace. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family," he said.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vi-

jayan said the passing of the child in the road accident had deeply saddened everyone.

"In the midst of unimaginable pain, her parents chose to donate her organs. By becoming Kerala's youngest organ donor, little Aalin has granted a new lease of life to five others-a monumental act of compassion that reflects the true spirit of Kerala," he said in a post on 'X'.

The CM extended his deepest condolences to the family and also saluted the dedicated health professionals, police officers, and support teams whose swift coordination made the transplants possible.

He said the child would be bid farewell with official honours.

Leader of the Opposition VD Satheesan also described Aalin's demise as heartbreaking and said the parents' decision was a message to all humanity.

"Even in the midst of the grief caused by the loss of their only daughter, the decision to donate the organs of the brain-dead child to save the lives of other children is commendable," he said in a statement.

"At a time of immense personal tragedy, the decision taken by those parents, keeping in mind the lives of other children, is a message to all humanity," he added.

Actor Mohanlal condoled the child's death, saying that by giving hope of renewed life to a few young children, the little angel bid farewell to the world.

He said the parents have become examples of humanity and compassion, and that the world remains beautiful because of such selfless love. "Aalin will continue to live on-not only in the memories of her loved ones, but also in the hearts of millions," he said.

# Political slugfest as K'taka govt marks 1,000 days in power



To commemorate 1,000 days of the Congress government in Karnataka, title deeds will be distributed to around one lakh families

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Haveri (Karnataka), Feb 14:** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday said his government had kept its promises as it completed 1,000 days in office, describing the milestone as significant.

He asserted that the government had delivered on its commitments and would continue to pursue its welfare agenda.

Addressing reporters, the chief minister said the government's programmes were aimed at empowering marginalised sections.

"These programmes focus on the welfare and empowerment of marginalised ones, including Dalits, women, backward classes and farmers. We will continue to implement them," he said.

To mark 1,000 days of the Congress government in Karnataka, title deeds will be distributed to around one lakh families at a convention here, it was announced Friday.

Meanwhile, terming the past 1,000 days of the Congress government as "dark days", Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka questioned the significance of the event. "For what achievement are they holding a convention?" he had asked.

Responding to the BJP's criticism of the Congress's achievement convention, Siddaramaiah said, "It is their jealousy because they did nothing in the last four years. That is why they are criticising us."

Questioning the opposition's record, he said, "What did they do in the last four years? They made 600 promises. Not even 10 per cent of the promises made to the people of Karnataka were fulfilled."

"What moral right do they have to criticise us?" the chief minister asked. Highlighting his government's performance, the chief minister said, "We made 592 promises, of which 240 have been fulfilled. We will fulfil the remaining promises as well. The allegations against us are false."

Responding to repeated queries on party matters and leadership issues, Siddaramaiah said he had already made it clear that he would abide by the Congress high command.

"There is no need to repeat the same question. We have to follow what the high command says. All our party leaders must abide by its directions," he added.

Reacting to Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's recent remarks, made after he met with the Congress high command in New Delhi, that he "lives on hope" and that sincere efforts always yield results, Siddaramaiah said, "Has the high command said anything? If not, let it be. I will go by their words."

Shivakumar met senior party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, as well as AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge, during his Delhi visit.

## Kerala temple gets mechanical elephant from Disha, PETA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thrissur (Kerala), Feb 14:** Bollywood actor Disha Patani and PETA India have jointly gifted a life-size mechanical elephant to the Thodathra Kalapattu Sree Bhadrakali Temple here, which was unveiled at the shrine Saturday.

The three-metre-tall, 500-kilogram mechanical elephant, named Thodathra Kalapattu Devi Dasan, was donated to the temple in recognition of its decision to never own or hire live elephants, PETA India said in a statement.

The mechanical elephant was welcomed with an inauguration ceremony and a Panchavadyam performance, the statement added.

It is the seventh such elephant, made of rubber, fibre, metal, mesh, foam, and steel, and powered by five motors, donated to a temple in Thrissur.

Patani said in the statement that every act of kindness brings people closer to a more compassionate world.

"I am very happy that mechanical elephant Thodathra Kalapattu Devi Dasan will now be used for the rituals and celebrations at Thodathra Kalapattu Sree Bhadrakali Kshetram, so traditions can continue with grace and compassion," she said.



PETA said that a mechanical elephant looks, feels, and functions like a real elephant.

"It can shake its head, move its ears and eyes, swish its tail, lift its trunk, and even spray water. It can be climbed upon, and a seat can be affixed to its back. It operates simply by plugging it into an electrical source and can be moved on a wheelbase for rituals and processions," it said.



Gokarnanatheshwara Temple, otherwise known as Kudroli Sri Gokarnanatha Kshetra, is illuminated on the eve of 'Maha Shivratri' festival, in Mangaluru, Karnataka

PTI PHOTO

## K'taka seeks MEA help as student goes missing in California

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 14:** The Karnataka government has requested the Ministry of External Affairs to extend all necessary assistance, coordinate with local law enforcement, and provide support to the family of a 22-year-old Indian postgraduate student who has gone missing in the US state of California.

Saketh Sreenivasaiah, a student at the University of California, Berkeley, hailing from Karnataka, has been reported missing in Berkeley, California, since the morning of February 12, it said.

In a letter to Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, Karnataka Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh said Saketh is currently enrolled in the Master

of Science program at the University of California, Berkeley.

According to information received from his family and housemates, his whereabouts remain unknown despite a formal complaint being lodged with the Berkeley Police Department, the letter dated February 13 stated.

Given the gravity of the situation and the mounting anxiety of his family residing in the state, she requested the ministry's intervention and support in the matter.

"It is requested that the Ministry of External Affairs, through the Consulate General of India in San Francisco, extend all necessary assistance, including coordination with local law enforcement and facilitation of support to the family," Rajneesh stated.

When contacted, Saketh's father, Sreenivasaiah, said he had submitted a memorandum to the state government requesting steps to help locate his missing son.

He said he last spoke to his son February 9 and later learned from his roommates that he had been missing since the morning of February 12.

The police are actively investigating the case; however, his whereabouts remain unknown.

"We still haven't been able to locate him. We are in touch with his roommates and others. We have written to the government seeking support and assistance to find our son," he told PTI. When asked whether he would travel to the US, Sreenivasaiah said he was considering it.

## 15 families ostracised for questioning community association accounts

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Yadgir, Feb 14:** Despite the Karnataka Congress-led government enacting a law to contain the menace of social boycott, the continued practice of social boycott has come to light from Shahapur town of Yadgir district in Karnataka Saturday.

The families claim that despite lodging complaints with the police and concerned authorities, no action has been taken against those responsible.

The shocking incident of more than 15 families in Shahapur town of Yadgir district allegedly being ostracised by members of their own community for the past eight years has been reported.

The boycotted families said an unwritten rule has been enforced barring others from giving or accepting marriage alliances with them.

Gangu Bai Paanibaate, one of the members of boycotted family stated, "We are also being denied participation in community events such as Jihveshwara, Hanuman and Krishna Jayanti celebrations. The social boycott has severely affected our livelihood, relationships and basic social rights. We urge the district administration and concerned departments to intervene immediately."



The affected families, belonging to the Swakulisaali community, alleged that the boycott was imposed after they sought details about the accounts and income generated from properties owned by the community association.

According to them, the Jihveshwara Kalyana Mantapa and 18 commercial shops in Shahapur generate an annual income of around Rs 25 lakh. When 20 families questioned the income and its management, the association's president and members allegedly declared a social boycott against them.

Suresh Firangi, another man from family facing social boycott stated, "In a recent incident, a boy from one

of the boycotted families was insulted and sent away during a sports event held as part of the Jihveshwara Jayanti celebrations."

Meanwhile, cases of social boycott in the name of superstition and customs have been reported repeatedly across the state, prompting legislative action.

In 2025, December 18, the Karnataka Legislative Assembly unanimously passed the Karnataka Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill, 2025. Under the new law, if it is proved during an inquiry that a person has imposed or abetted a social boycott, they can face up to three years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs 1 lakh.

## Elderly woman confronts traffic violator, honoured

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kozhikode (Kerala), Feb 14:** A 73-year-old woman was Saturday honoured by the Kerala MVD for confronting a traffic violation near Erangipalam bypass here recently.

Prabhavathi Amma stood her ground against a scooterist who rode his two-wheeler on the footpath and forced him to return to the road, showing that age is no barrier to standing up against wrongdoing.

The video of the incident went viral, earning her widespread praise on social media and appreciation from the Kerala Motor Vehicles Department (MVD).

MVD officials arrived at her residence and honoured her with a traditional shawl.



Recalling the incident, Prabhavathi said she was on her way to a shop when she saw the scooterist riding towards her on the footpath. "He told



me to make way for him and I asked where should I go? Should I walk on the road? I told him the footpath is meant for pedestrians and the road is for two-wheelers.

"So, he asked me whether

I was teaching him the law," she told PTI Videos. Following the incident, authorities said they have suspended the scooter rider's driving licence for violating traffic rules and endangering public safety.

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of the day

quote

For the government of Kerala, formulating public policy is an exercise in people's participation, involving the widest possible consultations with experts and all sections of society before finalisation. The Vision 2031 effort is a continuation of that approach

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

It is important that the actual sequence of events is placed before the people so that there is no room for speculation or suspicion

ROHIT PAWAR | NCP (SP) MLA

I urge the public to visit the festival with their families, participate in the activities and become partners in preserving and expanding Delhi's green cover

V K SAXENA | DELHI LT GOV

X

POST OF THE DAY

1) Buying gold/silver looks risky (retracing from record rallies). 2) Buying US Stocks looks risky (firms spending too much). 3) Buying Indian stocks looks risky (very less earnings growth/Al displacing jobs). 4) Buying Real Estate looks risky (too much oversupply hitting the markets). 5) Buying Cryptos looks risky (well, meme coin whatnot etc issues). 6) Just holding cash looks risky (US debasing currency; other weaker currency gets debased faster). Also there is X factor on the market (Trump), who is more volatile than Helium. So basically everything is risky. Just sleep.

@akshat\_world

SHORT TAKES

**Fresh firing in Ukhrul**

**Imphal:** Manipur Police Saturday said fresh firing was reported at Litan Sareikhong area in Ukhrul district allegedly by Tangkhul Naga village volunteers causing panic and commotion among the public. Police also requested both Kuki and Naga communities in and around Litan to refrain from spreading rumours to prevent any further escalation.

**Car plunges into gorge; four dead**

**Shimla:** Four people, including a woman and her son, were killed and another sustained serious injuries when their car plunged into a deep gorge in Kinnaur, police said Saturday. A rescue team, along with locals, rushed to the spot near Jani village, where they recovered the bodies and rescued the injured person, they said. The police said they received information about the accident around 9.20 am. Kinnaur Superintendent of Police (SP) Sushil Kumar said that four out of five occupants died on the spot, while one person remains in critical condition.

**Drugs valued at ₹2.15cr seized**

**Thane:** Police in Maharashtra's Thane district have seized drugs valued at nearly ₹2.15 crore and arrested three persons for allegedly possessing the narcotic substances, an official said Saturday. A police patrol team intercepted three men in the Dombivli area Friday. The trio, including a Nigerian national, tried to flee, but the cops nabbed them, he said.

Frequency of cleaning will be regulated based on peak and non-peak hours, and war rooms will be created to monitor the cleaning process with the help of technology

ASHWINI VAISHNAW | RAILWAY MINISTER

SC TO HEAR PLEAS AGAINST HIMANTA SARMA MONDAY

The Supreme Court is slated to hear Monday petitions seeking action against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over a viral video allegedly showing him taking aim and firing with a rifle at members of a particular community



Bangalore joyride turns fatal; 6 killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 14:** What began as an early morning “joyride” in an SUV ended in tragedy, claiming the lives of seven people, including six school students, who had set out secretly without informing their families, police said Saturday. The multi-vehicle pile-up occurred early Friday morning near M Satyavara on the Hoskote-Dabaspet Highway in Bengaluru Rural district, they said.

According to police, six students set out in an SUV for a “joyride”. The SUV car allegedly being driven by one of the students, Ayan Ali, reportedly at 150-160 kmph was en route from Hoskote towards Devanahalli when it allegedly struck a motorcycle from behind. Ali took his father's car without parents knowledge, police said. The driver of the SUV allegedly lost control after the initial impact and crashed into a canter vehicle. Another car was also drawn into the wreckage, resulting in a severe pile-up. Six occupants of the SUV and the motorcycle rider identified as 26-year-old Gagan, a resident of Devanahalli, died on the spot, police said.

The impact of the accident flung the two-wheeler rider off the vehicle, and he hit the metal side crash barrier with extreme force, leading to his death.

The other deceased were identified as Ahram Sharif (16), Ashvin Nayar, Eethan George, Ayan Ali, Bharath - all 17 years old; Mohammed Farhan Shaik (18), students of Class X and XII.

Around 11 am Friday, grieving parents gathered at MVJ Hospital near Hoskote, struggling to come to terms with the fact that their children had died in the accident.

Cabinet approves 3 multi-tracking railway projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 14:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved three projects of the Railway Ministry entailing a cost of approximately ₹18,509 crore.

These projects include the construction of third and fourth lines between Kasara-Manmad, Delhi-Ambala, and Ballari-Hosapete. “The increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for Indian Railways,” the government said in a statement Saturday.

“These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion. The projects are in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a New India, which will make people in the region 'Atmanirbhar' through comprehensive development that enhances employment and self-employment opportunities,” it added.

According to the statement, the projects are planned under the PM-Gati Shakti National Master Plan, with a focus on enhancing multi-modal connectivity and logistics efficiency through integrated planning and stakeholder consultations.

These projects will provide seamless connectivity for the movement of people, goods and services. Providing details on the growth of the Indian Railways network, the statement said that the three projects, covering 12 districts across

Urban India's big reset gets a ₹1 lakh-cr push

**New Delhi:** In a major boost to urban infrastructure, the Union Cabinet has approved the launch of the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) with a total central assistance of ₹1 lakh crore, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said Saturday. Under the scheme, central assistance will cover 25 per cent of a project's cost, provided that at least 50 per cent of the funding is mobilised from the market. In a statement, the government said the initiative will lead to a total investment of ₹4 lakh crore in the urban sector over the next five years.

Delhi, Haryana, Maharashtra and Karnataka, will increase the existing railway network by about 389 kilometres.

“The proposed capacity enhancement will improve rail connectivity to several prominent tourist destinations across the country, including Bhavli Dam, Shri Ghatandevi, Trim-bakeshwar Jyotirlinga, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi in Katra, Srinagar, and major attractions such as Hampi (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Ballari Fort, Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary, Tungabhadra Dam, Kenchanagudda, and the Vijaya Vittala Temple, among others,” it added.

Outlining the commercial gains for Railways, the statement said, “The proposed projects are on essential routes for the transportation of commodities such as coal, steel, iron ore, cement, limestone/bauxite, containers, food grains, sugar, fertilisers and POL, among others.”

9 states, 3 UTs miss final voters' list deadline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 14:** Nine states and three Union territories have missed the original deadline to publish their final electoral rolls as part of the ongoing special intensive revision of voters' list.

However, the Union territories of Lakshdweep and Puducherry came out with their final rolls Saturday as part of the Election Commission's ambitious phase two of voters' list cleanup exercise.

According to Pondicherry's chief electoral officer, the Union territory has 9,44,211 electors in the final voters' list.

Lakshadweep has 57,607 electors according to the final voters' list.

Announced October 27 last year, the phase two of the special intensive revision covers a combined electorate of nearly 51 crore in these states and Union Territories.

The exercise was to conclude February 7 with the publication of final electoral rolls.

While the deadline was missed, Lakshdweep and Puducherry Saturday came out with their respective electoral rolls. Rajasthan too was to come up with its final rolls Saturday, the poll authority has extended the date of publication to February 21. EC officials said a variety of reasons such as poor implementation by state chief electoral officers of the schedule, mismanagement by grassroots level officials, political intervention and issue reaching the Supreme Court are behind the schedule going haywire.

According to the latest schedule, the final rolls of Tamil Nadu and Gujarat will be published February 17, while Andaman, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Goa will have their final rolls February 21.

The final poll roll of Madhya Pradesh will be published February 23. On February 28, the final voters' list of West Bengal while that of Uttar Pradesh will be issued April 10. Separately, a special revision of electoral rolls in Assam concluded February 10.

PM makes historic touchdown at NE's first emergency airstrip

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Guwahati, Feb 14:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday made a historic touchdown at the Northeast's first Emergency Landing Facility in Assam's Dibrugarh district, and later launched a scathing attack on the Congress at a rally here, accusing the party of ignoring the region and fuelling insurgency during its rule in the state.

He also launched projects worth ₹5,450 crore during his third visit to the poll-bound Assam in three months. Modi took off from the Chabua airfield after his arrival and landed at the Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) in Moran on a stretch of National Highway-37.

The PM, after inaugurating the ELF, said, “It is a matter of immense pride that the Northeast gets an Emergency Landing Facility.” “From a strategic point of view and during times of natural disasters, this facility is of great importance,” Modi said on X. The ₹100-crore ELF, a 4.2-km reinforced stretch on the Moran bypass, will act as a strategic and multi-functional runway for IAF fighter jets and transport aircraft, strengthening defence, logistics



and disaster response. During his day-long Assam visit, the Prime Minister, while addressing a public meeting here that also included BJP workers, launched an all-out attack on the Congress, accusing it of neglecting the Northeast and promoting insurgency in Assam during its rule.

He alleged that the Congress always endangered the nation's security, with fear and insecurity prevailing during its tenure in Assam. “The Congress indulged in polarisation and vote bank politics, and took decisions that promoted these,” he said.

“The partition of the country took place due to the Mus-

lim League, but now there is 'MMC' “ Maoist, Muslim League, Congress “ and people should be aware of their intentions,” Modi said. The PM accused the Congress of protecting infiltrators, and asserted that the BJP is “committed to ending illegal immigration, and so the next five years are very important for the state”. He also claimed that the Congress, being out of power in Assam for 10 years, is “more dangerous than when it was in power, and this is evident from the venomous statements made by its leaders”.

For seven decades, the Congress built only three bridges over the Brahmaputra river, but the BJP government constructed five bridges in 10 years, he asserted.

The PM paid tributes to the bravehearts who were martyred in Pulwama in 2019, and asserted that the world has seen how the government responded to the terror attack. The country's response was also witnessed during Operation Sindoor following the terror attack in Pahalgam last year, he said.



A C-130J aircraft of the Indian Air Force, carrying Prime Minister Narendra Modi, lands at the Emergency Landing Facility (ELF), in Dibrugarh district, Assam

PTI PHOTO

SNIPPETS

BLO held on charge of murdering lover's husband

**Kolkata:** A booth-level officer (BLO) was among two arrested for allegedly murdering a man over an extramarital relationship, in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, police said Saturday. BLO Rizwan Hasan Mondal and his accomplice Sagar Gyne were arrested Friday after dismembered body parts of 30-year-old Nasir Ali were found in a canal in Baduria, a police officer said. Preliminary investigation found that Mondal had an extramarital relationship with Ali's wife and he had asked the deceased to meet him at a deserted place late on Monday evening on the pretext of discussing some issues pertaining to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in West Bengal, he said. Ali was reported missing since Monday night and his family lodged a police complaint the next day.

Second bomb scare in a day at Kolkata airport

**Kolkata:** Hours after a Shillong-bound IndiGo flight was grounded at the city airport following a bomb threat that later turned out to be a hoax, a fresh security scare was reported on a Dibrugarh-Kolkata flight Saturday evening after a suspicious message was found inside the aircraft toilet, officials said. The IndiGo flight 6E 6894 landed safely at 7.37 pm at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport and was immediately taken to the isolation bay as per security protocol. All passengers were safely deboarded, the statement said. The message, reportedly written with lipstick, was found inside the aircraft toilet, “indicating a bomb threat,” it added. Earlier in the day, a Shillong-bound aircraft was stranded at Kolkata airport for around four hours following a bomb threat. The IndiGo flight 6E 7304 was moved to the isolation bay after the discovery of a handwritten note claiming that a bomb had been placed on the plane, it said.

Maha Cong chief ‘equates’ Tipu with Shivaji

*Maharashtra Congress chief Sapkal was speaking to reporters in Buldhana on the controversy over the portrait of Tipu Sultan in the office of Malegaon Municipal Corporation deputy mayor Shan-e-Hind Nihal Ahmed, which was opposed by Shiv Sena corporators there and Hindu outfits*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Nagpur/Buldhana, Feb 14:** Maharashtra Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal Monday courted controversy by suggesting equivalence between Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and 18th-century Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan, triggering fierce condemnation from Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who called the comment “shameful”.

Tipu Sultan remains a polarising figure of history, with one segment invoking his bravery in battle against the British, while others have pointed to his bigotry and ill-treatment of Hindus in several parts of south India. On the other hand, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is universal-

ly feted for his military genius as well as administrative skills based on benevolence and social welfare.

Sapkal was speaking to reporters in Buldhana on the controversy over the portrait of Tipu Sultan in the office of Malegaon Municipal Corporation deputy mayor Shan-e-Hind Nihal Ahmed, which was opposed by Shiv Sena corporators there and Hindu outfits.

While pointing to the valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the way he presented the idea of ‘Swarajya’, Sapkal gave the example of Tipu Sultan's call for battle against the British and claimed this was an ideal articulated on the same lines.

“In that sense, Tipu Sultan



emerged as a warrior and a bhoomiputra of Bharat. He never embraced poisonous ideologies. Rather, as a symbol of valour, we should regard Tipu Sultan on par (samakaksh) is the word Sapkal used) with Shivaji Maharaj,” the Congress leader said.

Hitting out at Sapkal, Fadnavis said the comparison was condemnable and asserted the Congress leader must feel ashamed of himself.

“Maharashtra will not tolerate this. Sapkal should apologize for comparing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj with Tipu Sultan. The Congress should take cognisance of this matter, and its allies must clear their stand on Sapkal's statement,” Fadnavis told reporters in Nagpur.

Later, in a post on X, Sapkal said the valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is unparalleled, while Tipu Sultan was

valiant and a lover of Swarajya. “It was by taking Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as an ideal that he (Tipu Sultan) fought against the British,” Sapkal said in the post.

He further hit out by claiming those following the ideology of the Sangh-BJP were slaves and spies of the British when Tipu Sultan was fighting the foreign rulers.

“Therefore, Devendra Fadnavis should not get into the pretence of teaching us history. The people of Maharashtra have not forgotten what all BJP-RSS, (former governor) Bhagatsingh Koshiyari along with others spewed against Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and disrespected him,” Sapkal said.

Posting an image, the Maharashtra Congress chief said, “These are the pictures of both Shivaji Maharaj and Tipu Sultan on the original copy of the Constitution.”

Meanwhile, senior Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Atul Londhe also lashed out at Fadnavis.





of the day

quote

It is our collective commitment to stand by each other in case of aggression, or in simple terms: one for all and all for one. And this is Europe's meaning

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PREZ

We are not looking at turnout only as a number in terms of percentage, because you all know that in many democratic countries, including my own, the turnout is shrinking, and, well, in some countries it's bigger, in some countries it's lower

IVARS JIABS | EU CHIEF OBSERVER

The so-called self-styled Field Marshal and corrupt Army Chief of the unnatural state of Pakistan, Asim Munir, is deeply implicated in the systematic persecution, enforced disappearances, torture, and extrajudicial killings of forcibly subjugated nations within Pakistan, including the Sindhis, Baloch, and Pashtuns

SHAFI BURFAT | CHAIRMAN OF JSMM

Drone strikes kill 2 in Ukraine

**Kyiv:** Drone strikes killed one person in Ukraine and another in Russia, officials said Saturday, ahead of fresh talks next week aimed at ending the war. An elderly woman died when a Russian drone hit a residential building in the Black Sea port city of Odesa, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said. In Russia, a civilian was killed in a Ukrainian drone strike on a car in the border region of Bryansk, regional Gov. Alexander Bogomaz said. The attacks came a day after a Ukrainian missile strike on the Russian border city of Belgorod killed two people and wounded five, according to regional Gov Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Law & order at any cost: Rahman

AGENCIES

**Dhaka, Feb 14:** BNP chairman Tarique Rahman Saturday prioritised law and order in Bangladesh “at any cost,” saying the 13th general election opened a new chapter for building a safe and humane Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader, who is set to become the prime minister replacing the interim government chief Muhammad Yunus, also spoke about revival of SAARC and how his government's foreign policy will be guided by “the greater interests of Bangladesh and its people.” Rahman's BNP Friday secured a sweeping victory with more than two-thirds majority in the landmark parliamentary elections held Thursday. “Our paths and opinions may differ but in the interest of the country, we must remain united. I firmly believe that national unity is our collective strength while division is our weakness,” Rahman told a press conference here, a day after the landslide victory in the parliamentary polls. Rahman, 60, said, “From today, we are all free, with the true essence of freedom and rights restored,” but added that peace and law and order must be maintained at any cost. “We will not tolerate any kind of chaos.” The 13th Parliamentary elec-



tions assumed significance as they were held after a period of tumultuous political vacuum, instability and fragile security situation, including widespread attacks on minorities after the student-led protests brought down the over 15-year rule of Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India, in August 2024. The BNP leader said the party will follow a foreign policy that protects the country's interests in its dealings with China, India, and Pakistan, newspaper Dhaka Tribune said. Bangladesh's foreign policy will be guided by “the greater interests of Bangladesh and its people,” Rahman said. About Bangladesh's future relations with China and the Belt and Road Initiative, he said: “If something is not in Bangladesh's interest, naturally we cannot pursue it. I am certain that mutual interests will be our first priority.”

Dhaka Tribune further said that Rahman also spoke about revival of SAARC “the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation” saying, “SAARC was established through Bangladesh's initiative. We want it to function. We will discuss with our friendly states and try to revive SAARC.” The elections brought BNP to power with two thirds of majority after the party virtually went through nearly two decades of political wilderness. BNP's former ally, the Jamaat-e-Islami, known to be close to Islamabad and which opposed Bangladesh's independence in 1971, emerged as the main Opposition in a changed political landscape. Deposed prime minister Hasina's Awami League was debarred by the outgoing interim government to take part in the polls. The BNP and the Awami League had alternated state power and served as the main Opposition in parliament for decades amid bitter rivalry. Rahman said the country is now set to begin its journey in a situation marked by a fragile economy left behind by an “authoritarian regime, a weakened constitution and institutions, and a destroyed law and order system.” According to the Election Commission (EC), the BNP has bagged 209 out of 297 seats, while right-wing Jamaat-e-Is-

B'desh cabinet oath in next 4 days: official

**Dhaka:** Bangladesh President Mohammed Shahabuddin is expected to administer the oath of office to the new cabinet of BNP chairman Tarique Rahman within next four days, officials said Saturday. The BNP leader is set to become the prime minister, replacing the interim government chief Muhammad Yunus. “In line with the Constitution, the president will administer the oath at Bangabhaban (presidential palace),” Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdur Rashid said without giving any specific date for the oath ceremony. Intro: The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader, who is set to become the prime minister replacing the interim government chief Muhammad Yunus, also spoke about revival of SAARC and how his government's foreign policy will be guided by “the greater interests of Bangladesh and its people”

lami secured 68 seats. Hasina's Awami League party was barred from contesting the polls, which recorded 59.44 per cent voter turnout. The EC postponed the announcement of results in two seats - Chattogram-2 and Chattogram-4 while the election in one seat was postponed due to the death of a candidate.

Russia killed Navalny with frog toxin, say 5 European nations

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**London, Feb 14:** Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny was poisoned with a lethal toxin from the skin of dart frogs, five European countries said Saturday, blaming the Russian state for the attack. The foreign ministries of the UK, France, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands said analysis of samples from Navalny, who died two years ago, “have conclusively confirmed the presence of epibatidine.” It is a toxin found in poison dart frogs in South America that is not found naturally in Russia, they said. The countries said in a joint statement that “Russia had the means, motive and opportunity to administer this poison.” They said they were reporting Russia to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons for a breach of the Chemical Weapons Convention. British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said “Russia saw Navalny as a threat. By using this form of poison the Russian state demonstrated the despicable tools it has at its disposal and the overwhelming fear it has of political opposition.” Navalny, who crusaded against official corruption and



staged massive anti-Kremlin protests as President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe, died in the Arctic penal colony in February 2024. He was serving a 19-year sentence that he believed to be politically motivated. Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, said last year that two independent labs had found that her husband was poisoned shortly before he died. Navalnaya has repeatedly blamed Putin for Navalny's death, something Russian officials have vehemently denied. Russian authorities said that the politician became ill after a walk and died from natural causes. In 2020, Navalny was poisoned with a nerve agent attack he blamed on the Kremlin, which always denied involvement. His family and allies fought to have him flown to Germany for treatment and recovery. Five months later, he returned to Russia, where he was immediately arrested and imprisoned for the last three years of his life.

US strikes Islamic State targets in Syria

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, Feb 14:** The US military Saturday reported a series of strikes against Islamic State group targets in Syria in retaliation for the December ambush that killed two US soldiers and one American civilian interpreter. US Central Command said in a statement that American aircraft had conducted 10 strikes against more than 30 IS targets between February 3 and Thursday, hitting weapons storage facilities and other infrastructure. At least 50 members of IS have been killed or captured, while

more than 100 IS targets have been struck since the United States began its strikes after the December 13 ambush, according to Central Command. That attack killed Sgt. Edgar Brian Torres-Tovar, Sgt William Nathaniel Howard, and Ayad Mansoor Sakat, the civilian interpreter. Meanwhile, the Syrian Defence Ministry said Thursday that government forces took control of a base in the east of the country that was run for years by US troops as part of the fight against IS. The Al-Tanf base played a major role after IS declared a caliphate in large parts of Syria and Iraq in 2014.

Courts cite 4,400 illegal detentions by ICE

REUTERS

**Washington, Feb 14:** Hundreds of judges around the country have ruled more than 4,400 times since October that President Donald Trump's administration is detaining immigrants unlawfully, a Reuters review of court records found. The decisions amount to a sweeping legal rebuke of Trump's immigration crack-down. Yet the administration has continued jailing people indefinitely even after courts ruled the policy was illegal. “It is appalling that the Gov-



ernment insists that this Court should redefine or completely disregard the current law as it is clearly written,” US District Judge Thomas Johnston of West Virginia, an appointee of President George W Bush, wrote last week, ordering the release of a Venezuelan detainee in the state. Most of the rulings center on

the Trump administration's departure from a nearly three-decade-old interpretation of federal law that immigrants already living in the United States could be released on bond while they pursue their cases in immigration court. White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said the administration is “working to lawfully deliver on President Trump's mandate to enforce federal immigration law.” **SOARING NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT DETAINEES** Under Trump, the number of people in ICE detention reached

about 68,000 this month, up about 75% from when Trump took office last year. A conservative appeals court in New Orleans last week gave the Trump administration a victory in its drive to lock up more immigrants. Just because prior administrations did not fully utilize the law to detain people “does not mean they lacked the authority to do more,” US Circuit Judge Edith Jones wrote in a decision reversing rulings that led to the release of two Mexican men. Both remain free, their lawyer said.

WEEK'S BEST PICS



Rescuers stand near a plane that crashed on the seashore in Mogadishu, Somalia

REUTERS



Sportspersons of Austria, Canada and France in action during the men's snowboard cross big final

REUTERS



A performer ahead of the halftime show during Super Bowl LX in Santa Clara, California

REUTERS



Children wade through a flooded street after Cyclone Gezani tore through the port city of Toamasina, Madagascar

REUTERS



Farmers drive their tractors in front of the Greek parliament as they protesting against high production costs, low prices for their products and delays in subsidy payments, in central Athens

AP



Dancers from the Mocidade Unida da Mooca samba school perform during a carnival parade in Sao Paulo

AP



of the day

quote

We're not opportunistic by saying, let us pad the high months (of traffic demand) with a dry lease or a wet lease aircraft. We are not opportunistic in saying, let's send off or park these aircraft during downtimes. So, I think, planning and fiscal discipline are key ways

VINAY DUBE | CEO, AKASA AIR

Through Bottles for Change, Bisleri continue to work closely with local bodies and organisations to strengthen segregation at source and enable households to participate meaningfully in the circular economy

K GANESH | DIRECTOR - SUSTAINABILITY & CORPORATE AFFAIRS, BISLERI INTERNATIONAL

While India's IT sector appears to be managing AI adoption relatively well, many firms remain insufficiently prepared for what lies ahead

SHEKHAR AIYAR | DIRECTOR & CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ICRIER

SHORT TAKES

US flags Alibaba, BYD over military links

**New Delhi:** The US Department of Defence has decided to add several major Chinese companies, including Alibaba and BYD, to a list of firms it believes have links to China's military, a report has said. The move comes just weeks before US President Donald Trump is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, raising the possibility of fresh tensions between the two countries, as per reports. The Pentagon submitted its updated "Chinese Military Companies" list, also known as the 1260H list, to the Federal Register Friday. However, the document was suddenly removed from the website at the Pentagon's request without any explanation. A defence official later said the revised list would be released next week. Along with Alibaba and BYD, the Pentagon plans to add search engine giant Baidu. A White House memo reportedly alleged that Alibaba provided technical support for Chinese military operations and gave the Chinese government access to customer data. Alibaba strongly denied the claims, saying it is not a military company and has no role in any military-civil fusion strategy. Baidu and BYD also rejected the Pentagon's allegations, calling them baseless and unfounded. Both companies said they would consider legal options to challenge the decision, the report said.

Ixigo to buy majority stake in Spain's Trenes

**New Delhi:** Marking its first major international acquisition, travel aggregator ixigo's board has approved the execution of binding agreements for the acquisition of a 60 per cent stake in Spain's second-largest train booking platform Online Travel Solutions, for 11.70 million euro (over Rs 125 crore). The acquisition of Trenes paves the way for ixigo's strategic entry into Europe, widely regarded as the global benchmark for rail travel. "This investment is expected to create meaningful synergies by bringing together Trenes' strong customer base, brand presence, and local operator integrations with ixigo's AI-led product innovation and technological expertise in solving complex travel use cases at scale. "With this acquisition, the company aims to accelerate the Trenes product development, AI reinvention, and improve customer experience to unlock new growth opportunities in Europe," Ixigo said in a statement.



India is definitely a growth market. We monitor very closely, and we are watching in fact on how we could perhaps be involved with some of these airport projects...there are many ways in which you can get involved

LIM MING YAN | CHAIRMAN, CHANGI AIRPORT GROUP

APPLE TO OPEN 6TH STORE

US tech giant Apple Friday unveiled the barricade for Apple Borivali, its sixth store in India and second in Mumbai -- in a market which has seen the company's production and exports touching new highs. According to the iPhone maker, the new store features the distinctive peacock-inspired visual identity first introduced at the September 2025 openings of Apple Hebbal in Bangalore and Apple Koregaon Park in Pune, and more recently at Apple Noida



BIG BOOST FOR STARTUPS

Cabinet approves Rs 10k-cr fund for startups to mobilise venture capital, support deep-tech entities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 14:** The government Saturday said it has approved a Rs 10,000 crore Fund of Funds to mobile venture capital and support deep tech, tech-driven innovative manufacturing startups, and early-growth stage enterprises.

This was the second part of the Fund of Funds (FoF) scheme under the Startup India initiative. The first was established in 2016.

The FOF 2.0 has been designed to continue the momentum of investments in startups, with an expanded scope over FFS 1.0.

"The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the establishment of the Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 with a total corpus of Rs 10,000 crore for the purpose of mobilising venture capital for the startup ecosystem of the country," a government statement said.

The Cabinet approved the second tranche of the Startup India Fund of Funds Scheme Friday.

The scheme, it said, is designed to accelerate the next phase of India's startup journey by mobilising long-term domestic capital, strengthening the venture capital ecosystem, and supporting innovation-led entrepreneurship across the country.

In 2016, the government constituted a Fund of Funds worth Rs 10,000 crore to provide seed capital and enable startups to take calculated risks.

Following the successful utilisation of the first tranche, a second phase of Rs 10,000 crore was sanctioned in the Union Budget for 2025-26.

There are about 100 unicorns



SINCE THE LAUNCH OF STARTUP INDIA IN 2016, THE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT-RECOGNISED STARTUPS HAS RISEN FROM ABOUT 500 UNITS RECOGNISED AS STARTUPS TO OVER TWO LAKH AT PRESENT. MORE THAN 49,400 STARTUPS WERE RECOGNISED IN 2025, THE HIGHEST IN A SINGLE YEAR

at present. A unicorn refers to a startup valued at \$1 billion or more.

Since the launch of Startup India in 2016, the number of government-recognised startups has risen from about 500 units recognised as startups to over two lakh at present. More than 49,400 startups were recognised in 2025, the highest in a single year.

"The Startup India Fund of Funds 2.0 follows the strong performance of the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS 1.0), which was launched in 2016 to address funding gaps and catalyse the domestic venture capital market for startups," the statement said.

Under the part of the fund, the entire corpus of Rs 10,000 crore has been committed to 145 Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs).

Such supported AIFs have invested over Rs 25,500 crore in more than 1,370 startups across the country in various sectors, such as agriculture, artificial intelligence, robotics, automotive, clean tech, consumer goods and services, e-commerce, education, fintech, food and beverages, healthcare, manufacturing, space tech, and biotechnology, amongst others.

This fund played a key role in nurturing first-time founders, crowding in private capi-

Khimji marks Saheed Nagar store anniversary with offer

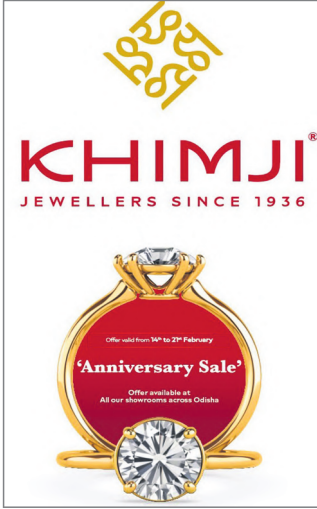
POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14:** Marking the anniversary of its flagship store at Saheed Nagar, Khimji Jewellers has announced a limited-period offer for customers across Odisha as part of the celebrations.

The leading brand has announced a special offer from February 14 to February 21, under which customers can avail a flat 45% discount on making charges on both gold and diamond jewellery.

Khimji Jewellers said the offer has been launched to mark the milestone of its flagship store and to thank customers for their continued support. The company added that the initiative also celebrates its 90-year legacy of craftsmanship by making its premium designs more accessible.

With 11 showrooms current-



ly operating and four more set to open soon in the state, the brand is rapidly expanding its presence to ensure customers have wider access to its jewelry for every occasion.

Nomura drops April rate-cut call on firmer inflation, RBI 'stealth easing'

Nomura expects a 10-basis point upside to its inflation forecast for the January-June period under the new series, which increases to 20-50 bps in the second half of the fiscal year

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Feb 14:** Nomura no longer expects India's central bank to cut rates in April, it said, as inflation is expected to rise and given the "stealth" policy easing that has already taken place.

This comes after India Thursday released consumer price inflation data under a new series, which changes the weighting on key goods like food and housing and adds several online services for the first time to reflect changing consumption patterns.

Nomura has raised its inflation projection for the next fiscal year, which begins in April, to 4.1% from 3.9% based on the old series.



Last week, Nomura had assigned a 65% probability that the Reserve Bank of India would cut its policy rate by 25 basis points to 5%.

It now joins the likes of Capital Economics and ANZ in no longer expecting an April rate cut. Nomura said that "stealth easing" toward a 5% rate has effectively already taken place,

Global giants unite in Trusted Tech Alliance

15 companies from four continents will work together on trusted technology principles across connectivity, cloud, chips, software and AI



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 14:** A set of like-minded global firms in the area of connectivity to cloud infrastructure to semiconductors, including Jio Platforms and Anshropic, have joined hands to form a Trusted Tech Alliance, a joint statement said.

The alliance was launched at the Munich Security Conference with 15 companies from Africa, Asia, Europe, and North America coming together to work across borders, and based on a shared set of principles for a trusted technology stack -from connectivity, cloud infrastructure, and semiconductors to software and AI.

These principles are designed to ensure that, regardless of a supplier's nationality, companies in this Alliance will adhere to common commitments of transparency, security and data protection which build trust and pass on the benefits of technology to people across the globe.

In response to an unprecedented pace of technological change and an increasingly complex environment, countries and customers are seeking greater reliability and resilience across technology providers and the services

they deliver. At the same time, there is continued scepticism about digital technologies and their potential negative impact on individuals and societies. In this environment, it is critical that companies from across the tech stack come together to address these concerns, the statement said.

In defining the attributes for trusted technology and a set of operating principles to which signatories will adhere, TTA members are committing to work with governments and customers to ensure that the benefits of emerging technologies can accrue to broader public trust while driving job creation and economic growth.

The Alliance brings together leading companies committed to a shared set of clear, verifiable practices and principles that manifest how technology can be secure, reliable and responsibly operated, regardless of where it is built or deployed.

"As of today, the signatories of the Trusted Tech Alliance are: Anthropic, AWS, Cassava Technologies, Cohere, Ericsson, Google Cloud, Hanwha, Jio Platforms, Microsoft, Nokia Nscale, NTT, Rapidus, Saab, and SAP," the statement said.

AI CHATBOT RACE

Grok gains US market share amid backlash

REUTERS

**Washington, Feb 14:** Grok, Elon Musk's AI chatbot, has been gaining ground in the US over the past months, data showed, even as it draws global censure and regulatory scrutiny after being used to generate a wave of non-consensual sexualized images of women and minors.

US market share of the tool rose to 17.8% last month from 14% in December, and 1.9% in January 2025, according to data from research firm Apptopia.

The jump firmed Grok - built into Musk's X social media platform - as the third most-used chatbot in the country in January behind market leader OpenAI's ChatGPT and second-placed Google Gemini, according to Apptopia data.

CMPDI holds workshop on coal mine emissions

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Ranchi, Feb 14:** CMPDI, in collaboration with IIT (ISM), Dhanbad, organised a one-day interactive workshop at its campus Saturday for BTR-2 and BTR-3 on the theme "Assessment of Fugitive Emissions from Coal Mines and Fuel Switching."

The workshop builds on earlier efforts on fugitive emissions under BTR-2 and BTR-3, including a review meeting held January 9 at IIT (ISM), Dhanbad. It also complements a similar one-day programme on environmental reporting organised by CMPDI in Ranchi February 4.

The workshop focused on developing project methodologies to measure fugitive emissions and identify emission factors across open-cast, underground and abandoned stages of coal mines, coal transportation, coal stockpiles, and

solid fuel conversion processes such as solid-to-solid and solid-to-liquid conversions. Technical sessions were held to promote collaboration on key environmental reporting in coal mining.

The workshop supports India's obligations under Article 13 of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, which mandates submission of the Biennial Transparency Report (BTR), Biennial Update Report (BUR), and annual update reports in line with MoEFCC guidelines every two years. The objective is to ensure standardised methodologies for accurate BTR reporting in the coal sector.

The programme began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp, followed by the welcome of officials from the Ministry of Coal, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, CIL, and other dignitaries.

SAFEST INVESTMENT BET

Gen Z, Millennials continue to back gold

According to the survey, 61.9% of respondents chose gold if they had ₹25,000 to invest today, far ahead of mutual funds (16.6%), fixed deposits (13%), stocks (6.6%) and crypto (1.9%)

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 14:** Gold remains the most trusted investment for young Indians despite growing access to modern financial products, with 62 per cent of respondents choosing the metal as the first choice for investment, according to a survey.

The survey also revealed that 66.7 per cent of respondents stated that gold purchases are largely their personal decisions, and nearly 62 per cent stated that their most recent gold purchase was below 5 grams, indicating the changing nature of how the GenZ and Millennials look at gold.

The Smynten PulseAI survey, conducted with 5,000 consumers aged between 18-39, cap-



tured how tradition-led buying is steadily giving way to a more individual, logic-driven approach.

According to the survey, 61.9 per cent of respondents would choose gold if they had Rs 25,000

to invest today, far ahead of mutual funds (16.6 per cent), fixed deposits (13 per cent), stocks (6.6 per cent) and crypto (1.9 per cent).

During times of economic uncertainty, 65.7 per cent said

gold feels like the safest option compared to bank savings, mutual funds or equities, it stated.

These findings underline gold's enduring role as the financial fallback across both Gen Z and Millennials.

The survey pointed to a clear move away from large, infrequent purchases toward lighter, more regular buying, as 61.9 per cent of recent purchases were below 5 grams, with 27.5 per cent buying less than 2 grams and 34.4 per cent buying between 2 and 5 grams.

For many first-time buyers, entry into gold is no longer limited to weddings. Nearly 24 per cent said their first gold purchase was triggered by their first salary or personal income, while 23.9 per cent cited an investment decision.



CARVING LEGACY

Six world titles,  
one BHAGAT

Odisha's ace para-shuttler clinches his fourth consecutive singles gold at the world championships and his sixth overall crown

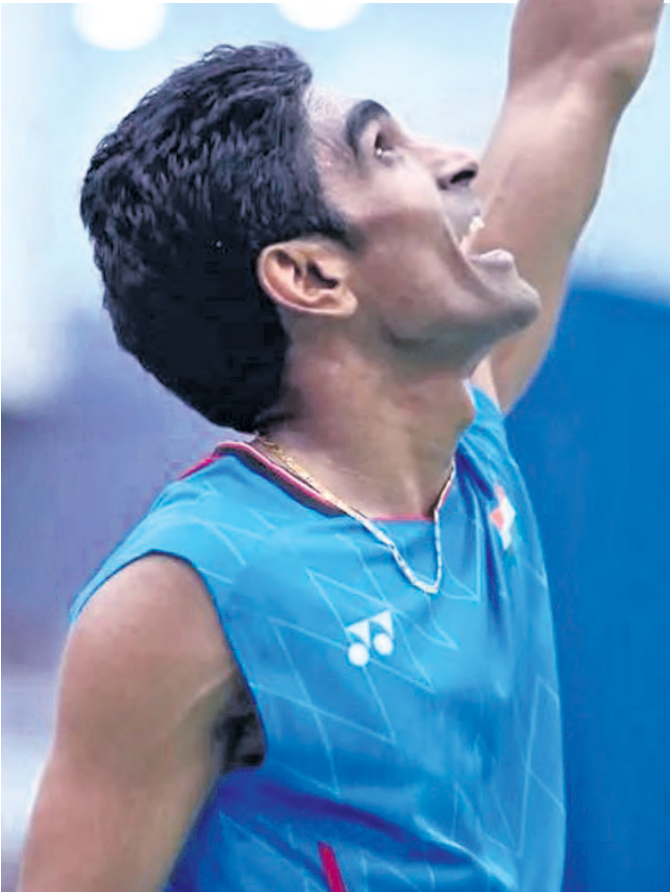
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Manama, Feb 14:** India's Pramod Bhagat captured the men's SL3 gold medal with a commanding straight-game win over Muhammad Al Imran of Indonesia at the BWF Para World Championships here Saturday.

The 37-year-old Bhagat out-classed his opponent 21-12, 21-18 in the final to claim his fourth consecutive singles gold at the world championships and his sixth overall world title in the category.

The victory underlines Bhagat's sustained dominance in the SL3 division, which refers to a classification for standing players with significant lower limb impairment.

Bhagat, who developed po-



lio when he was five, had secured world championship singles gold medals in 2009, 2015, 2019, 2022 and 2024.

Following Saturday's win, he surpassed China's legendary Lin Dan, who won five men's singles world titles in able-bodied badminton, making Bhagat the most decorated singles champion across world championship history in the sport.

The triumph also marked a significant redemption for Bhagat, who served an 18-month suspension for violating the Badminton World Federation (BWF) anti-doping whereabouts clause, which forced him to miss the 2024 Paris Paralympics..

Bhagat later combined with Sukant Kadam to claim the men's doubles SL3-SL4 title, defeating fellow Indians J Dilli and N Sivakumar 21-19, 21-16 in the final. The top-seeded Indian pair controlled key phases of the summit clash to complete a golden double for Bhagat.

In other results, N Sivakumar finished runner-up in the men's singles SL4 category after losing to top seed Lucas Mazur of France 12-21, 21-19, 14-21 in the final.

India's M Ramadass, the top seed in women's singles SU5, settled for silver following an 11-21, 11-21 defeat to China's Yang Qiu Xia in the title clash.

Top seed N Sumathy Sivan also finished runner-up in the women's singles SH6 category after going down 14-21, 21-12, 17-21 to China's Li Feng in a hard-fought three-game final.

T20 WORLD CUP

Greatest rivalry: India, Pakistan lock horns

Defending champions India would be hoping to carry their rich vein of form in the T20 Internationals



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Colombo, Feb 14:** Amid the still-smouldering embers of an impasse that mixed cricket with politics like never before, India will need middle-order stability and a fully fit Abhishek Sharma to maintain domination over Pakistan when the two bitter rivals clash in the T20 World Cup's marquee fixture, here Sunday.

A temporary 'peace season' has dawned after Pakistan made a U-turn from its boycott stand and agreed to take the field against India at the Premadasa stadium here.

It came after weeks of intense parleys that involved the International Cricket Council, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Practically, the whole of South Asia was turning the wheel to make this match happen, should the weather gods allow, because of its power to attract millions -- fans and bank balance alike.

**Abhishek bats at nets**

For India, the worries start with Abhishek as he was forced to skip the match against Namibia with a stomach bug that needed hospitalisation.

But on the bright side, the left-hander batted for a considerable time at nets on Saturday evening, signalling his recovery from the illness.

"If you guys want, we will play Abhishek," skipper Suryakumar Yadav was in a mood to joke with the media contingent when the obvious query came in.

So, it's almost certain that the Punjab man will walk in for Sanju Samson to open with

Head-to-head	
ODI World Cup:	Total Matches: 8
	India Won: 8
T20 World Cup:	Total Matches: 8
	India Won: 7
Champions Trophy:	Total Matches: 6
	India Won: 3

an on-song Ishan Kishan. The nature of the track here also might prompt the management to bring in left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

But the inclusion of Kuldeep will have to come at the expense of a batter and the unfortunate one missing out could be Rinku Singh. Bringing in Kuldeep is also a massively tantalising option because of his hold over Babar Azam and he also had fine figures of 4 for 30 in the Asia Cup final at Dubai -- his last outing against the cross-border rivals.

**The spin threat**

Keeping up with the hybrid model chalked out last year, Pakistan have been stationed in Colombo, and it has given them a better understanding of the pitch and conditions here.

The pitch at the RPICS has been a speed-sucker and the 2009 champions have five capable spinners in their ranks -- Usman Tariq, Saim Ayub, Abrar Ahmed, Shadab Khan and Mohammad Nawaz.

Tariq's side-arm stop and pause action has already become the talk of the town and battle with the versatile Indian batters would be an intriguing sub-plot of the showdown.

Ireland's big win against Oman

**Colombo:** Ireland skipper Lorcan Tucker produced a masterful unbeaten 94 under pressure to power his side to a 96-run victory over Oman in their T20 World Cup match here Saturday. Riding on Tucker's entertaining 51-ball knock, studded with 10 boundaries and four sixes, Ireland piled up a formidable 235 for five before dismissing Oman for 139.

Nervy England overpower Scotland

**Kolkata:** Veteran leg-spinner Adil Rashid returned with figures of 3/36 before Tom Banton smashed an unbeaten fifty in the middle overs to guide England to a comfortable five-wicket win over Scotland in a T20 World Cup Group C match here Saturday. Opting to bowl first, England rode on Rashid's exploits to bowl out Scotland for 152.

SA take big leap towards Super 8s

**Ahmedabad:** South Africa rode on skipper Aiden Markram and Marco Jansen's batting and bowling exploits to beat New Zealand by seven wickets and all but qualify for the Super 8 stage Saturday. Jansen recorded career-best figures of 4/40 as South Africa restricted New Zealand to 175 for 7. Chasing, Markram made unbeaten 86 off 44 balls, which equalled his career-best T20I score.

ISL KICKS OFF

MBSG beat Kerala Blasters 2-0

**Kolkata:** Defending champions Mohun Bagan Super Giant began their Indian Super League campaign with a comfortable 2-0 victory over Kerala Blasters in the season opener at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharathi Krirangan here Saturday. A first half strike from Jamie Maclaren (36th minute) and a second half injury-time goal from Tom Aldred (90+6) secured three points for the Mariners. Mohun Bagan SG head coach Sergio Lobera named a very strong lineup with all the familiar faces, including Dimi Petratos, Jamie Maclaren and Alberto Rodriguez, taking the field for the Spaniard's first match in charge of the Mariners. New signings Mehtab Singh, Robson Da Silva, and Amey Ranawade were the fresh faces in the whole match-day squad. On the other hand, David Catala named a young lineup in his first ISL match with foreign signings Omar Ba and Victor Bertomeu making their debuts along with midfielders Y Ebindas and Rowlin Borges.

Debutants Inter Kashi hold FC Goa 1-1

**Margao:** Debutants Inter Kashi produced a disciplined and determined display with 10 men to hold FC Goa to a 1-1 draw on the opening day of the Indian Super League 2025-26 here Saturday. Despite enjoying the lion's share of possession and creating clearer chances, FC Goa were forced to settle for a point as the newcomers showed resilience. Prasanth Karuthadathkuni scored Inter Kashi's maiden goal in the ISL in the second minute of the first half added time. Dejan Drazic equalised for FC Goa via a penalty in the 84th minute.

FIH PRO LEAGUE

India's poor run continues

Men in Blue lose 2-4 against Belgium in return leg

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Rourkela, Feb 14:** India's torrid display in the Rourkela leg of the FIH Pro League continued unabated as they lost 2-4 against Belgium to suffer their third consecutive defeat at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here Saturday.

This was the second meeting between the two teams in this leg, with Belgium having won the earlier fixture 3-1. India were then crushed 0-8 by Argentina in their next match here.

Alexander Hendrickx (14th, 17th minutes) led the charge for the visitors with a brace, supported by goals from Hugo Labouchere (11th) and Arthur de Sloover (15th).

India showed improved defensive character in the second half by keeping a clean sheet, but strikes from Aditya Lalage (24th) and captain Harmanpreet Singh (37th) were not enough to overturn the early deficit.

Belgium kicked off the proceedings and immediately established control. While India vice-captain Hardik Singh excited the crowd with an early forward run, the hosts struggled to test the Belgian defence.

India thought they had taken the lead in the seventh minute, but the goal was disallowed.

Belgium quickly capitalised on the momentum, earning their first penalty corner in the 11th minute, which Labouchere successfully converted.

The pressure continued, and



in the 14th minute, Hendrickx doubled the lead with a powerful drag-flick from another penalty corner.

Despite Indian goalkeeper Suraj Karkera making a crucial foot save moments later, Belgium struck again in the final minute of the quarter.

Opting for a variation on their third penalty corner, a sequence of short passes set up de Sloover to make it 3-0.

Belgium picked up right from where they left off in the second quarter. Earning their fourth penalty corner in the 17th minute, Hendrickx made no mistake with his drag-flick to extend the lead to 4-0.

Desperate for a response, India pushed forward.

The breakthrough came in the 24th minute when Abhishek dribbled past the Belgian defence and fired a shot. Although goalkeeper Loic Van Doren made the initial save, Lalage expertly poached the rebound to pull one back.

The third quarter saw a more

balanced contest.

Moments later, a brilliant run by Sukhjeet Singh earned India a penalty corner of their own. Captain Harmanpreet stepped up and masterfully converted the chance in the 37th minute, scoring his first goal of the 2025-26 season to reduce the deficit to 4-2.

India started the final quarter with urgency, nearly making it 4-3, but Van Doren produced a superb save to deny the hosts.

Two minutes later, Indian goalkeeper Pawan stood tall to thwart a dangerous Belgian attack. As the clock ticked down, Belgium shifted to an ultra-aggressive approach to close out the game.

Pawan made a massive double save in the 56th minute to keep India's hopes alive, but despite their best efforts to find space in the final two minutes, the resolute Belgian defence held firm to secure the victory.

India will play their final match of the Rourkela leg Sunday against Argentina.

AcreRise Premier League concludes



**Bhubaneswar:** AcreRise successfully organized the AcreRise Premier League 2026, its annual in-house sports event dedicated to encouraging fitness, teamwork, and a healthy competitive spirit among employees. The company has always believed in nurturing a strong sports culture within the organization and continues to motivate employees to actively participate in sporting activities. The initiative reflects AcreRise's commitment to employee well-being and engagement beyond the workplace. The two-day sporting event, held February 11 and 12, 2026, featured cricket and badminton tournaments, drawing enthusiastic participation from employees across departments. The matches were marked by energy, camaraderie, and competitive excellence. A total of seven matches were played during the league. After a series of exciting encounters, the AcreRise Legends Team emerged as the champions, delivering an outstanding performance and demonstrating remarkable team coordination. The AcreRise Premier League 2026 concluded on a celebratory note, reinforcing the organization's vision of building not only professional excellence but also a vibrant and healthy work culture.

Quad God Malinin's Olympic dreams in shreds

REUTERS

**Milan, Feb 14:** The pressure had been building, the glare of Olympic expectation, the scrutiny of a sport that demands not only athletic precision but artistic perfection. And Friday, all of it came crashing down on Ilia Malinin.

The American phenom, considered virtually untouchable and a near-certain gold medallist, unravelled in stunning fashion in the men's free programme at the Milano Cortina Olympics.

Malinin landed only three of his seven planned quadruple jumps, fell twice, and watched in disbelief as more than two years of competitive dominance dissolved into an eighth-place finish.

"In the moment, it definitely felt like not only nerves, but maybe the ice was also not the best condition for what I would



like to have," he told a throng of reporters, half a dozen deep. "That's not an excuse, we're all put in that situation, but the nerves were just so overwhelming.

"Going into my starting pose, all the traumatic moments of my life really just started flood-

ing my head. So many negative thoughts rushed in, and I just did not handle it."

Only two months ago, the 21-year-old laid down a jaw-dropping performance at the Grand Prix Final, landing seven quads, including the quadruple Axel, to smash his own

It's not like any other competition, it's the Olympics... it was really just something that overwhelmed me

ILIA MALININ

world record score in the free programme.

On Friday, his planned quad Axel - a jump only he has ever landed in competition - turned into a single, prompting gasps from the crowd. He ended up getting a score of 156.33 that was a shocking 80-plus points less than that stunning Grand Prix skate.

The two-times world champion, who was not nearly at his best in the team event either, admitted he "still hasn't been able to process" what transpired, despite feeling prepared and confident heading into the day.

Some of the quads, he not-

ed, even felt "ideal." But something deeper was shifting beneath the surface.

Asked to explain the pressure of being a huge Olympic favourite in his Games debut, he said: "It's not easy, being the Olympic gold hopeful is really just a lot to deal with, especially for my age.

"It's not like any other competition, it's the Olympics... it was really just something that overwhelmed me," he said.

In the quiet aftermath of the most painful competition of his career, he was already turning towards what comes next.

"Honestly, it's just something where you take what happened and what you learned, and decide what you want to do for the future and how to approach things," Malinin said. "I can't go back and change the outcome, even though I would love to. From here, it's just regrouping, figuring out what to do next."