



Priyanka on success

Actor Priyanka Chopra reveals how her definition of success has gradually evolved over time

LEISURE | P2



Martial law row

South Korean court hands life in prison to ex-President Yoon Suk Yeol for insurrection

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Wealth erodes

Investors' wealth erodes by nearly ₹7 lakh crore Thursday as the stock markets take a heavy beating amid geopolitical tensions

BUSINESS | P11



Highest-capped Kaur

Harmanpreet Kaur becomes the highest-capped player in women's international cricket when she makes her 356th India appearance

SPORTS | P12

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 320 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | FRIDAY | FEBRUARY 20, 2026

12 PAGES | ₹5.00



MILANO THINGS: Teun Boer of the Netherlands falls during the Men's 500m Short Track Speed Skating at the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics

REUTERS

Woman, daughter killed in Cuttack cracker explosion



Bill Gates pulls out of AI summit

REUTERS



New Delhi, Feb 19: Bill Gates pulled out of India's AI Impact Summit hours before his scheduled keynote Thursday, as scrutiny over his ties to late financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein intensified following the release of US Justice Department emails.

The abrupt withdrawal of Microsoft's co-founder dealt a fresh blow to a flagship event already marred by organisational lapses, a robot row and complaints of traffic chaos.

The six-day event still notched more than \$200 billion in investment pledges for AI infrastructure in India. Gates' cancellation follows the release of emails last month by the DOJ that included communication between late financier and convicted sex offender Epstein and the Gates Foundation's staff.

The foundation said the billionaire will not deliver his address "to ensure the focus remains on the AI Summit's key priorities". Only days ago, the foundation had dismissed rumours of his absence and insisted he was on track to attend.

The foundation's chief strategy officer and Africa and India chief Ankur Vora spoke instead of Gates.

Gates has said the relationship was confined to philanthropy-related discussions and that it was a mistake for him to

meet the sex offender.

He was among the top tech leaders due to attend the event among the likes of Google CEO Sundar Pichai, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei. Gates' absence followed another high-profile cancellation by Nvidia's Jensen Huang earlier Saturday.

In his keynote address, PM Narendra Modi called for maintaining children's safety on AI platforms as he addressed the gathering Thursday, alongside French President Emmanuel Macron. "We must be even more vigilant about children's safety.

Just as a school syllabus is curated, the AI space should also be child- and family-guided," Modi said, after standing on stage with top AI executives and posing for photographs with their arms

raised in a show of strength.

The photoshoot produced an awkward moment when Altman and Amodei stood side by side on stage but did not hold hands although the other executives did. The summit exhibition halls were shut to the public Thursday in a surprise move that led to more anger among participating companies that had put up stalls and pavilions.

Police repeatedly shut roads to give preference to VIP movement at the summit, creating chaos in the city of 20 million people. The Indian government has apologised for inconvenience caused to attendees in the initial days.

Opposition parties attacked the government and the prime minister for poorly managing the global summit.

Tehsildar suspended

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The state government has placed Bipin Kumar Pradhan, serving as the tehsildar of Padmapur in Bargarh district, under suspension following allegations of corruption against him, official sources said Thursday.

"Bipin Kumar Pradhan, serving as tehsildar of Padmapur, was suspended based on a report submitted by the district Collector," according to an official statement. The order takes immediate effect pending further inquiry into the allegations, the statement added.

The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for those aged 15 and above rose sharply in Odisha to 64.5 per cent in 2024, up from 58.1 per cent in 2022, exceeding the national average of 59.6 per cent in 2024. Female LFPR also recorded a notable increase from 37.6 per cent to 48.7 per cent during the same period, well above the national figure of 40.3 per cent, the report said.

"Agriculture and allied activities contribute 19.6 per cent to Odisha's economy in 2025-26, higher than the national share of 16.8 per cent. The agriculture and allied sector has registered a robust growth rate of 5.3 per cent in 2025-26, compared with 3.1 per cent at the national level," it said.

The industrial sector contributes 41.3 per cent to the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) in 2025-26 (AE), with manufacturing growth estimated at 8.3 per cent, which is above the national

ODISHA ECONOMIC SURVEY 2025-26

al average of 7 per cent.

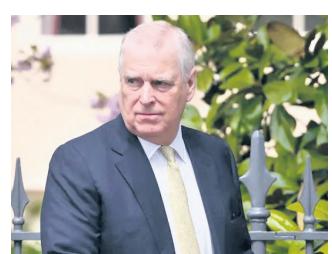
The services sector accounts for 39.1 per cent of GSVA in 2025-26 and is projected to grow by 9.3 per cent. Financial services are expected to expand by 11.9 per cent in 2025-26 (AE), supported by deeper banking and fintech penetration. New policies on artificial intelligence, global capability centres, and semiconductors aim to position Odisha as a future-ready digital economy, it said.

Odisha budgeted the highest capital outlay-to-GSDP ratio among major states at 6.6 per cent in 2025-26, up from 5.0 per cent in 2024-25. The debt-to-GSDP ratio stands at 13.6 per cent, the lowest among major states and well below FRBM norms, ensuring long-term fiscal sustainability.

The report also noted growth in infrastructure, including ports, railways, and the aviation sector, as well as in health, education, and skill development.

EPSTEIN FALLOUT: EX-PRINCE ANDREW ARRESTED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



that the arrest involves Andrew, who turned 66 Thursday.

"Following a thorough assessment, we have now opened an investigation into this allegation of misconduct in public office," said Oliver Wright, Assistant Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

"It is important that we protect the integrity and objectivity of our investigation as we work with our partners to investigate this alleged offence," Wright said. "We understand the significant public interest in this case, and we will provide updates at the appropriate time," he said.

The arrest follows a series of allegations over the past few weeks as the Epstein files were released by the US Congress, with Buckingham Palace issuing an unprecedented statement earlier this month to say that it 'stands ready' to support a police investigation into the conduct of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor.

After Greenland, Arctic island Svalbard wary of great powers

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

"The Arctic is no longer a quiet corner on the map," EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas told a conference in Tromsø in northern Norway in early February. "It is the front line of the global power competition."

Longyearbyen is an unusual place. A former mining community turned tourist destination and academic hotspot, it lies in the fastest-warming region on the planet. One of the northernmost towns in the world, located halfway between continental Norway and the North Pole, Longyearbyen is home to 2,500 people. It is plunged in darkness with no sun for four months in winter, then bathed in round-the-clock daylight in summer.



Venturing outside the town means carrying a mandatory rifle in case of encounters with polar bears. Some political observers have suggested that Trump's desire to control the Arctic may extend beyond Greenland to Svalbard, or that Russia may

want to match his appetite and seize the archipelago.

In addition to the riches believed to lie under its seabed, Svalbard -- twice the size of Belgium -- is strategically located, controlling the northern part of the so-called 'Bear Gap'.

Russian submarines from having access to the Atlantic, she said. Longyearbyen's residents, who hail from around 50 countries, are staying cool-headed amid the speculation. "Maybe we talk a bit more about what's happening in Greenland and with Trump and everything, but at the same time I feel like we're not more anxious than we usually are," Barbara Kunz, director of the European Security Programme at Stockholm peace research institute SIPRI, told AFP.

Russia wants to protect its nuclear deterrence, and so it wants to make sure that nobody can approach its northern coast, while the US would like to prevent



IRREGULAR by MANJUL

I asked AI, but it advised me not to attend the AI summit. It said it would provide a five-day gist in a five-second read

leisure

FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com™

accuracy • reliability • trust

FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

■ ARIES

Your day is packed full. There are negotiations, commitments, plans and decisions to wade through. You may feel low on energy and swamped due to lack of information and inputs from others. But clarity will return gradually as matters conclude, says Ganesha.

■ TAURUS

Ganesha sees you in a very romantic mood today. Your thoughts, tender and dreamy, will keep drifting towards someone special; someone of the opposite sex. Come evening and you will, in all likelihood, be sitting closely together, arm in arm, with your spouse or your sweetheart.

■ GEMINI

Your entire attention will be concentrated on the work-front today. You will be on the lookout for new projects and contracts to spur on your earnings. Opportunities for changing your job will come knocking on your door. You will be afforded the full co-operation of your colleagues today.

■ CANCER

Control your anger, counsels Ganesha. Or else, it will sadden your near ones. Writers may display creative output of high order. The day augurs well for artists, too. This is the time to take up new challenges, says Ganesha.

■ LEO

You will not be in the mood to take up significant tasks today. You will want to throw your responsibilities to the wind and pursue leisurely activities. However you will still need to tackle some pressing issues. It is easier to swim with the tide, than against, says Ganesha.

■ VIRGO

You will be bubbling with ideas today. You may face a dilemma between your obligations and present duties, which could prove to be very perplexing. New contacts turn out to be very useful. Ganesha says blood is thicker than water, and family and friends will cement their relationship with you.

■ LIBRA

Ganesha says you will learn a lot from your past experiences for a shining future. You will be slightly possessive about some costly item that you own. There will be small concerns during the day about different matters, which will give you mental stress. On the whole the day will pass by nicely.

■ SCORPIO

No matter how rich and successful you become, it is very important to stay grounded. Never let your success go to your head, advises Ganesha. Rudeness and overconfidence may take away everything from you and may leave you empty handed. So be kind and spread kindness.

■ SAGITTARIUS

Life is bubbling within you and you shall be in a hyper-elevated state of bliss today. Your high-spirits and energy will inspire you to perform at your best. Moreover, your inner voice will be loud and bellowing. Make the most of this superb day, says Ganesha.

■ CAPRICORN

Mounting pressure of work and responsibilities during the day may drain your energy, but not your enthusiasm, feels Ganesha. The second half of the day will be tiring, as you will be fighting a tough battle with your competitors. You'll come out triumphant from the fight as you perform smartly and get your acts right.

■ AQUARIUS

You need not always put up a brave face, feels Ganesha. You can ventilate your emotions and speak your heart out in front of your loved ones. It will make the pain bearable and you'll probably get a way out of your problems. You will feel better by the evening, and a sweet smile will brighten up your face.

■ PISCES

You need to nurture your personal relationships carefully today, and give them the attention they are due. You need to control the outbursts of your temper and stop arguing with your partner or spouse over insignificant matters. Personal life will be smooth sailing as long as neither of you attempt to dominate over the other, says Ganesha.



RAPPER BAD BUNNY FINDS HIS FIRST FILM AS LEAD STAR

Puerto Rican superstar Bad Bunny is set to headline the historical drama *Porto Rico*, marking his first leading role in a feature film. Bad Bunny, who recently headlined the Super Bowl Halftime Show in a performance celebrating Puerto Rican culture, earlier featured in Brad Pitt-starrer *Bullet Train* and Darren Aronofsky's *Caught Stealing*.

PRIYANKA'S DEFINITION OF SUCCESS

Mumbai: Actor Priyanka Chopra recently opened up about how her definition of success has evolved, placing greater emphasis on balancing career and family. While she continues to build her presence in the international entertainment industry, Chopra made it clear that professional milestones alone no longer define achievement for her.

Reflecting on her journey, she shared that there was a time when ambition and legacy were at the forefront of her goals. However, after starting a family, her priorities gradually shifted. Today, she views success through a more personal lens, one that includes being present for her loved ones while continuing to pursue meaningful work.

The *Barfi* actress acknowledged that working across industries often demands constant travel and long schedules, but she now makes conscious choices about the projects she takes on. She described stepping away from work at times not as a setback, but as a privilege, the ability to pause, reset, and prioritise family without guilt.

Rather than chasing the idea of having "arrived," Priyanka emphasised creating a life that feels balanced and fulfilling. For her, true legacy lies not just in films or accolades, but in the ability to nurture both a thriving career and a grounded personal life.

AGENCIES

VAMAKI



Big B's cryptic post



ZENDAYA FEELS LOVE AND LOSS GO HAND IN HAND

Hollywood actress Zendaya is getting philosophical about life, love and loss. The 29-year-old actress, who is engaged to fellow movie star Tom Holland, has learned that "love and loss go hand in hand."

Mumbai: Megastar Amitabh Bachchan left fans intrigued after posting a cryptic message on X that simply read, "T 5661(i) - CHUUUUUUPPP (shut up!!!!)" The single-word post, written with emphasis, quickly sparked widespread speculation and debate online, as followers tried to decode its meaning.

With no context provided, social media was flooded with reactions ranging from concern to amusement. Some fans wondered if everything was alright, while others playfully asked him to explain the "code" behind the message. A section of admirers even praised the post, calling it a reflection of his trademark authority and screen presence. Many noted that only Bachchan could generate such massive engagement with just one word.

Interestingly, several users turned to X's AI chatbot Grok for clarity. The chatbot suggested that the emphatic "CHUUUUUUPPP" translates to a forceful "shut up" in Hindi and may indicate frustration, possibly linked to ongoing rumours regarding his son Abhishek's personal life, rumours Bachchan has previously dismissed as "speculated untruths" on his blog. However, no official explanation has been given.

The post comes shortly after Bachchan concluded *Kaun Banega Crorepati Season 17*, where he delivered a memorable performance including singing continuously for over 32 minutes.

AGENCIES



Styling tips by Tamannaah

Mumbai: For Tamannaah Bhatia, jewellery is far more than an accessory, it is a powerful form of self-expression and an extension of her personality. Whether she is attending a red carpet event, stepping out casually, or preparing for a film role, her jewellery plays a defining role in shaping her overall look.

"I've always felt that the right kind of jewellery can add so much glamour to any outfit," she shares. "Whether it's casual wear, a festive celebration, or a red carpet appearance, jewellery changes how an outfit is perceived. For me, it has always been an integral part of styling."

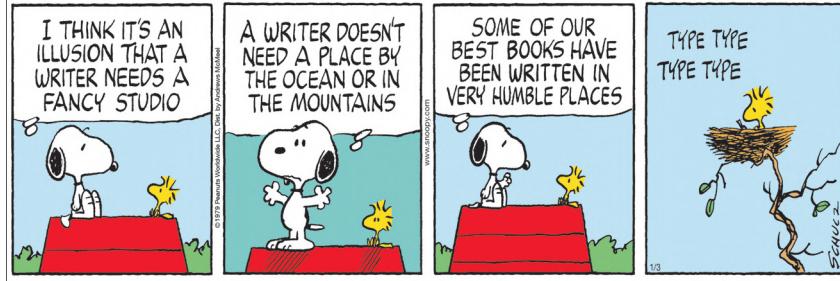
Her connection to fine jewellery is also deeply personal. Coming from a family where her father has been in the jewellery business, the craft has long been part of her life. Today, she designs many of her own pieces and enjoys wearing creations that reflect her evolving style. The actor, known for films like *Jailer* and *Aranmanai 4*, says jewellery helps her effortlessly embody different moods; from minimalist to maximalistic.

Even on relaxed days in track pants, she believes the right jewels elevate her look. For Tamannaah, every piece tells a story, one that mirrors her mood, identity, and sense of glamour.

AGENCIES



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBES

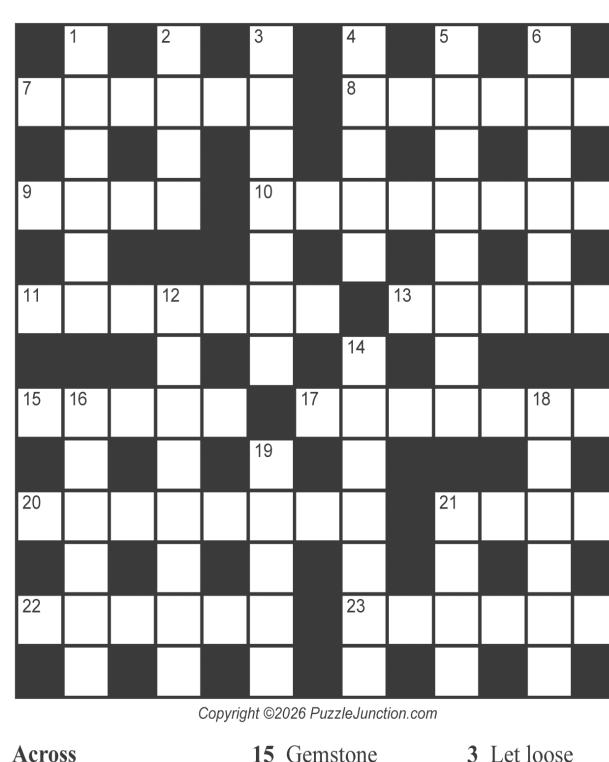


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

Across

- 15 Gemstone
- 17 Watch part
- 18 Exactly right (4,2)
- 20 Amphitheatre
- 21 Story
- 22 Appraised
- 23 Opulence

Down

- 15 Gemstone
- 17 Watch part
- 18 Exactly right (4,2)
- 20 Amphitheatre
- 21 Story
- 22 Appraised
- 23 Opulence

Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

- 3 Let loose
- 4 Employment
- 5 Large Scottish lake (4,4)
- 6 Evil spirit
- 12 Plot
- 14 Collapse
- 16 Worldwide
- 18 Tempt
- 19 Buttonlike
- 21 Hack

Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

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

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



ANNUAL TEST: Students come out of an exam hall at Unit 3 Capital High School in Bhubaneswar, as the Class X examinations begin, Thursday

Unnao: Bee attack leaves umpire dead

AGENCIES

Unnao/Kanpur (UP), Feb 19: A 65-year-old umpire died while several players were injured after a swarm of bees attacked them during a cricket match in Unnao district, police said Thursday.



MANIK GUPTA

for cover to save themselves.

Eyewitnesses said Gupta sustained serious injuries in the attack and fell unconscious. He was initially taken to a private hospital in Shuklaganj and later referred to Lala Lajpat Rai Hospital in Kanpur as his condition deteriorated. Doctors at this hospital declared him dead.

A top office-bearer of the Kanpur Cricket Association (KCA), which organised the game, confirmed the incident that took place at Sapru Maidan in the Shuklaganj area Wednesday evening.

According to police officials, Manik Gupta from Kanpur was officiating as the umpire of the cricket match when a swarm of bees suddenly attacked the players and officials present on the ground, triggering panic.

Players and spectators ran

for cover to save themselves.

Eyewitnesses said Gupta

sustained serious injuries

in the attack and fell uncon-

scious. He was initially taken

to a private hospital in Shuk-

laganj and later referred

to Lala Lajpat Rai Hospi-

tal in Kanpur as his con-

dition deteriorated. Doc-

tors at this hospital de-

clared him dead.

Another umpire and around 15 to 20 players also suffered bee stings, police said. KCA president SN Singh officially confirmed the incident.

for cover to save themselves.

Eyewitnesses said Gupta

sustained serious injuries

in the attack and fell uncon-

scious. He was initially taken

to a private hospital in Shuk-

laganj and later referred

to Lala Lajpat Rai Hospi-

tal in Kanpur as his con-

dition deteriorated. Doc-

tors at this hospital de-

clared him dead.

Another umpire and around 15 to 20 players also suffered bee stings, police said. KCA president SN Singh officially confirmed the incident.

for cover to save themselves.

Eyewitnesses said Gupta

sustained serious injuries

in the attack and fell uncon-

scious. He was initially taken

to a private hospital in Shuk-

laganj and later referred

to Lala Lajpat Rai Hospi-

tal in Kanpur as his con-

dition deteriorated. Doc-

tors at this hospital de-

clared him dead.

SC slams freebie culture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Supreme Court Thursday slammed the culture of freebies and subsidies ahead of elections and said it was 'high time' to revisit such policies, as they hamper the country's economic development.

Observing that the ultimate financial burden of such populist measures falls squarely on the shoulders of taxpayers, a bench headed by CJI Surya Kant asked, "But this money which the State says it will pay now. Who will pay for it? This is taxpayers' money."

The observations were made during the hearing of a petition filed by the Tamil Nadu Power Distribution Corporation Limited which proposed to give free electricity to all irrespective of consumers' paying capacity. "It is understandable when some people cannot afford, you have to provide. There are children who cannot afford education, so the state must provide. It is the state's duty. There are children who are bright but cannot afford to go to medical colleges. The state must help them. But the persons who can enjoy, have all means available and are affluent and therefore any kind of freebie first comes to their pocket. Is it not high time for the states to revisit these policy frameworks," the CJI asked.

The bench, also comprising justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, warned that the indiscriminate distribution of largesse is hampering the nation's economic development and straining state exchequers already reeling under mas-



State governments should generate employment, make roads and hospitals so that poor are saved.. but in the name of welfare schemes we are giving cash, free ration, free kerosene, free cycles to all

SURYA KANT | CHI

sive revenue deficits.

"It is high time that all political stalwarts, leaders, parties, and all social engineers, they need to revisit everything. We will be hampering the development of the nation if we keep on having this largesse distribution. There has to be a balance. But how long will this continue," the CJI asked.

The state-owned firm has challenged Rule 23 of the Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2024, which imposes strict financial discipline on power distribution companies.

The impugned rule requires that any gap between the approved cost of supplying electricity and the tariff actually recovered from consumers must not exceed 3 per cent and that such gaps must be cleared within a fixed time.

The DMK-ruled Tamil Nadu is going for Assembly polls this year.

The SC, which issued notices to the Centre and

those who cannot afford, if you start giving, will it not amount to a sort of appeasing policy," the CJI asked.

He said due to these populist measures, most of the state governments are performing two functions and they are funding the distribution of largesse and paying salaries and all other development work like making hospitals and good roads are put on the backburner.

"State governments should generate employment, make roads and hospitals so that poor are saved... but in the name of welfare schemes we are giving cash, free ration, free kerosene, free cycles to all," the CJI said.

The bench asked as to why the Tamil Nadu firm suddenly decided to loosen the purse strings after the electricity tariff was notified.

The CJI said in some states, even large landlords receive free electricity, allowing them to keep lights and machines running without cost. "If you want to have a facility, you pay for it," he said.

Senior advocate Gopal Subramaniam, appearing for the Tamil Nadu firm, said that there must be equity in allocation of resources and that the widening gap between revenue and expenditure was a matter of governance. Justice Joymalya Bagchi raised concerns about fiscal planning and regulatory processes, particularly in the context of electricity subsidies.

"After the tariff has been notified suddenly the state government decided to open its purse a bit more," he said, adding, "If you really want to do all this, put it in the budgetary allocation and then justify how you will do so."

The team said they present an archival data storage system called 'Silica' – described in a paper in the journal Nature – which writes data in glass using a multibeam femtosecond laser.

The authors "report an optical archival storage technology based on femtosecond laser direct writing in glass that addresses the practical demands of archival storage, which we call Silica".

"Optical storage approaches, particularly laser writing in robust media such as glass, have emerged as promising alternatives with the potential for increased longevity," they said.

However, previous studies have largely optimised individual aspects of ar-

Paddy ruckus stalls House for second straight day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Demonstrations by Opposition BJD and Congress MLAs, alleging mismanagement in the paddy procurement process, disrupted the proceedings of the Assembly for the second consecutive day Thursday.

As soon as the House assembled for the Question Hour at 10:30am, BJD and Congress members rushed to the Well with placards, raising slogans against the government.

Some of the BJD members were seen scaling the Speaker's podium during the demonstrations.

BJD MLAs alleged that due to mismanagement in Kharif paddy procurement process, farmers were facing harassment.

The Congress legislators, on the other hand, attacked the BJP government, alleging that it was not being able to fulfill its pre-poll promises, including providing 300 units of free electricity.

As the agitating members did not pay heed to Speaker Surama Padhy's repeated

CYCLOCLES CLAIMED 147 LIVES IN 12 YRS

Bhubaneswar: A total of 147 people lost their lives in the cyclones that hit the state in the last 12 years. Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari told the Assembly Thursday. In a written reply to a question by Congress MLA Taraprasad Babinpati, Pujari said the state was affected by 12 cyclones between 2014 and 2025, and in four of those, 147 people lost their lives. He said the state suffered damage of ₹19,529 crore due to these cyclones. The highest of 73 people were killed by cyclone Titli in 2018, while 68 people lost their lives in cyclone Fani, which hit the state in 2019, he said. Three people were killed in cyclone Hudhud in 2014, and another three in cyclone Yaas in 2021, he added. Pujari said the state incurred a loss of properties of ₹9,336.27 crore due to cyclone Fani, while cyclone Hudhud damaged properties worth ₹4,949.39 crore. The damage caused by cyclone Titli was ₹2,779.32 crore, he said, adding over 54.21 lakh livestock were killed in these cyclones.

Gold reserves in Mayurbhanj dist

Gold reserves of more than 1.46 tonne have been discovered in Mayurbhanj district, Mines Minister Bibhut Bhushan Jena told the Assembly Thursday. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) conducted a survey for gold reserves in different areas in Bangariposha constituency of the district, Jena said in a written reply to a question of MLA Sanjali Murmu. During the survey, the GSI has found gold deposits of 1462.73 kg along with copper reserves of 17.06 million tonne in Madanashikaria area of the district, he said.

appeals to return to their seats, she adjourned the proceedings till 11:30am.

The House could function

for three minutes during the Question Hour.

When the House reassembled for Zero Hour, similar scenes were witnessed. Six minutes later, the Speaker announced a second adjournment till 4 pm.

BJD member Goutam Budhda Das said they want the resignation of Food Supplies Minister KC Patra and the government's apology to farmers.

"The BJP government is not holding discussions with the farmers, who are the victims of the paddy procurement mismanagement. The state-run mandis are not procuring paddy from farmers and putting them in trouble on some pretext or another," he told reporters outside the House.

Congress MLA Sofia Firduous alleged that the state government is not listening to the people, even as it claims to be a "people's government".

"We strongly condemn the government calling farmers 'fake' and their plight as 'noutanki' (drama). The BJP has developed the habit of not listening to the people," she said.

The main accused, Tikan Behera of Durgapur village under Jarapada police limits, has been arrested.

School peon hangs self in Koraput dist

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, Feb 19: A peon ended life by hanging himself at Jabagada Project Upper Primary (UP) School under Nandapur block of Koraput district Thursday morning, police said.

The deceased was identified as Shiba Nayak, 40, who worked as a peon at the state-run school that has residential facilities for students of SC & ST communities.

Based on complaints filed by headmaster Ramesh Chandra Kholas and Shiba's wife, Sumitra Naikam, Machhkund police registered a case (1/2026) of unnatural death and sent the



body to Lamtaput CHC for postmortem, said IIC Kulanmani Buruda. Preliminary investigation suggests Shiba had been staying in the school hostel for the past four-five days due to reported family disputes and had not returned home. Police suspect that after completing hostel duties Wednesday night, he allegedly hanged himself from a ceiling fan in the office room using a piece of cloth.

Laser-written glass can store data for over 10K yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: Encoding data into glass through laser could be a promising avenue for holding huge quantities of data for more than 10,000 years, as the technique is resistant to moisture, temperature changes and electromagnetic interference, according to a study.

The Project Silica team at Microsoft Research in Cambridge, UK, said the technology could prove effective for a long-term storage of legal, personal and commercial data that need to be preserved successfully.

The current techniques of preserving data – such as magnetic tapes or hard disk drives – degrade after a few years or decades, making

them unsuitable for a long-term storage.

The team said they present an archival data storage system called 'Silica' – described in a paper in the journal Nature – which writes data in glass using a multibeam femtosecond laser.

However, previous studies have largely optimised individual aspects of ar-

The system can encode units of data called voxels – three-dimensional pixels – into glass, which are each capable of storing more than one bit of data, the researchers said

chival data storage using laser-modified glass, such as data density, but not an "end-to-end system, including writing, storing and retrieving information", the team said.

The system can encode

units of data called voxels – three-dimensional pixels – into glass, which are each capable of storing more than one bit of data, the researchers said.

They added that the system has a writing capacity of 65.9 megabits of data per second for a data density of 1.59 gigabit per cubic mm or 4.84 terabytes in a 12-square-centimetre, 2-mm-deep piece of glass.

"This storage is equivalent to about 2 million printed books or 5,000 ultra-high-definition 4K

that it could likely last longer at room temperature. However, a limitation of the study's lifetime experiments is that the lifetime estimates did not account for influences such as mechanical stress or chemical corrosion, which can degrade the glass media and its data, the authors said.

Chen and Wu said, "Silica unites performance, durability and practical feasibility, transforming a laboratory concept into a viable solution for preserving the records of human civilisation."

Implementing the storage technology at scale could be a "milestone" in the history of knowledge storage, similar to oracle bones, medieval parchment or the modern hard drive, they said.

RDWU TO HOST 'MEDIA-NTAR'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Rama Devi Women's University (RDWU) will host its Annual Media Fest 2026, titled 'Media-ntar' on February 26 and 27, bringing together students, academicians and media professionals for a two-day exploration of media literacy and industry trends.

The fest will focus on addressing the growing challenges of misinformation in the digital age. As information circulates rapidly across digital platforms, the event aims to equip young minds with the skills to critically analyse content and distinguish facts from falsehood.

Department head Ambika Sankar Mishra said the objective of the fest is to sensitise youth to rise of misinformation and strengthen their understanding of media ethics and literacy. The programme is being organised by students and faculty members of the department with support from the Higher Education department.

Media-ntar 2026 will feature a range of competitions, including photography, short films, audio jingles, advertisement posters, extempore speaking, storytelling and talent hunt events.

'Protection of Lord's land a moral responsibility'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Lord Jagannath is revered as the supreme spiritual landlord of the Odia community, and protecting all His landed properties is a collective moral responsibility, said Additional Chief Secretary of the Revenue and Disaster Management department Arbinda Padhee while chairing a high-level meeting at Lok Seva Bhawan here Thursday to review measures for safeguarding the deity's land.

During the meeting, Padhee directed officials to take necessary steps for the effective implementation of all orders and judgments of the Supreme Court and Odisha High Court on protection and restoration of Lord's land.

He also stressed correction of land records for properties under the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration and called for speedy disposal of pending cases

from lands under the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, particularly in various talukas of Khurda district and along national and state highways. It was decided that a review meeting on the protection of the Lord's landed properties will be held on the first Wednesday of every month.

Discussions were also held on evicting illegal encroachments



Revenue and Disaster Management department
Additional Chief Secretary Padhee directed officials to ensure effective implementation of all orders of Supreme Court and Odisha High Court on protection and restoration of Lord's land

under the chairmanship of the Khurda Collector.

Further, to strengthen the protection and management of the Lord's landed properties, Padhee directed the establishment of a dedicated Shri Jagannath Mahaprabhu Land Cell within the Revenue department. He added that state-level meetings under his direct supervision, along with periodic district-level reviews, will continue to ensure effective monitoring and protection of the properties.

The meeting was attended by Amit Ruturaj, Collector of Khurda district, Debabrata Sahu of the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration, senior officials of the Revenue department's Land Reforms Branch, and Sub-Collectors and Tahasildars of Khurda district.

Excise sleuths raid dance bar in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The Bhubaneswar Excise department raided No Limit River bar under Capital Police Station limits late Wednesday night and sealed the establishment for allegedly engaging women to dance and violating Excise norms. The bar was also found operating beyond permitted hours.

According to sources, a video of the bar went viral where women were seen dancing inside the premises in front of intoxicated youths. Besides, the video also portrayed some youths throwing cash on the female dancers.

The Excise team raided the bar at around 1:30 am Thursday. However, before officials could act, customers were alerted and vacated the premises.

Sources said the bar had multiple entrances, allowing partygoers to escape before the raid.

"As part of the investigation, we tried to access the CCTV footages but the data was deleted and we suspect it was done deliberately to destroy the evidence," said Bhubaneswar Excise SP Debasish Patel.



Patel also informed that they found some cash lying on the floor which confirmed that they have violated excise norms by engaging women to perform dance inside a bar, which has been banned under Odisha Excise rules amended by the state government in 2024.

"After verification, we have sealed the bar for flouting Excise rules. We have also written to the Excise commission to cancel the bar's license and take serious action against it," said SP Patel.

HONOURING STATE ICONS**Govt forms steering committee for 'Baraputra Aitiya Gram Yojana'**

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: In a significant step towards preserving Odisha's rich historical and cultural legacy, the state government constituted a state-level project steering committee to oversee the implementation of 'Baraputra Aitiya Gram Yojana' in state.

The yojana is aimed at commemorating prominent freedom fighters, and eminent personalities who shaped the socio-cultural and literary landscape of the state.

The committee will be chaired by Odia Language, Literature and Culture (OLL&C) Minister. Members include heads or representatives from the coordinating departments.

Other members of the committee include OLL&C secretary and director, concerned District Collector, and a distinguished archaeologist nominated by Odisha State Archaeology. The OLL&C special, additional, joint secretary will serve as the convenor member.

The decision, cleared by Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) and approved by government, following a proposal prepared by Finance department, seeks to transform the native



The committee will be chaired by Odia Language, Literature and Culture (OLL&C) Minister. Members include heads or representatives from the coordinating departments

villages of the eminent personalities into heritage hubs. The initiative is designed not only to conserve their memories but also to inspire and motivate future generations by showcasing their contributions to Odisha's identity and progress.

The scheme will be implemented under the overall guidance and coordination of multiple key departments, including Housing, Revenue and Disaster Management, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water, Planning and Coordination, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Textiles and Handicrafts.

The collaborative framework is expected to ensure integrated development of identified heritage villages, combining cultural preservation with infrastructure enhancement and tourism promotion.

The yojana is expected to strengthen Odisha's cultural roots while fostering heritage tourism and community pride across the state.

6 Odias stranded in Thailand; state seeks Centre's help

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: The Odisha government has written to the Centre, urging the authorities concerned to take immediate steps for the safe return of six stranded Odia workers from Thailand.

The six labourers, who are reportedly working in a plywood company in Thailand, are "facing severe hardship as they have not been paid their salaries for the last three months", said Delhi-based Principal Resident Commissioner Vishal Gagan in a letter to the additional secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Wednesday.

The Odia workers went to the Southeast Asian country through an agent from Gorakhpur district in Uttar Pradesh, he said. The principal resident commissioner said that the workers have pleaded on social media for their rescue and safe repatriation from Thailand to their native places in Odisha's Kendrapara and Bhadrak districts.

Sharing the passport details of the six stranded Odia workers, he wrote, "In view of the serious nature of plight of the workers, it is requested that urgent action may please be initiated for disbursal of remuneration of emigrant workers as per their due entitlement and their urgent rescue and safe repatriation of 6 emigrant workers from Thailand back to their native place in Odisha."

'Expedite land acquisition for highway, ROBs'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Emphasising timely completion of key infrastructure works, Works department principal secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh Thursday directed officials to accelerate land acquisition and statutory clearances for ongoing national highway and railway over bridge (ROBs) projects across the state.

Chairing a comprehensive review meeting, Singh instructed district Collectors to personally monitor land acquisition issues and resolve bottlenecks at the earliest. He called for closer coordination between revenue, forest and project authorities to ensure that procedural delays do not hamper construction schedules.

Fast-track forest land approvals and tender processes wherever pending, Singh specifically stated officials and added that unnecessary delays would not be tolerated. Collectors must hold regular district-level review meetings and take proactive measures to clear hurdles affecting project implementation, he stressed.

MARKET WATCH

CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	91.116 ▲ 0.34	SENSEX	82498.14 ▼ 1,236.11	GOLD	₹ 156,183 ▲ ₹ 422
EURO	107.1490 ▲ 0.15	NIFTY	25454.35 ▼ 365.00	SILVER	₹ 245,800 ▲ ₹ 1532

VIT's Viswanathan gets honorary doctorate from Thailand varsity

Vellore: Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) Vice-President Sankar Viswanathan has been conferred an honorary Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering and Technology Management by Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep (RMUTK), Thailand. The prestigious degree was awarded following unanimous approval by the University Council, recognising Sankar Viswanathan's exceptional leadership, professional achievements, and contributions in engineering and technology management. The honour was conferred by Palakorn Suwanruth, Privy Council of Thailand, and Pichai Janmanee, President of Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep. The honorary degree represents the highest academic recognition conferred by the institution for distinguished service and professional excellence. In his acceptance address, Viswanathan highlighted the shared cultural and knowledge ties between India and Thailand, and called for stronger academic collaboration between the two nations. The ceremony was attended by VIT Chancellor G Viswanathan, Assistant Vice-President Kadhambari S Viswanathan, along with Ramani Balasundaram and Sravan Krishna.

Odisha Yatri adds SOS safety, enables ₹10cr driver earnings

Bhubaneswar: In a major step to enhance public safety, Odisha Yatri, the state government's people-first mobility platform, is set to evolve into a comprehensive safety platform with advanced emergency response features, expanding its footprint with a strong focus on citizen safety, digital innovation, and driver empowerment. The upgraded system will enable direct SOS connectivity with police, emergency triggers without opening the app, live location sharing, and instant alerts to designated emergency contacts. These tech-enabled interventions aim to ensure safety is accessible anytime and anywhere across the state, reinforcing the platform's role beyond mobility services. Alongside strengthening safety infrastructure, Odisha Yatri has facilitated over ₹10 crore in cumulative driver earnings under its zero-commission model, allowing drivers to retain 100 per cent of their ride income. This transparent and equitable approach has improved driver livelihoods, strengthened trust, and positioned Odisha Yatri as a fair, government-backed mobility solution. The FASTicket initiative has further accelerated the digitisation of Ama Bus services, enabling passengers to scan QR codes inside buses, book tickets within seconds, receive instant digital tickets, and avail exclusive discounts.

OUAT HOSTS NAT'L WORKSHOP**Experts call for women-friendly farm tools**

POST NEWS NETWORK



Women & Child Development Commission-cum-Secretary Mrinalini Darswal said women-friendly farm mechanisation can improve efficiency, and boost income and self-reliance

DIRECTOR OF THE ICAR-CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING, BHOPAL CR MEHTA CALLED FOR FOCUSED EFFORTS TO EMPOWER WOMEN THROUGH SUITABLE TECHNOLOGIES AND ENHANCE RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

economic status and contributing to national development. She stressed the need for intensified university-level research and improved access to such technologies for grassroots farmers.

Presiding over the session, OUAT Vice-Chancellor Pravat Kumar Roul highlighted the importance of mechanisation in modern agriculture and its crucial role in improving agricultural efficiency.

Deputy Director General (Agricultural Engineering) at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi SN Jha highlighted the rising demand for farm machinery and its crucial role in improving agricultural efficiency.

Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering, Bhopal CR Mehta called for focused efforts to empower women through appropriate technologies and emphasised the need to enhance research publications in this field.

Assistant Director General (Agricultural Engineering) at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, KP Singh highlighted the transformative role of mechanisation in modernising traditional farming practices.

Project Coordinator of AI-CRP Sukhbir Singh, presented an overview of the programme, and several farmer-oriented publications were released during the event.

Dean of Research at Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Niranjan Panda delivered the welcome address, while Ambika Prasad Sahu, Dean of the College of Agricultural Engineering & Technology, proposed the vote of thanks. The workshop was attended by ICAR officials, AI-CRP scientists, OUAT faculty, students, and farmers from across the region.

**WEATHER**

Max Temp	33.5°	CTC	30.6°
Min Temp	15.9°	FORECAST	15.4°
Humidity	68%	79%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Dry weather likely to prevail

NH-26 project crawls, Semiliguda pays price

NARENDRA RAUT, OP

Koraput, Feb 19: The long-pending expansion of National Highway 26 passing through Semiliguda in this district has once again come under sharp criticism as incomplete construction continues to disrupt daily life for residents, commuters, and business owners.

The widening of NH-26 was announced decades ago, soon after the formation of the Sunabeda Municipality. Funds sanctioned at the district level were distributed among concerned departments – National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) for road construction, the Electricity Division for street lighting, and the PHD Division for drains and bridges. The approved project included a 72-feet-wide double-lane road from NALCO Chowk to the bus stand, along with road extension and drainage on both sides, planned in two phases.

After years of struggle and repeated representations by MLAs from Pottangi and Kora-



put, the matter was raised before the Urban Development Minister and the District Collector. Although construction finally began, work progressed only on one side from NALCO Chowk to Ganga Maa Mandir,

before coming to an abrupt halt midway.

Municipal Chairman Rajendra Patro expressed strong displeasure over the delay. "Residents, commuters, and traders meet me almost daily demand-

ing speedy completion of the road widening project along with drains and street lights. The NH division assured us the work would resume soon, but there has been no response so far," he said.

A senior citizen of Semiliguda said, "This road was promised even before my children grew up. Today my grandchildren are facing the same dust, traffic jams, and accidents. It is shameful that such an important highway remains incomplete."

Local business owners echoed similar concerns. One trader near the bus stand said, "Customers avoid this stretch due to traffic and bad roads. Our daily sales have dropped drastically." Another businessman added, "Dust, blocked drains, and unfinished work are affecting health and business alike. Authorities must act immediately."

Residents have now demanded urgent intervention to resume and complete the NH-26 expansion without further delay.

MYSTERY SHROUDS SALESGIRL'S DEATH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, Feb 19: Mystery shrouds the death of a 20-year-old salesgirl working at a shopping mall in the main market area of Basudevpur, who died under suspicious circumstances while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Cuttack on Wednesday.

The deceased, identified as Kamini Kanchan Dhal, was employed at Cosmo Bazaar shopping mall. Her father, Surendra Prasad Dhal of Bhaiarpur village, has lodged a written complaint at the Basudevpur police station alleging that the mall manager, Rahul Nayak, was responsible for her death.

In his complaint, Surendra alleged that Rahul had taken his daughter for a picnic January 31 to Balasore, Remuna and Chandipur. During the trip, he alleged, his daughter was administered slow poison in a soft drink or food item. She reportedly fell ill the day after returning from the picnic.

Family members first admitted her to the Basudevpur hospital and later to a private clinic in the town. As her condition did not improve, she was shifted to a private hospital near Tangi in Cuttack, where she died during treatment. Surendra further alleged that months before the picnic, Rahul had been harassing and blackmailing his daughter over a one-sided romantic interest. Holding Rahul fully responsible for his daughter's death, he demanded strict action against him.

Police have registered a case (94/26) and detained Rahul for questioning. Basudevpur IIC Neeraj Kumar Samal said an investigation is underway. Rahul's mobile phone has been seized, and further inquiry, including questioning of other mall employees and examination of his rented accommodation, is expected to reveal more details.

Man, daughter found dead in river; 2 missing

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boipariguda, Feb 19: Two members of a family were found dead in a river while two others remain missing in Koraput district, police said Thursday.

The deceased were identified as Lalit Pujari, 27, and his 4-year-old daughter Gelhi of Dandabadi village under Ramgiri police outpost in Boipariguda police limits.

According to reports, Lalit, his wife Gori, 24, and their two daughters, Tulabati, 6, and Gelhi, had left home February 1, saying they were going for fishing in a nearby river. They did not return.

Failing to trace them, Lalit's uncle, Padamal Pujari, lodged a missing complaint at Boipariguda police station

February 15. Police registered a case and began an investigation.

Clothes, food items and fishing nets belonging to the family were later found on the banks of the Sabari River

MASS SUICIDE SUSPECTED

near Badudi hill, prompting a search operation.

An ODRAF team from Koraput, along with police and a scientific team, recovered the bodies of Lalit and his younger daughter from the river

Wednesday evening. Gelhi's body was found tied to Lalit's waist

with a cloth.

Lalit's wife and elder daughter are still missing, and search operations are continuing.

The bodies were sent for post-mortem examination Thursday. Police registered a case (08/26) of unnatural death and intensified the investigation.

As vomit was reportedly found at the spot, police suspect it may be a case of mass suicide.

Locals said Lalit had borrowed money from several people and was under pressure to repay the loans, which may have led to the incident.

Similarly, 47,264.40 quintal paddy has been procured from 98 farmers across three mandis under Kashirupada PACS while 522.87 quintals are still lying at the mandis.

In Kandla PACS, 43,880.34 quintal paddy has been lifted from 1,098 farmers from three

3.59L qtls paddy of 8,019 farmers lifted in Kesinga



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kesinga, Feb 19: A report published in **OrissaPOST** February 2 highlighting delays in paddy procurement in Kesinga block of Kalahandi district has spurred prompt action as authorities

OP IMPACT

lifted more than 3.59 lakh quintal paddy from 8,019 farmers.

mandis while 107.65 quintals remain to be procured.

Similarly, across two mandis under Kesinga PACS, 20,621.44 quintals have been procured from 514 farmers, with 299.44 quintals yet to be lifted.

In total, around 2,000 quintal paddy is still lying in seven PACS awaiting procurement.

At the paddy procurement centre under the Pastikudi PACS, 46,619.08 quintal paddy has been procured from 1,051 farmers. Another 204.59 quintals remain at the mandi.

Similarly, at three procurement centres under the Tundla PACS, 70,659.66 quintals have been procured from 1,664 farmers, while 526.93 quintals are still lying at the mandis.

Under the Utkal PACS, 77,917.92 quintals have been procured from 1,670 farmers at two mandis. However, 482.92 quintal paddy is yet to be lifted.

According to the Kesinga RMC, 2,438.64 quintal paddy procured from 8,019 farmers across 15 mandis was yet to be lifted as of Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.

When contacted, Kesinga RMC secretary Jyoti Ranjan Dash said some paddy was lifted from Kikia and Pastikudi Thursday.



Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed for learning more and ever more.

THE MOTHER

The Rebel King

In the summer of 1989, Francis Fukuyama presented his vision of the end of history. Since liberal-democratic capitalism is the best possible social order, he argued, no further progress was possible, other than through the preferred order's gradual realization around the world.

But the "end" lasted just three decades at most, and now we find ourselves at the opposite extreme: the predominant idea today is that the liberal-democratic capitalist world order, with its complex rules guaranteeing basic human rights (freedom of speech, universal health care, public education, and so forth), has disintegrated. It is being replaced by a brutal new world in which big fish eat small ones, and ideologies are no longer taken seriously, because what matters is raw economic, military, and/or political power.

Hence, US President Donald Trump did not intervene in Venezuela to restore democracy there; he did it, apparently, to get free access to the country's immense oil and mineral reserves. Likewise, Russian President Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine to seize territory and restore the Greater Russia that existed before the Bolshevik Revolution and, in a different form, after it.

The predominant worldview is a realism shed of all illusions and ideals. If you are a small country, accept that you must live in fear. If you can enjoy obscene power, you should do so – just beware that principles don't matter. In this new post-ideological world, it is often said, the mask of human rights, respect for other states' sovereignty, and the rest have fallen away.

But nothing about this is true. Our post-liberal world is penetrated by ideology even more than the liberal-democratic order was. Trump's MAGA vision is pure ideology, even if it is contradicted daily by its own acts. Steve Bannon, a key ideologist of Trumpian populism, describes himself as a Leninist working to destroy the state. But under Trump, the US state machinery has grown stronger and more overbearing than ever, regularly violating existing laws and intervening in democratic processes and markets. For MAGA, "freedom of speech" is the prerogative of the powerful to offend and humiliate the weak, not the power of the oppressed and exploited to have their voices heard.

The same holds for Israel and Russia, to mention just two examples. Israel is now beset by Zionist fundamentalism, which invokes the Old Testament to legitimize the brutal colonization of Gaza and the West Bank. Equally, Putin legitimizes his power with a Eurasian ideology that opposes Western individualist liberalism and supposedly prizes traditional Christian values. Giving priority to the community, individuals should be prepared to sacrifice themselves for the state.

Along these lines, Alexander Kharichev, a top Putin ideologist, has formulated the basic features of Homo putin, with its supposedly "self-sacrificing nature": "For us, life itself seems to mean much less than it does for a Westerner. We believe there are things more important than mere existence. That, in essence, is the foundation of our faith."

In all these cases, we are as far as possible from seeing the world as it is: what the predominant "realism" ignores is the extreme ideology that the status quo needs to reproduce itself.

This tension underlies one of the key features of today's world: more and more states rely on criminal armed gangs to sustain their power. Haiti, punished for more than 200 years for its successful slave-led revolution, is merely the most extreme case of a so-called failed state, with gangs controlling 80% of the territory. Now, similar things are happening in Ecuador (where gangs openly occupy parts of cities) and in those parts of Mexico that are totally controlled by drug cartels.

In this context, we should also mention the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Iran's morality policy. They function as an ideological police force, and often go to extremes that appear to embarrass the government. Recall the murder of Mahsa Amini after she was arrested for allegedly wearing her headscarf improperly. Then there was the Wagner Group, which the Russian government used as a proxy to retain plausible deniability for military operations abroad. It ultimately turned against Putin's regime.

But the most obvious case is the Israeli settlers who are openly terrorizing Palestinians living in the West Bank. They act as an independent movement, committing crimes that range from burning Palestinians' houses and olive trees to beating and killing Palestinians themselves. Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Forces just watch, intervening only if Palestinians actively resist the settlers. Again, a criminal gang is tolerated and even solicited by a state that wants to maintain plausible deniability.

Then there is Trump. Previously the instigator of an insurrection against the constitutional seat of power in the US, he is now enacting his own inner colonization by deploying militarized Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents (and no longer the National Guard) to Democratic-run cities to terrorize their inhabitants. ICE has increased its headcount by 120% since Trump returned to the White House, recruiting 12,000 new agents and officers through a campaign targeting white nationalists, and handing them guns after just 47 days of training. With their faces masked, they function like Trump's own West Bank settlers, forcibly entering people's homes without judicial warrants. A Mexican priest who works in Minneapolis described ICE as worse than his country's drug cartels.

Still, there is a key difference: Unlike Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu or Putin, Trump is not maintaining any distance from his criminal gang. He is their direct commander, and he is ordering them to ignore democratic institutions and the wishes of local authorities.

Thus, as the chief executive, Trump is the top enforcer of US law and the top gang leader all in one. One is reminded of GK Chesterton's insight that "Christianity is the only religion on earth that has felt that omnipotence made God incomplete. Christianity alone has felt that God, to be wholly God, must have been a rebel as well as a king." With some irony, we can say that Trump effectively tries to function like the Christian god: the de facto king of the US, running his country mostly by decree, and simultaneously the top rebel against the state.

Trump's recent behaviour renders this paradox even more visible. He recently filed a lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service, demanding \$10 billion in damages from a federal government agency that he oversees. Alleging that he's been wronged in his personal capacity, it appears that he would have the final say on whether he walks away with a settlement, and of what size.

We have seen something similar before, not in reality, but in a movie: Woody Allen's early masterpiece *Bananas* (1971). In a courtroom scene, the hero and defendant, Fielding Mellish, acts as his own attorney and interrogates himself, shouting aggressive questions at the empty witness stand, then scrambling to the seat and giving rambling, confused answers. A half-century later, reality has caught up with the joke.

The writer is Professor of Philosophy at the European Graduate School.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

power post

FOCUS SOCIETY

EPSTEIN FILES & BEYOND



Bhabani Shankar Nayak

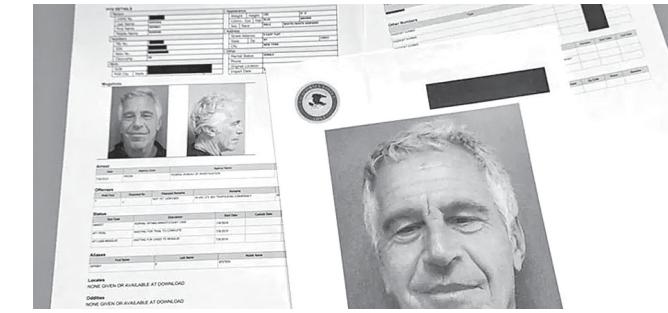
UNDERMINING THE STATE AND GOVERNMENT AS UPHOLDERS OF DEMOCRATIC LAW HAS LONG BEEN A CENTRAL AGENDA OF CAPITALISM

Slavoj Žižek
THE PREDOMINANT WORLDVIEW IS A REALISM SHED OF ALL ILLUSIONS AND IDEALS

The more than three million Epstein files, including those already released, not only reveal an entrenched criminal network of perverted ruling elites and rotten capitalist socialites with an inhuman sexual appetite for young girls, but also expose their power, influence, and lack of accountability. Sexual trafficking and the exploitation of young girls define this criminal network of social, political, and economic elites. The impact of this exploitative, immoral, and perverted network has far-reaching consequences for people, society, culture, politics, states, and governments across the globe.

However, the release of the Epstein files at this particular juncture appears to be less about delivery of justice but more about systematically diverting public attention from the failures of market-led democracy, the bourgeois state, capitalist and imperialist global system which have failed both institutionally and procedurally to address the everyday material and spiritual needs of the people in terms of delivering equality, liberty and justice. The multiple material crises confronting the working masses are fundamentally produced by the capitalist system itself and threatens the very foundation of lives, dignity of people and trusting each other as human beings.

The systematic release of different aspects of these files serves to undermine public confidence in political leaders, intellectuals, journalists, corporate executives, and other influential figures. The erosion of public trust and confidence is central to the growth of a culture of depoliticisation, which is itself a key requirement of capitalism. Democratic political accountability introduces checks and balances within the political, legal and economic systems—mechanisms of ac-



The names contained in the Epstein files do not merely expose a billionaire 'old boys' club'; they also reveal elite impunity that undermines the legal system

countability that are anathema to capitalism. Consequently, a trustless, depoliticised, and unaccountable culture is conducive to capitalist dominance. This trustless culture, along with the transient nature of profit-driven production systems, productivist values, and patterns of consumption, is fundamental to capitalism's continued existence. Therefore, the priests of capitalism seize every opportunity and every event to promote and deepen a culture of distrust.

The story of the Epstein files undermines the authority of the democratic state and governments in the public eye, as sections of the ruling class are shown to be complicit in the illegal and immoral empire of the Epstein network and its heinous criminal activities. Undermining the state and government as upholders of democratic law has long been a central agenda of capitalism. Capitalism prefers authoritarian states and governments that faithfully follow the dictates of the capitalist system. Democratic forms of governance or states with a radical orientation are treated as aberrations and are therefore unacceptable to capitalist markets and their agents.

The Epstein files normalise various forms of heinous

crimes, such as sex trafficking and sexual violence, as ruling elites and their networks openly display hedonistic lifestyles without legal accountability in public or private remorse. This lack of accountability trickles down into everyday social life, where sexual violence is increasingly normalised or ignored. Such reactionary dynamics encourage violence against women and reproduce and sustain a feudal, patriarchal capitalist system in which the objectification of women's bodies is treated as normal.

The Epstein files also show how non-governing segments of the ruling class use the power of democratically elected leaders to enjoy privileges at the expense of popular democracy and the dignity of women. The trauma and fear inflicted on women by these agents of gangster capitalism become a warning to other women. Such a culture is deeply detrimental to the growth of a gender-equal society. The names contained in the Epstein files do not merely expose a billionaire "old boys' club"; they also reveal elite impunity that undermines the legal system—one that is supposed to protect rights, promote justice, and punish crime—so that sexual exploitation of women can be brought to an end.

The mainstream media and its moral discourse surrounding immoral activities documented in the Epstein files and its high-profile, powerful men and their celebrity status network eclipses the voices of victims and ignores the lasting impacts on individuals and societies across the globe. This trajectory of crime, criminals, and their networks undermines the processes of justice and encourages the proliferation of all forms of criminal activity. The Epstein files do not merely reveal the moral failings of these perverted and powerful men; they expose an organised crime syndicate centred on hedonistic pleasure through the trafficking and exploitation of young girls. The reach of this syndicate extends far beyond national borders, and its consequences will persist for a long time unless justice is delivered swiftly.

The Epstein affair once again reignites and reinforces the understanding that the struggle for women's liberation is inseparable from the struggle against all forms of power sustained by the feudal, patriarchal capitalist system. This system is led by powerful men who reduce the female body to a mere commodity of pleasure, while normalising violence and exploitation against women. History bears witness to the successes of united struggles for collective emancipation from patriarchal capitalism, a system that exploits all by treating the human body as a commodity for leisure, pleasure, and profit. This objectified commodity culture of capitalism not only endangers women but also threatens life itself and the planet. Struggle against such a system is therefore central to the pursuit of a dignified human life free from all forms of exploitation.

The writer teaches at the London Metropolitan University.

SPECTRUM COMMERCE

The scaffolding for Odisha's trade moment



Sandip Pati

FOR A STATE GRAPPLING WITH MIGRATION AND LIMITED NON-MINING EMPLOYMENT, THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPORTING ORE AND EXPORTING COMPONENTS IS NOT MERELY ECONOMIC

People in government and industry love to celebrate agreements. They believe that signing trade deals is the hard part; that once the ink dries, opportunities flow naturally. At the national level, the language around India's new FTAs with the EU, UK, US, Oman, and New Zealand is confident, even triumphant. Trade could approach \$200 billion with Europe alone. Bilateral flows with the UK could cross \$100 billion within a decade.

But agreements do not operate in a vacuum. They depend on something less visible and far less discussed: the economic scaffolding that allows opportunity to be captured rather than merely announced. Odisha is standing beneath that scaffolding, close enough to see it, but not yet positioned to climb. For decades, Odisha has done one thing exceptionally well. It has supplied the raw materials that powered India's industrial rise. Roughly a quarter of India's iron ore, a fifth of its aluminium capacity, and a significant share of its steel output come from this state. Ports like Paradeep quietly handle over 100 million tonnes of cargo each year.

Yet Odisha accounts for less

than 1.5 per cent of India's merchandise exports. The state produces, but does not proportionately participate in global trade. What happened is that Odisha confused the product with the position. The product was raw material. The position of integrated, certified, value-added participation in global supply chains was never built. Raw materials move even when institutions are thin. Bulk commodities find buyers regardless of export infrastructure or compliance frameworks. But that era is closing.

The new FTAs are not designed for raw material economies. They reward value addition, environmental compliance, and integration into global supply chains. Engineering goods, specialty chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and EV components are the currencies of the agreements India has signed. States that built export readiness early will capture disproportionate gains. States that did not will experience adjustment pressures without commensurate rewards. Odisha risks the latter not because it lacks potential, but because its extractive growth model never required such scaffolding.

Consider what is now on

the table. If Odisha captured just five per cent of the incremental engineering and metals exports to Europe, it could add \$6 to 7 billion in exports over time, a figure that exceeds its entire current export base. With the UK, British assessments project tens of billions in trade gains driven by automobiles, textiles, and pharmaceuticals. Odisha employs more than half a million people in textiles, yet remains peripheral in the global apparel trade. Not because markets are closed, but because standards, branding, and export readiness were never treated as core infrastructure. Even New Zealand and Singapore, smaller in scale, offer compounding advantages through Paradeep's existing shipping lanes and supply chains, gains that are quiet but durable.

Then there is the service sector, the quiet giant. Services already account for over 40% of India's exports, and the new FTAs explicitly expand market access for IT and digital trade. Yet Odisha holds below 2% of India's IT exports. It has talent that is serving Silicon Valley in Bangalore. What it lacks is positioning and government intent. In a services-driven trade

world, invisibility is a choice. The employment consequences compound this failure. Manufacturing and services exports generate far more jobs per dollar than mining. For a state grappling with migration and limited non-mining employment, the difference between exporting ore and exporting components is not merely economic. Exporting ore funds the state. Exporting components could transform it.

India's FTAs have changed the external environment. The door is open. Whether Odisha walks through it depends entirely on whether it builds the internal scaffolding: standards committees, export facilitation desks, skills alignment programmes, and institutional coordination. Unglamorous work. But this is what durable trade success looks like.

In the global economy, opportunity is rarely denied outright. It is offered conditionally. Those who are prepared step forward. Those who are not remain suppliers to someone else's success.

The writer is a Consultant at Grant Thornton Bharat in economic growth and investment promotion space.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST

B-15, Rasulgarh Industrial Estate, Bhubaneswar-751010

Digital safety must

Sir, Digital arrests and cyber frauds are increasing alarmingly in our state, affecting people from all walks of life. Shockingly, even educated and tech-savvy individuals are falling prey to these crimes. Citizens are being followed, trapped, and exploited online. Beyond financial losses, these crimes threaten personal privacy, safety, and emotional well-being. As our reliance on digital platforms grows—for work, education, and social interaction—the risk of cybercrime also multiplies. Social media, online banking, and other digital services, while convenient, are being misused by criminals to manipulate and deceive innocent users. Lack of awareness and limited digital literacy worsens the situation, leaving even educated people vulnerable to scams, phishing, and identity theft. Immediate action is needed from authorities, institutions, and citizens alike. Strict cyber policing, awareness campaigns, digital literacy programmes, and swift legal measures are essential. Citizens should adopt strong online safety practices and report suspicious activity promptly. Collective efforts can make the digital space safer, secure, and trustworthy for all.

Bijaya Kumar Sahoo, BHUBANESWAR

Bangladesh impasse

Sir, In early 2026, Bangladesh held a general election alongside a nationwide referendum seeking approval for major constitutional reforms, including structural changes to Parliament and governance. A majority of voters supported the proposals. After the results, differences surfaced between the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Jamaat-e-Islami. Jamaat leader Abdullah Mohammad Taher insisted that elected members must first take an oath to a proposed Constitutional Reform Council to implement the referendum's mandate. However, BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed argued that such a council has no constitutional standing yet and that Parliament must address reforms through established procedures. The disagreement has delayed political consensus. A negotiated settlement—placing reforms before Parliament and clearly defining the council's legal status—could resolve the impasse. Political uncertainty raises concerns among minority Hindus about safeguards and stability.

RS Narula, PATIALA

When Shivaji drew large crowds during 1666 visit to Aurangabad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Feb 19: Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (formerly Aurangabad), though not part of the then Hindavi Swarajya, holds a notable place in history for hosting Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj during his journey to Agra in April 1666, eight years before his coronation.

His arrival at the then capital of the Mughal province of Deccan drew large crowds, reflecting the growing stature of the Maratha warrior king, whose birth anniversary is being celebrated Thursday.

Aurangabad derives its name from Emperor Aurangzeb. Bhimsen Saxena, a Mughal administration official, wrote about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's visit to the city in his Persian memoir 'Tarikh-i-Dilkusha', later translated into English by historian Jadunath Sarkar.

The memoir recorded Shivaji



Maharaj's contingent of horsemen and the public enthusiasm surrounding him.

The visit followed the Treaty of Purandar with Mughal Subhedar Mirza Raja Jaisingh, after which Shivaji Maharaj was to go to meet Aurangzeb

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

Jaipur) in Agra May 29, 1666, to another official, also recounts that Shivaji Maharaj's escort comprised of 200-250 men, including 100 horsemen.

His entourage included a gold and silver-plated palki (palanquin), two elephants with haudas (carriage or seat on the jumbo's back), a few camels carrying luggage, and his distinctive orange and vermilion flag with golden decoration.

Parkaldas described Shivaji Maharaj as lean, fair-complexioned, and commanding, noting also the handsome appearance of his nine-year-old son Sambhaji Maharaj.

"Without even finding out who he is, one does feel instinctively that he is a ruler of men," Parkaldas wrote in the letter, which is part of 'Rajasthan Records' by Sarkar about the Maratha warrior's famous visit to Agra.

When Shivaji Maharaj rode out in his 'palki', many footmen wearing large Turkish-style caps marched ahead of him.

Many of his senior officers also travelled in palkis, so his entourage carried several of them along the journey, he wrote.

Saxena also recorded an incident involving Mughal officer Saf Shikan Khan, who initially failed to personally receive Shivaji Maharaj.

Khan sent his nephew to receive him, which displeased the Maratha king, who then headed to Mirza Raja's house here.

When the nephew informed Shivaji Maharaj that Khan was waiting for him in their general court, he said, "Who is this Saf Shikan Khan? Why has he not come to see me? What does he do here?"

Later, Khan and other Mughal officials visited Shivaji Maharaj, and the following day, he met Khan at his residence, along with other dignitaries, who treated him with respect befitting his status, Saxena wrote. After a brief stay, Shivaji Maharaj continued his journey to Agra, as documented in the memoir.

ANIMAL WILFRE OVER LIVELIHOOD

Mumbai court rejects plea to return seized horse to owner



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

plea citing a prohibition on 'Victorias' (horse-drawn carriage rides) in Mumbai city and that he had committed breach of a Bombay High Court order.

The police was referring to a June 2015 judgment in which the HC declared the use of Victoria horse-drawn carriages for joyrides in Mumbai as illegal and had directed a complete ban within one year due to animal cruelty and lack of licences.

PETA (intervenor) had prayed for an order to keep the horse in the Animal Rahat Organization, which is recognized by the Animal Welfare Board.

In its verdict delivered in July last year, the magistrate noted that Rajbhar was doing business in the city, but had not shown any licence for the same. "Therefore, prima facie, it seems he is doing such business without any valid licence," the lower court had said.

Rejecting Rajbhar's plea, the magistrate handed over the interim custody of the horse to PETA on a bond of Rs 2 lakh and on the condition that the organisation will return the horse as and when directed by the court.

Aggrieved with the magistrate's ruling, the man filed a criminal revision application in the sessions court, which was opposed by PETA and the police contending it was not maintainable against the property return order.

They submitted that such a plea is maintainable only against final orders or intermediate orders, but not against interlocutory orders.

The sessions judge, finding merits in the submissions of the intervenor and police, rejected Rajbhar's revision plea.

About 13,000 teacher posts vacant in J&K: Education Min

According to the district-wise data, Rajouri (1,416), Kathua (1,332), Jammu (1,234), and Poonch (946) are among the districts with the highest vacancies in the Jammu division, while Anantnag (1,016), Budgam (797), Pulwama (764) and Kupwara (621) top the list in the Kashmir division.

Regarding promotional vacancies of Masters, Itoo said 1,722 posts are vacant in the Kashmir division and 224 in the Jammu division.

Itoo said all promotional vacancies are being filled through Divisional Level Departmental Promotion Committees (DPCs) in accordance with rules.

In response to another query, the minister said that no middle, high or higher secondary school has been upgraded since November 2024.

"There is no immediate proposal under consideration for upgradation of schools to the next level, particularly in hilly and remote areas of Doda district," Itoo said.

She added that upgradation requires the development of infrastructure and creation of teaching and non-teaching posts, which involves financial implications and requires concurrence from the Finance Department.

However, whenever such a proposal is mooted, feasible schools in Doda district would be considered strictly in accordance with feasibility reports, existing norms and requirements, the minister said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 19: A total of 12,977 teaching posts are vacant across Jammu and Kashmir, and the School Education Department has not upgraded any school since 2024, Education Minister Sakeena Itoo said Thursday.

In her written reply to a starred question by BJP MLA Shri Shakti Raj Parihar in the Legislative Assembly here, the minister said 7,985 teacher posts are vacant in the Jammu division and 4,992 in the Kashmir division.

According to the district-wise data, Rajouri (1,416), Kathua (1,332), Jammu (1,234), and Poonch (946) are among the districts with the highest va-



canancies in the Jammu division, while Anantnag (1,016), Budgam (797), Pulwama (764) and Kupwara (621) top the list in the Kashmir division.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

in Agra.

During his stop in Sambhajinagar in April 1666, he travelled with 500 well-dressed and armed soldiers, drawing huge crowds.

A letter sent by Parkaldas, an official of Amber state (present

national

of the day quote

The return of Kashmiri Pandits with full dignity and security is the commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

MANOJ SINHA | J&K LT GU

I respectfully request the CM again to seek a CBI probe into the matter so that the culprits behind the misappropriation can be caught and punished

RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR | KERALA BJP PRESIDENT

The growing concerns raised by the Leader of the Opposition, Tika Ram Jolly, and other legislators in the Assembly regarding the rising cases of cardiac arrests and sudden deaths among youths and children are extremely serious

ASHOK GEHLOT | EX-RAJASTHAN CM

SHORT TAKES

CPI(M) leader quits as KTDC Chairman

Palakkad (Kerala): CPI(M) leader and former MLA P K Sasi has resigned as Chairman of KTDC amid speculation that the UDF is holding discussions with him to contest the upcoming Assembly election. Sasi told reporters here Thursday that he had submitted his resignation to the Tourism Minister, the Tourism Director and the Tourism Secretary. He said he was stepping down from the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation (KTDC) for personal reasons and clarified that he has not resigned from the CPI(M) or from his trade union positions.

Shots fired targeting editor of newspaper

Imphal: Gunshots were allegedly fired targeting the editor of a local newspaper in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said Thursday. Armed men intercepted Khoiron Loyalakpa's car near Hatta Cemetery around 10 pm Wednesday, they said. Two rounds were fired at his vehicle, which shattered the rear glass. Following this, the attackers physically assaulted him, they added. Loyalakpa was taken to a hospital with a bloody nose and discharged after primary treatment, police said.

Terror associate held with 2 foreign pistols

Jammu: A terror associate with direct links to Pakistan-based handlers was arrested along with two foreign-made pistols in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said Thursday. Sachin Kumar alias Pamma, a resident of Sair village near the Line of Control, was arrested in a joint operation by police and Rashtriya Rifles from a forward village in Nowshera sector, a police spokesman said. He said a terror module was busted with the arrest of Kumar who, as per preliminary investigation, was in direct contact with Pakistan-based narco-terror operatives.

3 Delhi schools receive bomb threat e-mails

New Delhi: At least three schools in Delhi received bomb threat emails Thursday morning, triggering swift evacuation and search operations by emergency agencies. The threats were later declared a hoax, officials said. Police teams, bomb disposal squads, dog squads and local administration officials were deployed at the schools soon after the alerts were received, officials said. As a precaution, school authorities evacuated students and staff.



With the cooperation of all, we have built not just a housing complex. It is a confident response to the neglect and apathy shown towards the state

PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

SC GRANTS BAIL TO VIKRAM BHATT

The Supreme Court Thursday granted bail to filmmaker Vikram Bhatt in a multi-crore rupees cheating case lodged in Rajasthan. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi also regularised the interim bail granted on February 13 to Bhatt's wife Shwetambari Bhatt in the case



NEXT PHASE OF SIR EXPECTED IN APRIL

EC notifies 22 states, UTs

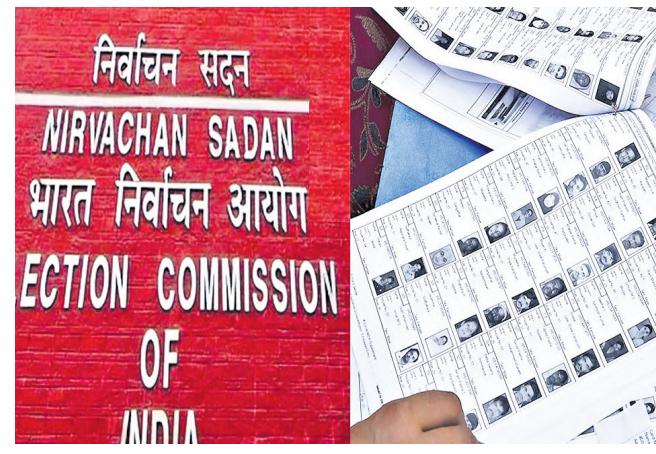
In a letter to chief electoral officers of 22 states and UTs, EC said pan-India SIR of voters' list was ordered in June last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Election Commission Thursday asked 22 states and Union Territories including Delhi to complete preparatory work related to the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) at the earliest as the exercise is "expected to start from April".

Once the exercise is completed, all states and UTs will be covered.

In a letter to the chief electoral officers of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Ladakh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram,



Nagaland, Delhi, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Telangana and Uttarakhand, the poll authority said pan-India SIR of voters' list was ordered in June last year.

Battling "vote chori" allegations levelled by the opposition Congress, the Election Commission held the SIR of electoral rolls in 13 states and UTs and a 'special revision' in Assam this year. It is all set to hold a similar exercise in the remaining 22 states and UTs this year.

While the exercise, which kept the EC in the news, was

completed in Bihar, it is ongoing in 12 states and UTs with nearly 60 crore electors.

The remaining 40 crore electors will be covered in these 17 states and five UTs. In Assam, a 'special revision', instead of SIR, was completed February 10.

Due to a variety of reasons, SIR in the nine states and three UTs have seen frequent tweaking in schedules. Like Bihar, political parties have approached the Supreme Court challenging SIR in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

■ Battling "vote chori" allegations levelled by the opposition Congress, the Election Commission held the SIR of electoral rolls in 13 states and UTs and a 'special revision' in Assam this year

■ It is all set to hold a similar exercise in the remaining 22 states and UTs this year

Recently, TMC president and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee personally pleaded before a bench of the chief justice of India against the poll roll cleanup exercise in her state.

As the EC was preparing for SIR in Bihar, its officials had claimed that several nationals from Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar were found by its grassroots level functionaries.

But eventually, the poll authority did not share any numbers or proof of such people who were not eligible to be on the voters' list.

Opposition parties had dubbed the EC's claims as a ploy to carry out SIR to target electors not aligned to BJP and its allies.



Helicopters fly over the Jal Mahal during a rehearsal ahead of the Sarang and Surya Kiran Air Show, in Jaipur, Rajasthan

PTI PHOTO

Only thumbnails shown, wife tells SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WANGCHUK DETENTION



The court previously questioned the accuracy of transcripts of videos submitted against Wangchuk. Angmo argues that the violence in Leh cannot be attributed to Wangchuk's actions and that he condemned the violence

ing February 23. On Monday, the apex court had questioned the Centre about the transcripts of videos submitted by it against Wangchuk and said the translations should be precise in the age of artificial intelligence.

It had told Nataraj that it wanted actual transcripts of Wangchuk's statements from the government after Sibal submitted that some of the words attributed to the activist were never said by him. The top court was hearing a habeas corpus petition filed by Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali Angmo, seeking a declaration that his detention under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980, is illegal.

The NSA empowers the Centre and the states to detain individuals to prevent them from acting in a manner "prejudicial to the defence of India."

The maximum detention period is 12 months, though it can be revoked earlier. Angmo said the violence in Leh September 24 last year cannot be attributed to the actions or statements of Wangchuk.

Wangchuk himself condemned the violence through his social media handles and categorically said it would lead to the failure of Ladakh's "tapasya" and its peaceful pursuit of five years, Angmo said, adding that it was the saddest day of his life.

Anti-CAA pleas: Top court to start hearing petitions May 5



The CAA seeks to grant citizenship to migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain and Parsi communities who came to the country from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Supreme Court Thursday said that it will commence the final hearing May 5 over 200 pleas including the lead one of IUML challenging the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA).

The CAA seeks to grant citizenship to migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain and Parsi communities who came to the country from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan on or before December 31, 2014.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi issued procedural directions with regard to final hearings on the petitions which are pending since 2019-2020.

The bench said it will hear petitions including the leader of the Indian Union of Muslim League (IUML) for one-and-a-

half days and the Centre will be granted a day for advancing its arguments.

The CJI said the bench would conclude the hearing on the petitions May 12. The bench asked the parties to file additional documents and submissions within four weeks.

The bench said it will hear the pleas related to pan-India application of the CAA first and then take note of the petitions pertaining to Assam and Tripura later. It said Assam's problem is different from the rest of the country as the earlier cut-off date for citizenship was March 24, 1971, which under the CAA was extended to December 31, 2014. These matters were last listed before a bench on challenging the validity of the law.

The apex court, however, refused to stay the operation of the Rules that would give effect to the CAA as sought by

a battery of senior advocates representing the petitioners.

The Centre March 11, 2024 paved the way for the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, with the notification of the relevant rules, four years after the contentious law was passed by Parliament to fast-track Indian citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who came to India before December 31, 2014.

The president gave his assent to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 December 12 that year turning it into an Act. Over 200 petitions were filed challenging the constitutional validity of the CAA. Among those who have filed pleas are the IUML, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, RJD leader Manoj Jha, Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra and AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi.

"Let us assume they showed it to be, that is not the requirement of law. The requirement is to give it to me. They have to provide the document, I don't have to ask. It is there constitutional duty to supply. We have said that time and again that the four was never supplied," Sibal said.

Another lawyer assisting Sibal informed the court that the pen drive was inserted in the laptop before Wangchuk and he only saw the thumbnails.

Additional Solicitor General KM Nataraj submitted that there is a video in which the conversation with the DIG and detainee will show everything. The top court said it see the relevant video recordings, including a 40-minute video of the interaction between police officials and the detainee. The matter is now posted for hear-

personal freedom, but also of choosing a life partner. If you want to spend your entire life with someone, it's important to understand them," said the 29-year-old.

If anything suggests a couple is incompatible, it is better to break off the engagement than end up divorcing after marriage. "The community should reconsider this decision," she added.

Umesh Kumar Sen, the community spokesperson in Balod district, said they have also decided that sisters-in-law will no longer be able to hide their brother-in-law's shoe during weddings, a long-standing tradition, as this can create conflicts between the two parties. He said the community has also decided to sever ties with a member if they embrace a different faith.

Ch'garh community bars engaged couples from chats



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Balod, Feb 19: A community in Chhattisgarh's Balod district has banned engaged couples from speaking to each other privately on the phone till the wedding, citing an increase in relationship break-ups.

The Sen community, which falls under the Other Backward Class category, has a population of approximately 250,000 across the state. About 70 per cent of the community works in salons. Santosh Kaushik, the community's Balod district president, said they observed that many couples were parting ways after engagement, causing distress for both parties.

"We discovered that the reason behind this was the communication between the boy and the girl via mobile phone before marriage. Therefore,

parents, he said.

Gauri Shankar Shrivastava, the state organisation secretary of the community, welcomed the decision by their Balod district unit. "The ban has been imposed in Balod district and will soon

be implemented across the state. Previously, the community had also banned pre-wedding shoots," he said.

The younger generation is divided over the idea. Balod resident Sakshi (20) welcomed the

move, saying if mobile phones are breaking engagements, it's not right for couples to talk for hours before the wedding.

"This decision is good for both the family and society," she said.

Poonam Ritu Sen, a journalist, is urging the community to reconsider the restriction.

"This is not only a matter of

national



We will contest unitedly and strongly. We consider this election a battle. We have many warriors, and we will win

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA | CONGRESS LEADER

NAXAL-AFFECTED DISTRICTS REDUCE TO 7

A fresh review of the regions affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has brought down the number of affected districts in the country to seven from eight, a development that aligns with the Union government's declaration on ending Naxal menace by March 2026



NATIONAL HERALD CASE

Delhi HC to hear ED plea March 9



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: The Delhi High Court Thursday listed for hearing March 9 a plea by the ED challenging the order of the trial court that refused to take cognisance of its chargesheet against Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others in the National Herald related money laundering case.

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma granted time to the Gandhis and others to file their replies.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Enforcement Directorate (ED), objected to the

request made by the counsel for the respondent leaders for additional time to file responses, saying notice was served to them

two months ago.

Terming it a "neat question of law", he said the case has to be argued on law and not facts, and the findings of the trial court were

"coming in the way" of other cases.

The reasons given by the trial court to refuse taking cognizance in the case were "patently perverse", the solicitor general said.

On December 22, the high court

CONGRESS LAUNCHES CAMPAIGN AGAINST INDIA-US TRADE DEAL

New Delhi: The Congress Thursday launched the first phase of its campaign against the interim India-US trade deal with senior leaders alleging that the Modi government "compromised" the country's sovereignty and self-reliance. The Opposition party claimed that the deal will hurt the interests of farmers in the country, alleging that the opening of the agriculture sector will help the US flood its agri products, including genetically modified ones, into the Indian market. As part of the party's campaign, senior leaders addressed press conferences over the issue in several states across the country. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sukhu addressed a presser in Srinagar, while party general secretary Sachin Pilot addressed another one at Mumbai and Deepender Hooda in Patna. The second phase of the campaign will be launched this weekend when three more press conferences by senior party leaders are planned in Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan, sources said.

INDORE WATER CONTAMINATION

Cong creates din in MP Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

has caused to the country's image?" the bench asked.

The top court refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict that had dismissed the pleas filed by the firm and some of its officials, who had challenged a January 2024 summoning order passed by the chief judicial magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar.

The chief judicial magistrate had passed the order in a complaint case filed under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 in Noida.

The top court was hearing a plea filed against the high court's order.

A complaint was filed by the drugs inspector alleging various violations including manufacture and sale of drugs declared "not of standard quality".

"Only for the sake of money, you indulge into this? The nation's image is dented due to this," the bench said. The counsel for the firm and its officials said there was nothing on record to show that consumption of the syrup has caused any death.

"Do you realise what dent it

has caused to the country's image?" the bench asked.

The top court refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict that had dismissed the pleas filed by the firm and some of its officials, who had challenged a January 2024 summoning order passed by the chief judicial magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar.

The chief judicial magistrate had passed the order in a complaint case filed under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 in Noida.

The top court was hearing a plea filed against the high court's order.

A complaint was filed by the drugs inspector alleging various violations including manufacture and sale of drugs declared "not of standard quality".

"Only for the sake of money, you indulge into this? The nation's image is dented due to this," the bench said. The counsel for the firm and its officials said there was nothing on record to show that consumption of the syrup has caused any death.

"Do you realise what dent it

SNIPPETS

Man detained for threatening to shoot Rahul, other Cong MPs

DRDO conducts key test for Gaganyaan drogue parachute

New Delhi: India's human spaceflight programme Gaganyaan has achieved a key milestone with the DRDO conducting a test that proved India's expertise in designing and manufacturing high-strength ribbon parachutes, the defence ministry said Thursday. The test was conducted February 18 at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) at the Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh, the ministry said in a statement. "India's human spaceflight programme has achieved a key milestone with the successful qualification level load test of drogue parachute for the Gaganyaan programme," it said.

India likely to join 'Pax Silica' today

New Delhi: India is likely to formally join a US-led strategic alliance, known as 'Pax Silica', which is aimed at building a resilient supply chain for critical minerals and artificial intelligence. The move comes amid efforts by the two sides to finalise the proposed trade deal and move forward on several other initiatives to solidify the bilateral ties after a spell of severe strain in the relations. India is likely to formally join the 'Pax Silica' initiative Friday, people familiar with the matter said. The initiative was launched in December to build a secure, resilient, and innovation-driven supply chain for critical minerals and artificial intelligence (AI). The Pax Silica Summit was held in Washington December 12 where partner nations signed the Pax Silica declaration. The declaration lays out a shared vision of deep economic and technology cooperation across supply chains - from raw materials through semiconductors and AI infrastructure -- and commitment to mutual prosperity and security. The member nations of the Pax Silica include Australia, Greece, Israel, Japan, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor last month announced an invitation to New Delhi to join the strategic alliance.

IMAGE HIT OVER COUGH SYRUP DEATHS: SC RAPS PHARMA FIRM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: "Do you realise what dent it has caused to the country's image?" the bench asked.

The top court refused to interfere with the Allahabad High Court verdict that had dismissed the pleas filed by the firm and some of its officials, who had challenged a January 2024 summoning order passed by the chief judicial magistrate of Gautam Buddha Nagar.

The chief judicial magistrate had passed the order in a complaint case filed under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 in Noida.

The top court was hearing a plea filed against the high court's order.

A complaint was filed by the drugs inspector alleging various violations including manufacture and sale of drugs declared "not of standard quality".

"Only for the sake of money, you indulge into this? The nation's image is dented due to this," the bench said. The counsel for the firm and its officials said there was nothing on record to show that consumption of the syrup has caused any death.

"Do you realise what dent it

FURORE OVER 'THE KERALA STORY 2'

Parties divided, producer says real life stories

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 19: The yet to be released Hindi film "The Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond" on religious conversion is at the centre of an escalating row, much like its 2023 predecessor, with Left and Congress leaders terming it hate propaganda and the BJP backing it as "legitimate concern".

The trailer of the film, produced by Vipul Amrutlal Shah and directed by Kamakhy Narain Singh, released Tuesday and landed straight into controversy. It tracks the stories of three Hindu women from three different states going against their families to marry Muslim men and then being forced to convert.

"The movie is based on real life stories... I want audiences to judge whether we are

showing is the truth or propaganda," Shah told PTI as the storm brewed in Kerala and elsewhere too.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan slammed the filmmakers, saying the intent is to "spread hatred against the state and undermine its secular tradition".

The reports regarding the release of a sequel to the hate-mongering film "The Kerala Story" should be seen with utmost gravity. Having already seen through the communal agenda and blatant lies of the first part, Kerala will once again reject this attempt to demonise our secular fabric with contempt," the CPM leader said in a post on X. Congress general secretary K C Venugopal agreed. He alleged that the BJP-led Central government, which honoured



THE TRAILER OF THE FILM, PRODUCED BY VIPUL AMRUTLAL SHAH AND DIRECTED BY KAMAKHYA NARAIN SINGH, RELEASED TUESDAY AND LANDED STRAIGHT INTO CONTROVERSY

IT TRACKS THE STORIES OF THREE HINDU WOMEN FROM THREE DIFFERENT STATES GOING AGAINST THEIR FAMILIES TO MARRY MUSLIM MEN AND THEN BEING FORCED TO CONVERT

the first film with a national award, was encouraging and legitimising such hate campaigns. The film received support from the BJP. Kerala BJP chief Rajeev

comfortable. This is the #CPM-CongressKuruvaSangam's idea of secularism - selective outrage for political survival."

The first film, titled "The Kerala Story", was also based on the religious conversion and radicalisation of young women and was also the centre of furious debate. It was directed by Sudipto Sen and earned over Rs 300 crore despite being banned in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Besides, it won the National Film Award for best direction for Sen and best cinematography.

Shah, who produced "The Kerala Story" as well and has co-written the second one, fought back against the critics of his new project.

He said the film does not target any particular state, religion or community and talks about the racket of forced conversions.

Leader of the Opposition Umang Singh termed the incident a failure of the system and demanded the resignation of Urban Development Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya and Health Minister Rajendra Shukla.

He claimed that while 35 people have died in Indore due to the contaminated water, the ministers responsible were sitting in the House. "These are not deaths, but murders, and the system has led to the murder of 35 people in Bhagirathpura. On moral grounds, these ministers should resign," he said. Congress members began creating a ruckus and shouting slogans demanding the ministers' resignations.

Amid the din, health minister Shukla admitted that 22 people have died in Indore due to wa-



international

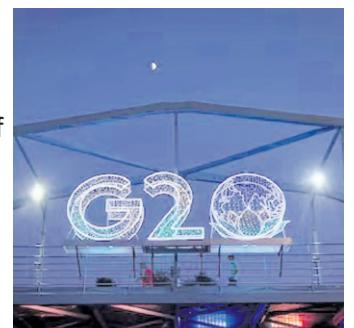


We will meet them looking to connect them with shelter, looking to them with services, looking to connect them with a city that wants them to be sheltered and indoors and warm and safe. And that is something that I believe will yield far better results

ZOHRA MAMDANI | MAYOR, NEW YORK

US TO HOST G20 FINANCE MEETING

The United States will host meetings of G20 finance officials in Asheville, North Carolina, in late August and September 1, the Treasury Department said Thursday. President Donald Trump will host the G20 leaders' summit in Miami December 14-15 at Trump National Doral in Miami, Florida



Trump threatens to bomb Iran



REUTERS

In some ways, it went well. But in other ways, it was very clear that the president has set some red lines that the Iranians are not yet willing to actually acknowledge and work through

JD VANCE | VICE PRESIDENT, US

The state must respond to this not only with generosity, but also with humility and a deep sense of duty. No nation can progress by undermining the youth

SUSHILA KARKI | INTERIM PRIME MINISTER, NEPAL

More than 5 million Americans came to France in 2025, part of a record 102 million foreign tourists during the year

SERGE PAPIN | TOURISM MINISTER, FRANCE

SHORT TAKES

Apple to manufacture iPhones in Pakistan

Islamabad:

Pakistan has

agreed to

provide

incentives to

American

tech giant

Apple to

start

manufacturing

iPhones in

Pakistan

US threats to bomb Iran,

with the two sides far apart in talks on Tehran's nuclear programme, have pushed up

16 killed in explosion due to suspected gas leakage in Karachi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, Feb 19: At least 16 people, including many children, were killed and 14 others injured when a suspected gas leakage led to an explosion in a residential building in Pakistan's Karachi Thursday morning.

The explosion took place around 4:30 am on the first floor of the building located in the Old Soldier Bazar area when everyone was awake for Sehri time," police official Jamshed Asher said.

The first day of Ramzan is being observed in Pakistan today. The police official said that the reason for the explosion apparently was a gas leakage.

Due to gas shortage in Pakistan's biggest city, many families especially in lower income residential areas use liquid petroleum gas cylinders at their homes. Police surgeon Dr Samaya Syed confirmed that they have received 14 bodies so far from the blast site while 14 injured are under treatment.

The explosion caused a part of the building structure to collapse due to its dilapidated condition. "We are still searching through the rubble and debris to see if there are any more bodies or survivors," Chief Fire Officer Humayun Khan said.

The deceased include at least nine children aged between two and 17 while the injured also include seven children.

This is the second major tragedy to occur in Karachi. Last month, a fire broke out in the basement of the Gul Shopping Plaza, a wholesale and retail market, in the Saddar area killing at least 79 people and leaving scores injured.

UK condemns 10-year sentence for couple

London:

British foreign

minister

Yvette Cooper

Thursday condemned as

"totally unjustifiable"

the 10-year sentence given to a British couple in Iran for spying, saying the government would continue to press for their release. Craig and Lindsay Foreman had been charged with espionage after Iran accused them of gathering information in several parts of the country. "We will pursue this case relentlessly with the Iranian government until we see Craig and Lindsay Foreman safely returned to the UK and reunited with their family," Cooper said in a statement.

The Foremans were arrested

January 3 of last year while travelling through Iran on a global motorcycle journey.

Iranian state media announced

their detention the following

month over espionage charges

and they have now been held

for more than 13 months.

Meta's Zuckerberg denies at LA trial

Los Angeles:

Meta Platforms

CEO Mark Zuckerberg

Wednesday repeatedly said

during a landmark trial over youth social media addiction

that the Facebook and

Instagram operator does

not allow kids under 13 on

its platforms, despite being

confronted with evidence

suggesting they were a key

demographic. Mark Lanier, a

lawyer for the woman suing

Instagram and Google's

YouTube for harming her

mental health when she was a child, pressed Zuckerberg over his statement to Congress in 2024 that users under 13 are not allowed on the platform. Lanier confronted Zuckerberg with internal Meta documents. The case involves a California woman who started using Instagram and YouTube as a child. She alleges the companies sought to profit by hooking kids on their services despite knowing social media could harm their mental health.

Hamas tightens grip in Gaza as Trump pushes peace plan

REUTERS

Cairo/Jerusalem, Feb 19: Hamas is cementing its hold over Gaza by placing loyalists in key government roles, collecting taxes and paying salaries, according to an Israeli military assessment seen by Reuters and sources in the Palestinian enclave.

Hamas' continuing influence over key Gaza power structures has fuelled widespread scepticism about the prospects of US President Donald Trump's peace plan, which requires the militant group to give up its weapons in exchange for an Israeli military withdrawal from the territory.

Trump's international Board of Peace, which is meant to supervise Gaza's transitional governance, is holding its inaugural meeting in Washington

Thursday.

"Hamas is advancing steps on the ground meant to preserve its influence and grip in the Gaza Strip 'from the bottom up' by means of integrating its supporters in government offices, security apparatuses and local authorities," the military said in a document presented to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in late January.

Hamas says it is ready to hand over administration of the enclave to a US-backed committee of Palestinian technocrats headed by Ali Shaath, a former Palestinian Authority official in the occupied West Bank. But it says Israel has not yet allowed committed members to enter Gaza to assume their responsibilities.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five district governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior officials in Gaza's economy and interior ministries, which manage taxation and security, the sources said.

NEW GOVERNORS

Hamas has named five dis-

trict governors, all of them

with links to its armed al-Qassam Brigades, according to two Palestinian sources with direct knowledge of its operations. It has also replaced senior

of the
day quote

We strongly believe in the potential of the helicopter market in India... we strongly believe that H125 helicopters can be a key enabler to boost this civil helicopter market in India



BRUNO EVEN | CEO, AIRBUS HELICOPTERS

Embraer is committed to delivering not only a world-class aircraft but also a robust, long-term support ecosystem tailored to India's operational and industrial requirements



BOSCO DA COSTA JUNIOR | PRESIDENT AND CEO, EMBRAER DEFENCE & SECURITY

The signing of these Tripartite Agreements reflects BPCL's structured approach towards integrating Compressed Bio-Gas into our CGD network and advancing the greenification of India's fuel ecosystem



RAHUL TANDON | BUSINESS HEAD, BPCL

SHORT TAKES**Agri products, auto exports surge in EU**

New Delhi: India's exports of agricultural products and automobiles are making greater inroads into European markets, recording healthy growth during April-December 2025, according to Commerce Ministry data. Of India's \$19.3 billion in global automotive exports during the first nine months of 2025-26, the EU's share rose to 11.6 per cent from 9.8 per cent in April-December 2024, the data showed. The shipments grew from \$1.6 billion in April-December 2024 to \$2.2 billion in April-December 2025 to the European Union, with which India has recently announced the conclusion of negotiations for a free trade agreement. India's exports from this sector to the world also rose from \$16.8 billion to \$19.3 billion during the nine-month period of this fiscal. Similarly, India's exports of fish, coffee, tea, spices, cereals, gums, and resins to the EU have also recorded healthy growth rates during the period under review.

Cereal shipments have risen from \$181 million during April-December 2024 to \$339 million in April-December 2025. Zero-duty access under the trade agreement will further push shipments of these goods.

Adobe to give free AI tools to students

Chandigarh: Global software company Adobe Thursday announced that it will offer its flagship products, including Photoshop, Acrobat and Firefly, free of cost to students across India to strengthen AI skills and support the country's growing creator economy. The announcement was made here, with the company saying the initiative aligns with the central government's focus on artificial intelligence and digital skill development. Under the initiative, students from accredited higher education institutions will get free access to Adobe's creativity and productivity tools along with AI-based learning modules, training and industry-recognised certifications. Adobe has partnered with Nasscom FutureSkills Prime, a digital skilling programme supported by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), to provide free AI-first courses and certificates. The company said the move supports the government's "Create in India" vision and complements the Union Budget 2026 announcement to create two million jobs in the Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) sector by 2030. Adobe Chair and CEO Shantanu Narayen said the initiative will empower millions of students with AI skills and help accelerate the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Positioned as a "Made-in-India, For-the-World" product, the e-Vitara is being manufac-



India must move from being a tech services-led nation to an IP-led nation; services scale with effort. IP scales infinitely

ROSHNI NADAR MALHOTRA | CHAIRPERSON, HCL TECHNOLOGIES

NESTLE TO SELL ICE CREAM BIZ

Nestle is in talks to sell its remaining ice cream businesses as part of CEO Philipp Navratil's drive to streamline the sprawling Swiss consumer food group, the company said at its fourth-quarter results Thursday. The maker of Maggi stock cubes and Nescafe coffee, said it was in advanced talks to sell ice cream businesses in Asia, Canada and parts of Latin America to Haagen-Dazs owner Froneri, a joint venture which Nestle established with European buyout firm PAI Partners

**Brokers seek 6-month freeze on RBI curbs on bank lending**

REUTERS

New Delhi, Feb 19: An Indian brokers' body has sought a six-month pause on rules that will tighten bank lending to stock brokers and other market intermediaries from April 1, according to a document reviewed by Reuters Thursday.

The Reserve Bank of India tightened the norms last week, including raising collateral for bank guarantees and banning lending for proprietary trading by brokers.

The brokers' body, The Association of NSE Members of India (ANMI), has written to the markets regulator, seeking intervention.

The new rules would restrict access to bank financing for proprietary trading positions, reduce liquidity, raise trading costs and are likely to discourage foreign portfolio investors' participation, the brokers said.

They would "unintentionally constrain proprietary market makers and arbitrage desks, which are key providers of liquidity and price efficiency," the brokers' body said.

Restricting funding would also create an uneven playing field between local and foreign firms, potentially shifting market share to overseas participants, who can continue to finance transactions through foreign banks, it said.

A six-month pause would give market participants time to submit feedback, conduct impact assessments and engage in constructive consultations, according to the letter.

Ambani, Adani vow \$210bn for AI push

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 19: Conglomerates run by billionaires Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani committed \$210 billion investment to creating infrastructure that will help India emerge as an AI development hub.

At the India AI Impact Summit, Ambani announced a ₹10 lakh crore (about \$110 billion) investment in artificial intelligence over the next seven years in gigawatt-scale AI-ready data centres in Jamnagar, leveraging up to 10 GW of green power surplus, and a nationwide edge-compute layer integrated with telecom and digital operator Jio's networks to deliver low-latency AI across India.

Adani, on the other hand, unveiled a \$100-billion investment to develop renewable-energy-powered, hyperscale AI-ready data centres by 2035 – one of the world's largest integrated energy-compute commitments.

Silver jumps ₹18K to ₹2.6L/kg; gold scales ₹1.58L/10g

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Iran, which has elevated geopolitical risk," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that the collapse of renewed Russia-Ukraine negotiations has also revived global uncertainty, prompting investors to increase allocations toward safe-haven assets.

"With geopolitical flashpoints intensifying, capital is rotating out of risk-sensitive assets and into traditional safe-haven assets, providing sustained support to gold prices," Gandhi said.

Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Indusind Securities, said that silver held above \$77 per ounce after climbing roughly 5 per cent in the previous session, as the broader metals market rebounded even as the dollar rallied on robust US economic data and hawkish signals from the Federal Reserve.

Silver and other precious metals were further supported by rising geopolitical tensions, as the US increased its military presence in the Middle East amid concerns of potential conflict with Iran, and peace talks between Ukraine and Russia concluded without a breakthrough.

B'desh bars SpiceJet from using airspace over dues

Last week, SpiceJet reported a loss of ₹269.27cr in the three months ended Dec 2025 as higher costs and one-time expenses took a toll on the budget carrier's bottom line

carrier is yet to repay pending dues, according to sources.

With the Bangladesh airspace not being available, the airline is taking longer routes for some of its flights from Kolkata, including to Guwahati.

When contacted, a SpiceJet spokesperson Thursday said the airline was in regular dialogue with the relevant authorities on operational and procedural matters, including navigation-related charges.

"These are routine industry issues and we are working constructively towards an

early resolution. Our flight operations remain unaffected, and we continue to operate our scheduled services in line with regulatory requirements," the spokesperson said in a statement.

While specific details were not disclosed, the sources said Bangladesh has banned the airline from using its airspace due to non-payment of dues.

Details about the nature of dues could not be immediately

ascertained.

An email sent to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) seeking comments on the issue did not elicit any immediate response.

Data from Flightradar24.com Thursday showed that SpiceJet's flights from Kolkata to Guwahati and Imphal were not using the Bangladesh airspace, and were taking longer routes to the destinations.

In afternoon trade, shares of SpiceJet were trading nearly 1 per cent lower at ₹16.81 apiece on the BSE.

BEAR ROUT**Investors' wealth erodes by ₹6.8L-cr****BSE SENSEX**

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

PTI
GRAPHICS

Sensex, Nifty crash more than 1% on selling in RIL, HDFC Bank amid escalating geopolitical tensions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

nents ended in the red while three closed in the positive zone.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms slumped by ₹6.79 lakh crore (₹6,79,210.1 crore) to ₹465 lakh crore (₹4,65,22,014.57 crore (\$5.13 trillion)).

Selling pressure was widespread, led by IndiGo, followed by Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Trent, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Adani Ports, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries, Tech Mahindra, ITC, Eternal and PowerGrid.

The sharp selloff in equities today was triggered by news of an imminent US strike on Iran. The US Vice President JD Vance's statement that Iran didn't meet all expectations of Washington and the President has the military option to strike Iran, sent fear in markets, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

He added that Brent crude shot up above \$70 per barrel and the fear gauge India VIX

rose 9 per cent. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹880.49 crore Thursday, while domestic institutional investors were also the net sellers of stocks worth ₹596.28 crore, according to the exchange data.

"Institutional selling - both domestic and foreign - was limited. Yet the Sensex tanked by 1,236 points, reflecting fear in the market. The market rally during the last three days, assisted by improving Q3 numbers and FIIs turning buyers, enabled profit booking by bulls. This magnified the selling pressure, finally ending in a sharp correction," Vijayakumar said.

In European markets, Berlin's DAX declined the most by 1 per cent, Paris' CAC 40 by 0.86 per cent, and London's FTSE 100 by 0.76 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi settled 3 per cent higher, while Japan's Nikkei 225 benchmark closed 1 per cent higher. Markets in Hong Kong and mainland China remained closed for the Lunar New Year holidays.

Broader indices ended lower, with the BSE Midcap Select Index declining 1.71 per cent, while Smallcap Select Index fell 0.98 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices, Realty dropped the most by 2.54 per cent, followed by Power by 2.22 per cent, Capital Goods by 2.18 per cent, Services by 2.11 per cent, Auto by 2.09 per cent, Consumer Discretionary by 1.91 per cent, Utilities by 1.90 per cent, and Industrials by 1.81 per cent.

In the international market, spot silver was trading 1.03 per cent higher at \$77.97 per ounce, while gold was quoted marginally higher at \$4,991.24 per ounce.

"Gold prices rose to around

\$5,000 per ounce on Thursday,

supported by a renewed wave of safe-haven demand amid

rising speculation over potential US military action against

Iran, which has elevated geopolitical risk," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that the collapse of renewed Russia-Ukraine negotiations has also revived global uncertainty, prompting investors to increase allocations toward safe-haven assets.

"With geopolitical flashpoints intensifying, capital is rotating out of risk-sensitive assets and into traditional safe-haven assets, providing sustained support to gold prices," Gandhi said.

Jigar Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at Indusind Securities, said that silver held above \$77 per ounce after climbing roughly 5 per cent in the previous session, as the broader metals market rebounded even as the dollar rallied on robust US economic data and hawkish signals from the Federal Reserve.

Silver and other precious metals were further supported by rising geopolitical tensions, as the US increased its military presence in the Middle East amid concerns of potential conflict with Iran, and peace talks between Ukraine and Russia concluded without a breakthrough.

Maruti Suzuki unveils e-Vitara in City

The unveiling ceremony at Tushi Motors was attended by Amitabh Thakur, Transport Commissioner and Chairman of STA Odisha, as the chief guest. On the occasion, Tushi Motors Managing Director Preeti Pallavi Patnaik, Director Anshuman Patnaik, VP Harmohan Mohanty and Regional Director Gaurav Dave were also present

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 19: Maruti Suzuki India Limited marked a major milestone in its electrification journey with the official launch of its first all-electric SUV, the e-Vitara, in authorized dealerships Tushi Motors and Sky Automobiles in Bhubaneswar Thursday.

The e-Vitara is built with HEARTECT-e architecture, featuring a long 2,700 mm wheelbase and flat-floor design to maximize interior space and passenger com-

tfort. The SUV is offered with two Lithium Iron Phosphate battery options — 49kWh and 61kWh.

Safety remains a highlight, with the SUV securing a 5-star rating from Bharat NCAP. It comes equipped with seven airbags, all-disc brakes and a Level-2 ADAS suite that includes adaptive cruise control and autonomous emergency braking.

To simplify EV ownership, Maruti Suzuki unveiled its 'e For Me' ecosystem, offering home charging installation support, access to over 2,000 charging points across 1,100+ cities and 1,500 EV-ready workshops nationwide.

The e-Vitara is priced between ₹15,99 lakh and ₹19,79 lakh (ex-showroom, introductory), positioning it competitively in India's premium electric SUV segment.

The launch ceremony at Sky Automobiles was attended by Vijay Kumar Satpathy, AGM SBL; Rashmi Ranjit Dalabhera, Deputy Commissioner, Transport; Saurav Yadav, Territory Sales Manager of Maruti Suzuki; Prabin Kumar Lath, COO, NEXA; Tushar Ranjan Behera, COO, Arena; Sanjay Kumar Gupta, GM, Sky Automobiles; B Kumar Nayak, SSM; Prashant Kumar Behera, GM NEXA; and Rashmi Rekha, QM, Sky Group

Speaking on the launch, Somprab Singh, CSMO, Taneira, said, "We are pleased to strengthen our presence in Bhubaneswar with the launch of our new store in Patia, a locality that reflects the city's artistic spirit and traditions. It is an important market for us given its strong cultural roots and deep appreciation for handloom, making it a natural destination for a brand committed to craftsmanship and quality. This store stands as a tribute to the country's diverse weaving traditions, bringing the finest expressions of India's textile legacy together under one roof."

To mark the grand launch, Taneira is offering a complimentary gold coin offer on a minimum purchase of ₹25,000 from February 19 to 23, inviting customers to experience the artistry and richness of India's textile heritage with a special gesture marking the occasion.

Spanning 3,337 square feet, the store was inaugurated by Somprab Singh, CSMO, Taneira; Sah Gaurav Krishan, RBH - East, Titan Company Ltd and Yogendra Hams and Family, Business Associates.

Designed to reflect Bhubaneswar's cultural identity, the store draws inspiration from local art forms such as Patachitra painting, Pipili applique and Dokra craft, offering visitors an immersive retail experience.

Celebrating the city's renowned textile craftsmanship, the store features a dedicated wedding zone for brides-to-be with a wide selection of bridal wear for the season.

Speaking on the launch, Somprab Singh, CSMO, Taneira, said, "We are pleased to strengthen our presence in Bhubaneswar with the launch of our new store in Patia, a locality that reflects the city's artistic spirit and traditions. It is an important market for us given its strong cultural roots and deep appreciation for handloom, making it a natural destination for a brand committed to craftsmanship and quality. This store stands as a tribute to the country's diverse weaving traditions, bringing the finest expressions of India's textile legacy together under one roof."

To mark the grand launch, Taneira is offering a complimentary gold coin offer on a minimum purchase of ₹25,000 from February 19 to 23, inviting customers to experience the artistry and richness of India's textile heritage with a special gesture marking the occasion.

MEN IN BLUE NEED TO TACKLE TOP-ORDER PREDICTABILITY GOING INTO SUPER 8s

Finger spin struggles out in open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 19: India's assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate has acknowledged two pressing issues facing the team heading into the Super 8s of T20 World Cup: the predictability of the left-handed top-order and the batters' struggles against finger spinners.

Speaking to select media after the win over the Netherlands in their final league fixture, Doeschate said the overwhelming title contenders have not played a perfect game yet.

With India's top-three being left-handers including Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan and Tilak Varma, he also conceded that it has made it easier for opposition teams to plan against them.

Netherlands off-spinner Aryan Dutt bowled three overs in the powerplay Wednesday and removed Sharma and Kishan.

Doeschate feels India don't have an off-spin issue per se, and it is the overall play against the finger spinners that needs major improvement. The home team will need to find a way to deal with fingers spinners in their Super 8 games against South Africa, Zimbabwe and West Indies.

"It has (made it easier for teams to plan against India). We don't have many options (in the top three). We've got Sanju sitting on the side and we feel on balance, particularly with the games coming up, if we look at what finger spin is, we are going to come up against New Zealand.

"We've got a few guys who bowl finger spin and so do the West Indies and so does South Africa if you include Markram. But on balance, we still feel that these are our best batters and we're going to make do with the abundance of left-handers," said Doeschate.

Namibia captain Gerhard Erasmus had foiled the Indian



batters with his round arm off-spin in Delhi before Pakistan's Usman Tariq, Salman Agha and Saim Ayub were able to put the arch-rivals under pressure in Colombo.

Doeschate said batters need to find a way against fingers spinners when the ball is holding a bit.

"I wouldn't say off spin, I'd say finger spin," said the assistance coach about the areas of improvement going into the next phase of the ICC event.

"If you take the combined, I think Pakistan bowled 14 overs of finger spin in the last game and off the top of my head I want to say something like 4 for 78 or something like that. So it's not great numbers."

"Colombo was a particularly difficult wicket and I think the numbers tonight got sort of improved towards the back end. But again, Aryan Dutt bowling four overs, it is a big challenge.

"I think these two venues in particular with the bigger boundary here (Ahmedabad) and obviously a slower wicket in Colombo sort of does exaggerate that. But it's something we're going to have to focus on,

like I said, with the amount of finger spin we're going to get in the next three games," said

Doeschate.

India play South Africa in their Super 8s opener here Sun-

Rival teams have been employing off-spinners in the powerplay to contain the top-order comprising Sharma, who has not scored a run in the tournament so far after being in the form of his life not so long ago

day. "I think on better wickets you won't see it (batters struggling against spin). You can hit through the line with more confidence, but the point is that we need to have plans where the wickets do hold and the boundaries are there. "We need to be able to have a game plan to deal with that threat," said Doeschate.

Even the Netherlands had planned to choke India with spin in the power play after seeing their struggles against Pakistan.

Historic deaf T20I Asia Cup kicks off



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 19: The first edition of the Asian Deaf Cricket Association (ADCA) T20I Asia Cup, 2026 was inaugurated at Barabati Stadium, Cuttack with a grand opening ceremony Thursday.

The tournament was inaugurated by chief guest, Rishi Pathania Vice President, Jindal Steel Limited, marking a significant milestone for the inaugural tournament hosted by Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA) supported by Odisha Deaf Cricket Association (ODCA) and Odisha Cricket Association (OCA).

The tournament features three national teams - India, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Roma Balwani, CEO, IDCA, commented, "The first edition of the ADCA T20I Asia Cup 2026 stands as a testament to the resilience and determination of India's decision to establish Asian Deaf Cricket Association by Sumit Jain, a veteran former hearing-impaired Indian cricketer. As we light the torch of this tournament, let this be a beginning of a long and impactful journey that expends to more countries, more tournaments and greater opportunities for deaf athletes across Asia."

India beat SL in opener



India edged Sri Lanka by 4 wickets in a tight low-scoring match at Barabati Stadium in the opener of the ADCA T20I Asia Cup.

Speaking about the tournament, Sumit Jain, President, ADCA, said, "The first edition of the ADCA T20I Asia Cup 2026 reflects our continued commitment to promoting cricket among hearing-impaired athletes from across Asia. The ADCA was founded with a simple but a powerful vision to create a global platform where deaf athletes can compete, grow and be celebrated with dignity and equality. We are deeply honoured to have Rishi Pathania as the chief guest. I would like to extend my gratitude to team Sri Lanka, Nepal and India for being part of this historic first edition."

Dedicated to nurturing upcoming sports talent among specially abled athletes, the ADCA T20I Asia Cup, 2026 continues to receive strong support from corporate and institutional partners, reflecting the growing commitment of India's corporate sector towards promoting inclusive sports and creating equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

The opening ceremony was attended by a distinguished line-up of Guests of Honour,

UNBEATEN WEST INDIES FINISH AS GROUP TOPPERS

Kolkata: Skipper Shai Hope top-scored with a 46-ball 75 before his bowlers did what was expected of them as West Indies beat Italy by 42 runs to enter the Super 8s of the T20 World Cup as group toppers here Thursday.

West Indies posted 165 for six in their final Group C fixture and then bundled out Italy for 123 in 18 overs. Shamar Joseph (4/30) and Matthew Forde (3/10) were the top bowlers for the Caribbean side. Asked to bat first, West Indies were well served by Hope, who hit six boundaries and four sixes, but their other top-order batters failed to make significant contributions in the face of some disciplined bowling by Italy. Sherfane Rutherford (24 off 15 balls) and Matthew Forde (16 off 8 balls) played useful cameos towards the end and remained not out. Sri Lanka-born leg-spinner Crishan Kalugamage was the most impressive bowler for Italy, returning figures of 2/25 in four overs.

ZIMBABWE STUN SRI LANKA AT HOME BY SIX WICKETS

Colombo: Zimbabwe notched up a stunning six-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their final Group B T20 World Cup match here Thursday. Opting to bat, Pathum Nissanka captain eight fours en route to a 41-ball 62 and Pavan Rathnayake blasted a 25-ball 44 in the back end as SL posted 178 for 7. In reply, Brian Bennett (63) hit a fifty and skipper Sikandar Raza (45) produced the needed acceleration as Zimbabwe chased down the total, scoring 182-4 in 19.3 overs to top the group. Earlier, Graeme Cremer (2/27), Blessing Muzarabani (2/38) and Brad Evans (2/35) claimed two wickets each for Zimbabwe. Both the teams have qualified for the Super 8s.

AFGHANISTAN CRUSH CANADA TO BOW OUT ON A HIGH

Chennai: Afghanistan, powered by a belligerent unbeaten half-century by opener Ibrahim Zadran and a fine bowling display by Mohammad Nabi, defeated Canada by 82 runs in an inconsequential T20 World Cup Group D match here Thursday. Sent in to bat, Zadran blazed an unbeaten 95 off 56 balls, striking seven fours and five sixes, and forged a 95-run third-wicket partnership with Sediqullah Atal (44 off 32) to power Afghanistan to a formidable 200 for 4 in their final match of the tournament. Canada were then restricted to 118 for 8 with Mohammad Nabi (4/7) and Rashid Khan (2/19) taking four and two wickets respectively.

WOMEN'S T20I SERIES

All-round Australia outplay India

Kangaroos beat Women in Blue by 19 runs in 2nd match to level series



quickly as Shafali Verma's early fireworks was followed by Smriti Mandhana opening up. The two Indian openers put on 5 in the powerplay to put the team on track of the chase.

With India struggling at 71 for three, skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (30) and Richa Ghosh (19) joined forces and did well to add 55 runs for the fourth wicket.

India were 65/1 in the ninth over when their slide began as the visitors lost six wickets for seven runs towards the end.

India were off the blocks

ultimately ball of the 17th over at extra cover, and three balls later, Ghosh was stumped off Gardner.

India's hopes suffered another big blow when Gardner had Deepti Sharma (0) caught by Sutherland in the 18th over, with India slipping to 128 for six.

Brief Scores:

Australia Women 163 for 5 in 20 overs (Georgia Voll 88, Beth Mooney 46; Arundhati Reddy 2/30) beat **India Women** 144/9 Harmanpreet Kaur 36; Ashleigh Gardner 3/22) by 19 runs

India's Kaur becomes highest-capped woman in international cricket

Harmanpreet Kaur became the highest-capped player in women's international cricket when she made her 356th appearance for India in Thursday's Twenty20 match against Australia, surpassing New Zealand great Suzie Bates. Indian captain Kaur, 36, has now played six tests, 161 One-Day Internationals and 189 T20 matches for her country since 2009. Bates, two years her elder, has not played for New Zealand since making her 355th international appearance in October during the ODI World Cup. Kaur's compatriot Sachin Tendulkar holds the record for the most international appearances in men's cricket, having represented India 664 times across formats. Kaur has scored eight centuries and 38 fifties for India, and led the country to their first Women's World Cup title on home soil in November.

INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

Mumbai City start on winning note

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 19: Mumbai City FC began their Indian Super League season on a winning note, edging past Chennaiyin FC 1-0 at the Mumbai Football Arena here Thursday.

A tightly-contested encounter was decided by an own goal in the 48th minute by Pritam Kotal as the Islanders secured all three points. Neither team could create much flow in the match as they cancelled each other out in the midfield. Chances were at a premium in the first half as the attackers found it difficult to break the opposition defence.

Jorge Pereyra Diaz forced a fine save out of Mohammad Nawaz after he was played through by Jorge Ortiz. Minutes later, Brandon Fernandes found Lallianzuala Chhangte at the far post. The forward laid the ball on the path of Ortiz but the Spaniard's effort only found the goalkeeper. Chennaiyin relied on long balls with Irfan Yadwad and new signing Inigo Martin as the target men, but they were well marked by the Mumbai City defence.

Odisha teams leave for Nat'l Roll Ball C'ship

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Under-11 state roll ball boys and girls team are set to compete at the 15th National Roll Ball Championship to be held from



Feb 21 to 23 in Tiruchi, Tamil Nadu. The send off felicitation of the state teams was done at Kalinga Stadium by Asish Kumar Rout, OAS, Officer on Special Duty, Sports & Youth Services Department, Govt of Odisha; Soudamini Patra, Secretary, Odisha Roll Ball Association (ORBA); Soumya Jaysingh, Coach and Watson, Official of ORBA. The girl's team will be lead by Amrita Baral as captain and Sudiksha Swain as the vice captain whereas the boys team will be lead by captain Ronak Mallick and vice captain Archit Anurag Das.

Capital Cup to highlight cyber awareness

Bhubaneswar: The Old Town Crown Legends Welfare Trophy in collaboration with the District Administration and Cyber Cell, will organize a one-day Capital Cup Cricket Tournament February 22 at the BM Government High School playground. The objective of this tournament is to increase cyber security awareness, digital responsibility and prevention of cyber crime and fire safety awareness. A total of eight teams will participate in this tournament to be held day and night. This was informed in a press conference organised at the Odisha Journalists Association office Thursday. Old Town Crown Legends Welfare Trophy President Narayan Maharan; Vice Presidents Jitendra Sahu, Chinmay Mohanty, and All Odisha Law Association Executive Secretary Ranjit Maharan were present on this occasion.



Karnataka to face J&K in title clash

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 19: Karnataka entered the Ranji Trophy final after a hiatus of 11 years, advancing by virtue of a first innings lead from their drawn semifinal match against Uttarakhand here Thursday.

Karnataka will face Jammu and Kashmir in the title clash at Hubballi from February 24.

Resuming the fifth and final day from their overnight 299 for six, Karnataka lost the remaining four wickets quickly to get bowled out for 323 for an overall lead of 826 runs.

Uttarakhand fought through fifties by Avneesh Sudha (66),

RANJI TROPHY FINAL



Sachin Rawat (53 not out) and Abhay Negi (57 not), thwarting Karnataka's ambitions for an outright win.

They finished their second innings at 260 for six.

However, the massive first innings lead was enough for them to ensure a passage to the final.

Karnataka were pressing for an outright win after reducing

Uttarakhand to 156 for six mid-way through the second session.

But Negi and Rawat hung in there, adding 104 runs for the seventh wicket before both the captains decided to shake hands some 30 minutes after tea.

Now, Karnataka will eye their ninth Ranji Trophy title, and the last of which came in the 2014-15 season under the leadership of R Vinay Kumar.

In fact, Karnataka had then

achieved the rare distinction of becoming the second domestic side after Mumbai to win all three the titles twice in as many seasons.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

But Negi and Rawat hung in there, adding 104 runs for the seventh wicket before both the captains decided to shake hands some 30 minutes after tea.

Now, Karnataka will eye their ninth Ranji Trophy title, and the last of which came in the 2014-15 season under the leadership of R Vinay Kumar.

In fact, Karnataka had then

achieved the rare distinction of becoming the second domestic side after Mumbai to win all three the titles twice in as many seasons.

PAK HOCKEY CRISIS

PHF chief resigns after banning skipper for criticism



clean the kitchen and wash dishes" before going out to compete during the tour in which the side lost all its matches of the FIH Pro League against the home team and Germany.

This was after they spent hours on the road after the hotel earmarked for them declined them entry for lack of an advance payment by the PHF, despite the body getting the requisite funds from the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB).

Pakistan have to travel to Egypt after four months to take part in the final qualifying tournament for the World Cup.