



Shanaya on resilience

Shanaya Kapoor says shelved debut setbacks strengthened her resilience and helped her grow into a better performer

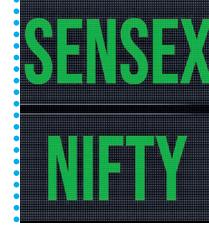
LEISURE | P2



Poverty grips Pak

Poverty in Pakistan increases over past six years, with latest estimates suggesting 28.8% of population living under poverty

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Weekly gains

Share benchmarks log weekly gains, helped by a tactical bounce Friday, as optimism around earnings recovery fueled rally

BUSINESS | P11



FIH Hobart leg

After home setback, India begin the FIH Pro League's overseas leg under new skipper Hardik Singh against Spain

SPORTS | P12

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BHUBANESWAR | SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 21, 2026

Farmers, women in focus

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi presents ₹3.10L-cr Budget



Out of the total outlay, ₹1,80,000 crore has been earmarked for programme expenditure, around 58 per cent of the total budget estimates.

Presenting his government's third Budget, Majhi, who also holds the Finance portfolio, said administrative expenditure is proposed at ₹1,14,000 crore, while the outlay for Disaster Risk Management Funds is ₹5,375 crore.

The capital outlay of ₹72,100 crore estimated in the budget is 6.5 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and 23.3 per cent of the state budget, the CM said.

The total outlay for the agriculture sector is ₹42,492 crore,

and ₹18,957 crore for women and child development initiatives. "One of the visions of our government under women empowerment is to see every girl child complete graduation," the CM said, announcing a new scheme 'Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumanag Yojana'.

As part of the scheme, a savings instrument of ₹20,000 will be created in the name of girls born in families belonging to the economically weaker section. They will be provided ₹1,00,001 on completion of graduation.

Majhi also announced another scheme "Mission PoWaR (Power, Water and Road)" with a proposed provision of ₹1,000 crore to provide connectivity to unconnected habitations.

A budgetary allocation of ₹800 crore has been made for a scheme for incomplete rural piped water supply projects to ensure that every rural household in Odisha has access to a safe, reliable and sustainable source of drinking water, the CM said.

He proposed to transfer ₹3,056 crore on recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission,

MAJOR ALLOCATIONS

₹42,492cr

Agriculture

₹42,565cr

Education

₹23,182cr

Healthcare

₹18,957cr

Women & child development

₹10,738cr

Urban development

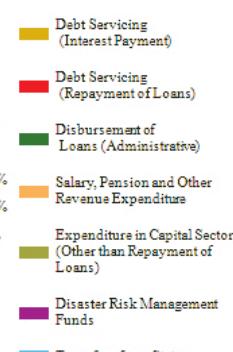
of GSDP for the 2025-26 fiscal. The 2025-26 budget would thus be Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) compliant, he stated.

The CM announced that the state government will establish a world-class Shree Jagannath Interpretation Centre in Puri at an estimated cost of ₹1,000 crore, while restoring the spiritual glory of the 'Gundicha Mandir', 'Emar Math', 'Pramod Udayan' and the historic Raghunandan Library.

Majhi also proposed an allocation of Rs 5,575 crore for the 'Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)' scheme, and Rs 1,500 crore for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for completion of pending work.

He also announced the 'DALKHAI' (Dignified Access to Livelihood, Knowledge, Health and Allied Infrastructure) scheme to address the underlying causes of distress migration by ensuring sustainable livelihoods through inter and intra-departmental co-ordination.

MORE P4



and around ₹7,450 crore on recommendations of the 6th State Finance Commission, to rural and urban local bodies of Odisha.

Majhi said his government will be able to generate a revenue surplus of about 3 per cent of GSDP, and the fiscal deficit will be limited to 3.5 per cent



Supreme Court strikes down Trump's tariffs

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 20: The Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's far-reaching global tariffs Friday, handing him a significant loss on an issue crucial to his economic agenda.

The 6-3 decision centres on tariffs imposed under an emergency powers law, including the sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs he levied on nearly every other country. It's the first major piece of Trump's broad agenda to come squarely before the nation's highest court, which he helped shape with the appointments of three conservative jurists in his first term.

The majority found that it's unconstitutional for the president to unilaterally set and change tariffs because taxation power clearly belongs to Congress. "The Framers did not vest any part of the taxing power in the Executive Branch," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote.

Justices Samuel Alito, Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh dissented. "The tariffs at issue here may or may not be wise policy. But as a matter of text, history, and precedent, they are clearly lawful," Kavanaugh wrote.

The Treasury had collected more than USD 133 billion from the import taxes the president has imposed under the emergency powers law as of December, federal data shows. The impact over the next decade was estimated at some USD 3 trillion.

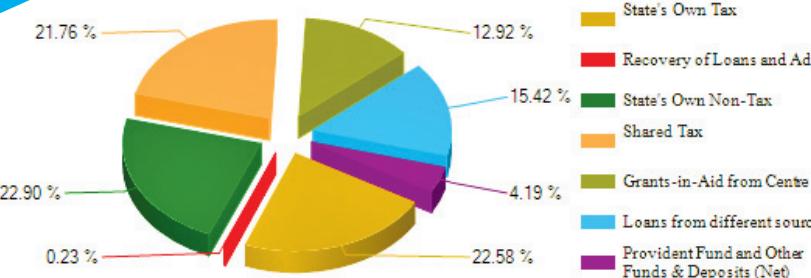
The tariffs decision doesn't stop Trump from imposing duties under other laws. While those have more limitations on the speed and severity of Trump's actions, top administration officials have said they expect to keep the tariff framework in place under other authorities.

P10

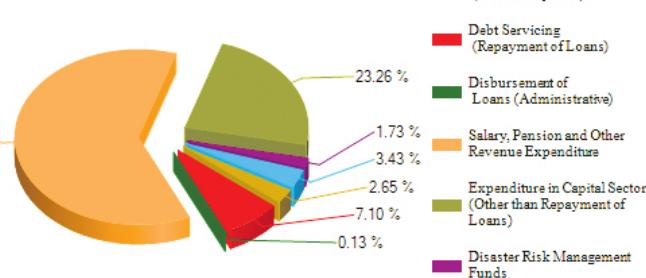
PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday presented ₹3.10 lakh crore Budget for 2026-27, with focus on agriculture, rural development and women empowerment.

RUPEE COMES FROM



RUPEE GOES OUT



RUPEE PLUMMETS 26 PAISE AGAINST DOLLAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 20: The rupee plunged 26 paise to settle at 90.94 against the US dollar Friday, tracking a strong American currency against major currencies and higher crude oil prices amid intensifying US-Iran tensions.

Positive momentum in domestic equity markets failed to support the Indian, forex analysts said.

They attributed the strengthening greenback and volatile crude prices to heightened tension between the US and Iran, with both countries signalling they are prepared for war if talks on Tehran's nuclear programme fizz out.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.94 against the US dollar and touched the intraday low of 91.04 during the session. It ended the session at 90.94, registering a steep loss of 26 paise from the previous closing level.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.01 per cent at 97.86.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



COUPLE GETS DEATH FOR SEXUAL ABUSE OF 33 KIDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

A special court in UP's Banda Friday sentenced a former junior engineer of the state's Irrigation department and his wife to death for the sexual exploitation of 33 minor boys – some as young as three – over a decade, officials said.

The POCSO court termed the crimes as 'rarest of rare' and held Ram Bhawan and his wife Durgawati guilty of systematically abusing children between 2010 and 2020. The duo circulated over two lakh objectionable videos and photographs of the victims to nearly 47 countries via the internet.

The couple was convicted under provisions of IPC and POCSO Act by Additional District and Sessions Judge (POCSO) Pradeep Kumar Mishra. They were found guilty of offences including aggravated penetrative sexual assault, using a child for pornographic purposes, storage of pornographic material involving children, and abetment and criminal conspiracy, Special Public Prosecutor Saurabh Singh said.

The court directed the UP government to pay ₹10 lakh in compensation to each of the 33 victims. "The court further ordered to distribute the cash amount seized from the house of the accused among the victims in equal proportion," the CBI said in a statement.

During the probe, it was found that Ram Bhawan, a resident of Naraini town in Banda district, had been living in a rented room in Chitrakoot district where the offences were committed, with his wife allegedly assisting him, the agency said. The SPP said court records indicated that the couple lured and threatened the minors

over several years, subjecting them to physical and mental abuse. The objectionable material was allegedly used for blackmail and other criminal activities.

The court termed the crimes as 'rarest of rare' based on 'unparalleled depravity and systemic nature of their crimes'.

"Such offences not only destroy the lives of children but also shake the moral foundation of society. Any leniency in such cases would send a dangerous message," the court said.

"The sheer scale of this victimisation across multiple districts, combined with the extreme moral turpitude of the convicts, marks this as a crime of such an exceptional and heinous nature that it leaves no room for reformation, necessitating the ultimate judicial deterrent to meet the ends of justice," it said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading higher by 0.01 per cent at 97.86.

New Delhi, Feb 20: Over 45 per cent of individual donations in India are made to religious organisations while over 42 per cent go to beggars, according to the third edition of "How India gives" report.

The Centre for Social Impact & Philanthropy (CSIP) at Ashoka University has come up with the report that maps the scale, patterns, and drivers of everyday household giving across India, underscoring that Indians are among the most generous globally.

Based on 7,225 nationally representative surveys across 20 states and anchored to National Sample Survey (NSS) consumption data, the study was aimed at providing detailed insights to date into how ordinary Indians contribute to social causes through cash, in-kind support and volunteering.

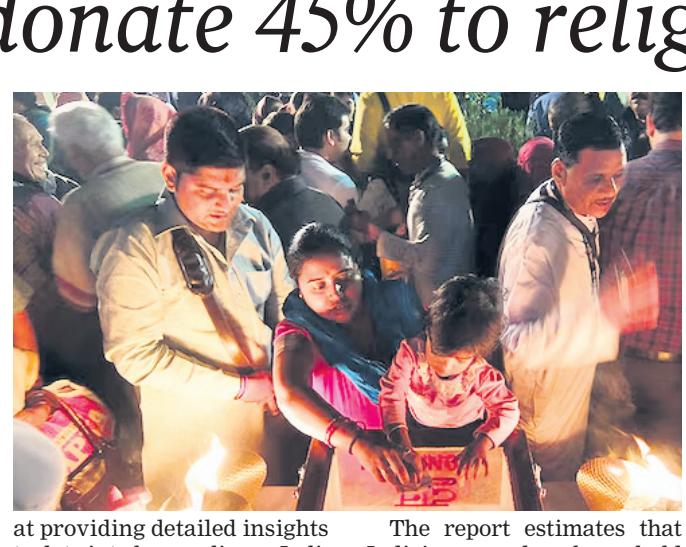


SHIRTLESS PROTEST: In this image posted February 20, Indian Youth Congress workers stage a protest during the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, in New Delhi

@IYC/X VIA PTI PHOTO

Indians donate 45% to religious bodies, 42% to beggars

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



The report estimates that India's everyday household giving ecosystem is worth approximately ₹540 billion (₹54,000 crore) annually, underscoring the significant but often under-recognised role within the country's broader philanthropic landscape alongside Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and institutional philanthropy.

According to the report, a significant share of everyday contributions flows to religious organisations (45.9 per cent) and directly to individuals such as beggars (41.8 per cent), while only 14.9 per cent reaches non-religious organisations.

"This distribution represents both a challenge and an opportunity, highlighting the potential to strengthen pathways that connect everyday donors to organised social sector initiatives," it said.

Commenting on the report

launch, Jinny Uppal, Director and Head, CSIP, said, 'How India Gives 2025-26' brings visibility to a form of generosity that has always existed in India but is rarely measured.

"Everyday giving - through in-kind support, cash contributions and volunteering - is foundational to India's development story. By anchoring our analysis to national consumption data and tracking patterns over time, we are able to understand not just how India gives, but how giving evolves as the country develops. The opportunity ahead lies in strengthening the bridges between everyday generosity and organised social impact," said Uppal.

The report also revealed key patterns in how Indians give. In-kind contributions account for the largest share of 46 per cent, slightly higher than cash donations of 44 per cent, while about 30 per cent of respondents reported volunteering, reflecting the relational and community-driven nature of giving.

In terms of learning channels, in-person canvassing is considered the most effective mode of engagement i.e. 25 per cent, followed by social media at approximately 15 per cent across regions. This underscores the continued importance of trust, proximity, and relational credibility in shaping giving decisions, even as digital outreach gains traction.

leisure

**SHAKIRA TO PERFORM IN INDIA AFTER 19 YEARS**

Shakira is all set to perform in India after 19 years. The Colombian superstar will perform in Mumbai April 10 and in Delhi April 15, marking the first time the concert will be hosted across two cities. Shakira last performed in India in 2007 during her *Oral Fixation Tour* in Mumbai.

HAILEY FEELS FAME CAN BE EXHAUSTING

Hailey Bieber, the wife of singer-songwriter Justin Bieber, feels fame is not an easy path to tread. She has found fame to be "mentally exhausting". The 29-year-old model shared that it's easy to lose a sense of perspective when you're in the spotlight, reports *Female First UK*.

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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ARIES

Curl, massage, clip, tweeze, polish, gloss, condition... today, will you attempt to shed your old skin. A dream date may have you in jitters but Ganesha suggests that you take it easy. True relationships are not sealed by glossy kisses alone!

**TAURUS**

All matters are likely to revolve around the opposite sex. Women are going to feature prominently and significantly in everything that you do. So says Ganesha. That is good. But you will be inclined to be lazy and laid back and may thus reduce the effect and impact of efforts. Keep your sluggishness away and you will find that everything that you have been striving for is falling in your lap.

**GEMINI**

You need to pay more attention to yourself today. Your kind and generous nature means you often think about others rather than yourself. Now is the time to pay attention to your own needs. You need to spend more time with your family and friends as well, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**

You will secure your place with hard work in your job or business. Ties with partners will improve. Closeness with spouse is indicated. Melody and joy will mark domestic bliss. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Ganesha's blessings are with you.

**LEO**

The pressure at work will be high. Some person may try to tempt you with lucrative offers to go against your principles. However, you will be able to resist the lure of easy money. Your health may suffer today, so be on guard, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

You will stay calm and steady today, and there is hardly anything that can disturb your peace of mind. Your family and friends will back you fully and motivate you to overcome hurdles. You will work with devotion, says Ganesha. You may ask for work that others may find very difficult to do.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says people will try to take advantage of your amiable nature and disposition. Small issues will crop up today making your nature a little tensed and enhance your anger too. You will be inspired to take chances in monetary matters. Ganesha says you need to keep your mind steady and regain your lost charm soon.

**SCORPIO**

Your imagination runs wild today. Though you do not travel geographically, your mind travels beyond boundaries. Think and act according to your will, advises Ganesha. However, practice caution before taking any major step.

**SAGITTARIUS**

You will be loaded with responsibilities at work today, for sees Ganesha. But, you are pro challenges and will take it up sportingly. On personal front, the list of your friends is likely to get longer. All in all, Ganesha sees you in an active avatar today.

**CAPRICORN**

Don't let your emotions play a spoilsport while deciding about the future. Think practically, otherwise, your expectations and reality will not be on the same boat, guides Ganesha. Friendly and supportive, today you will spread happiness and win the love of one and all. Whenever you get confused about which path to take, take advice from the experienced people around you.

**AQUARIUS**

Set any target, take up any activity or accept any challenge; you will succeed in any of them with flying colours, foresees Ganesha. Your well-wishers will shower praises upon you for those hard-earned achievements. Friends are like family to you, take them out and have a gala time before another busy day begins.

**PISCES**

You will be busy with romance throughout the day. While singles are likely to find the person of their dreams, those who are married will establish a new closeness in their relationship. Your attitude towards work will begin to change. You will become more serious about your career, and the fruits of this transformation will be reaped by you shortly in the near future, says Ganesha.



SHANAYA'S lessons from rejection

MUMBAI: Bollywood actor Shanaya Kapoor was initially set to make her debut with Dharma Productions' *Bedhak*, co-starring Lakshya and Gurfateh Pirsada. However, the project was eventually shelved. Looking back, Shanaya says she is grateful for how things unfolded, as the setbacks pushed her to grow as a performer.

In a recent interview, she shared that the experience of films being shelved and projects not materialising shaped her journey and encouraged her to work harder on her craft. During the time she wasn't facing the camera, Shanaya focused on training.



ing and self-improvement. She credited her father, Sanjay Kapoor, for guiding her to concentrate on what was within her control and continue honing her skills consistently.

Shanaya began her film career behind the scenes as an assistant director on *Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl*. She eventually made her acting debut opposite Vikrant Massey in *Aankhon Ki Gustaakhiyan*, though the film underperformed at the box office.

Her latest release, *Tu Yaa Main*, co-starring Adarsh Gourav and directed by Bejoy Nambiar, opened to mixed reviews and a modest box-office response.

AGENCIES

preserving tecting When options love in the world, the told, "They at where we also, that's we give up on each something so beautiful about our characters in the film, even if they're born in the current era, they're such old school people. They're not giving up on each other, like how it is today."

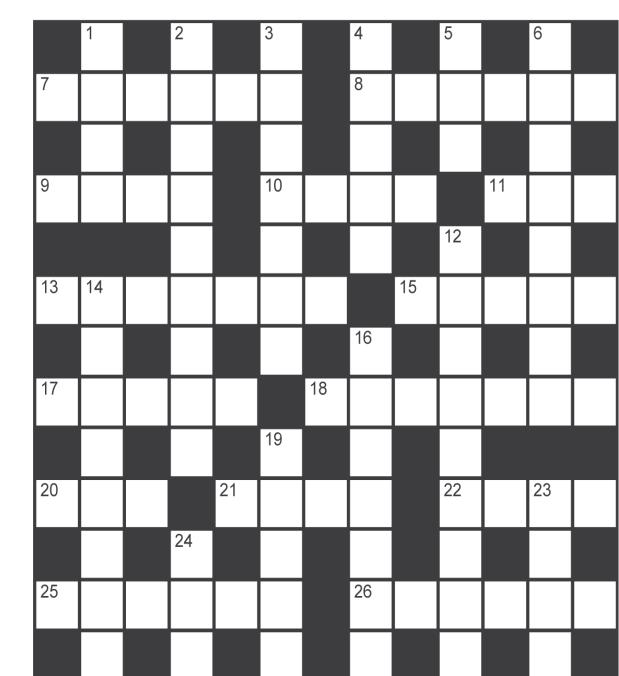
She further mentioned, "People are just giving up on each other very easily. I just want each and every teenager out there to believe that love exists. Please do not give up on love. It is beautiful. It is magical. If you are with the right person, just be patient enough to not jump onto any board, just be patient enough to wait for the right person to enter in your life, because the moment he or she does, life is easy". IANS

AGENCIES

SATABDIRA KALAKARA'S MULTILINGUAL DRAMA FEST BEGINS

The host troupe presented Odia play *Mahasangramara Mahanayaka* on the first evening of the 5-day event at Rabindra Mandap, Friday. Written by Biswabhusan Harichandan, the play was directed by troupe's founder and secretary Dhira Mallik. The festival, titled National Kalinga Natya Mahotsav, marks the golden jubilee celebrations of the organisation.

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

FUN POST**CROSSWORD**

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Across

- 7 Seat of power
- 8 Odd
- 9 Terrarium plant
- 10 Highway exit
- 11 ___ de Triomphe
- 13 Tentacled creature
- 15 Japanese cartoon art
- 17 Manicurist's board
- 18 Cutting the roast
- 20 Slot machine symbol
- 21 Cattle member
- 22 Like hen's teeth
- 25 Land on Lake Victoria
- 26 Almost

Down

- 3 Afraid
- 4 Scrumptious
- 5 New Zealand parrot
- 6 Robin Hood's followers (5,3)
- 12 World-wide
- 14 Run for office
- 16 Voyaging
- 19 Kind of race
- 23 Film part
- 24 Pantry pest

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.

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

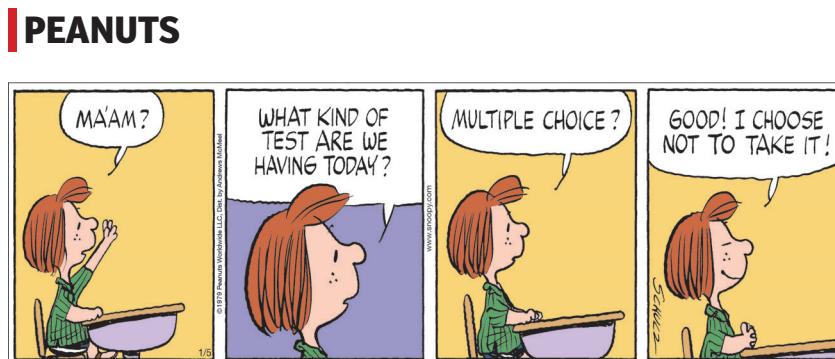
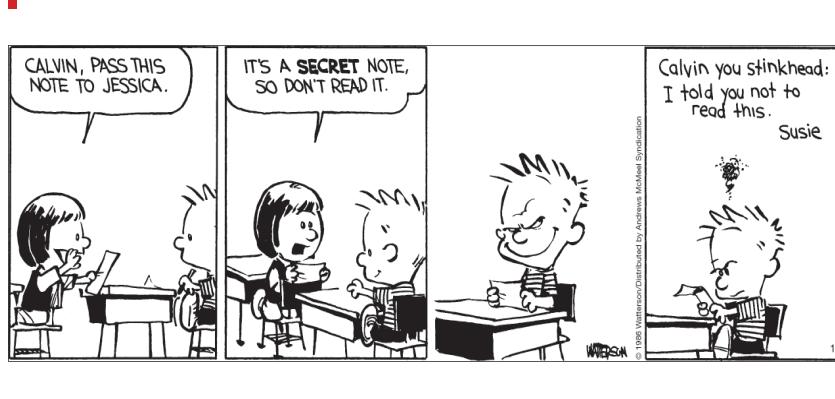
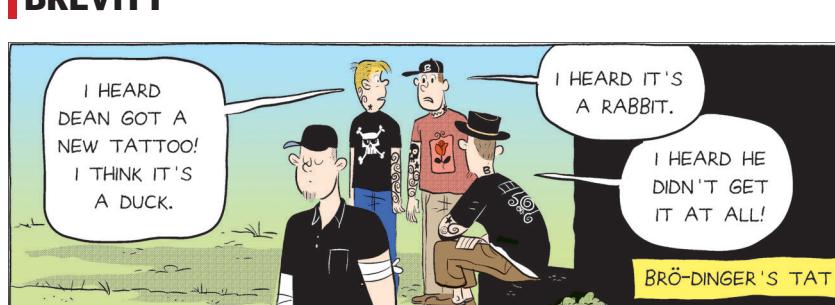
SOLUTIONS

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

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

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

PEANUTS**CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY**

Trump: Considering limited strikes on Iran

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, Feb 20: President Donald Trump warned Friday that limited strikes against Iran are possible even as the country's top diplomat said Tehran expects to have a proposed deal ready in the next few days following nuclear talks with the US.

In response to a reporter's question on whether the US could take limited military action as the countries negotiate, Trump said, "I guess I can say I am considering that." Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a TV interview that his country was planning to finalise a draft deal in "the next two to three days" to then send to Washington.

"I don't think it takes long, perhaps, in a matter of a week or so, we can start real, serious negotiations on the text and come to a conclusion," Araghchi said on MSNOW's 'Morning Joe' show.

The tensions between the longtime adversaries have ramped up as the Trump administration pushes for concessions from Iran and has built up the largest US military presence in the Middle East in decades, with more warships and aircraft on the way. Both countries have signalled that they are prepared for war if

talks on Tehran's nuclear programme fizz out.

"We are prepared for war, and we are prepared for peace," Araghchi said Friday.

Trump said a day earlier that he believes 10 to 15 days is "enough time" for Iran to reach a deal following recent rounds of indirect negotiations, including this week in Geneva, that made little visible progress. But the talks have been deadlocked for years, and Iran has refused to discuss wider US and Israeli demands that it scale back its missile programme and sever ties to armed groups.

Araghchi also said Friday that his American counterparts have not asked for zero enrichment of uranium as part of the latest round of talks, which is in contradiction to what US officials have said. "What we are now talking about is how to make sure that Iran's nuclear programme, including enrichment, is peaceful and will remain peaceful forever," he said.

He added that in return Iran will implement some confidence-building measures in exchange for relief on economic sanctions. In response to Araghchi's claim, a White House official said Trump has been clear that Iran cannot have nuclear weapons or the capacity to build them and that it cannot enrich uranium.



FREESTYLE SKIING: Germany's Leonie Bachl-Staudinger, 20, competes during the women's ski cross qualifications at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Livigno, Italy, Friday

AP/PTI

Deploy judges to end trust deficit: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Dismayed over ongoing tussle between the West Bengal government and the Election Commission (EC), the Supreme Court Friday issued an "extraordinary" direction to deploy serving and former district judges to assist the poll panel in the controversy-ridden special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in the state.

Ruing the "unfortunate blame game" and the "trust deficit" between the EC and the "democratically elected" TMC government, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Dipak M Pancholi passed a slew of fresh directions to ensure completion of the SIR process. The bench ordered deputation of judicial officers for adjudication of claims and objections of the persons, who are put under the logical discrepancy lists and facing removal of their names from the electoral rolls.

Logical discrepancies in progeny linking with the 2002 voter list include instances of a mismatch in the parent's name and the age difference between a voter and their parent being less than 15 years or more than 50 years. The top court asked Calcutta High Court Chief Justice Sujoy Paul to spare some



WEST BENGAL SIR
The top court permitted the EC to publish a final list of voters in West Bengal by February 28

judicial officers and find former judges to assist in the SIR work as it took serious note of the state government not sparing enough grade 'A' officers for the revision exercise. Chief Justice Paul has been asked to convene a meeting Saturday and the same will be attended by Chief Secretary, DGP, official from the EC, Advocate General of the state. Additional Solicitor General of the Union and the Registrar General of the High Court on the issue of finalising modalities of deputing judicial officers in SIR process.

"In order to ensure fairness in the adjudication of the genuineness of the documents and consequential inclusion/exclusion in voters list, and as agreed to by both sides, we are left with hardly any other option but to request the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High

Court to spare serving judicial officers along with some former judicial officers in the rank of Additional District Judge and District Judges who can then be requested to revisit/dispose of the pending claims under the category of logical discrepancy," the bench ordered.

Disregarding the vehement objections of the state government, the top court permitted the EC to publish a final list of voters in the state by February 28, the deadline fixed earlier. However, it also permitted the election commission to come out with supplementary lists later.

It noted that no prejudice will be caused to anyone if supplementary voter lists are issued after February 28 as names of electors can be included till the last date of filing of nomination papers for the elections.

Senior advocate Shyam Di-

van, appearing for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, alleged that the orders passed by the electoral roll officers (EROs) are now being scrutinised by a "new species of officers" called the 'special roll officers'.

"The 'special roll officers' cannot trump EROs. How can they on a wholesale basis reject what ERO has done?" Divan asked. The EC refuted that claim and said that the SROs are there since inception. The bench agreed with the submissions of the poll panel.

The bench further said that if there is non-cooperation then the court will deploy judicial officers or ask the EC to deploy the officials from other states.

Bengal govt counsel senior advocate Kapil Sibal said there might be a law and order problem, if the poll panel is permitted to publish the final voter list by February 28. In a bid to balance equity, the SC said such judicial officers/former judicial officers, while adjudicating the claims and objections, shall be assisted by poll panel's micro-observers and also by the officers of the state government.

"The circumstances being extraordinary, the entrustment of work to judicial officers and former judicial officers is also extraordinary," the bench said.

Core sectors growth slows down in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Production growth of India's eight key infrastructure sectors slowed down to a two-month low of 4 per cent in January, according to official data released Friday.

It was 5.1 per cent in January 2025 and 4.7 per cent in December 2025.

Crude oil and natural gas output recorded negative growth in January. Production of refinery products remained flat.

Production growth of coal and cement moderated to 3.1 per cent and 10.7 per cent during the month under review against 4.6 per cent and 14.3 per cent, respectively, in January 2025.

However, fertiliser, steel and electricity output recorded a positive growth during the month.

During the April-January period of this fiscal, growth of core sector industries was down to 2.8 per cent, compared with 4.5 per cent recorded during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal.

Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Ltd, said the slowdown was broad-based, with as many as seven of the 8 sectors witnessing a deterioration in their YoY growth performance.

Woman's body found; hubby dies in hospital

POST NEWS NETWORK

Brarajnagar, Feb 20: A 55-year-old woman was found dead under suspicious circumstances at her residence here Friday, while her husband, who was also inside the house and fell unconscious when the door was opened, died at a hospital later in the day.

The deceased were identified as Rukmini Bhoi and Gobinda Bhoi, 61, a retired employee of Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd (MCL). Police suspect foul play in Rukmini's death, though the exact cause will be ascertained after the investigation.

The incident occurred in Sambalpur's Hanuman Mandir under Orient police station.

According to police, the couple was staying alone in the house. The main door had reportedly remained locked from inside for nearly four days. Rukmini's younger sister, who lives nearby, had been trying to contact her over the phone but received no response. When she went to the house around 11am Friday and knocked on the door, Gobinda opened it. Upon entering, she found Rukmini's decomposed body inside and immediately alerted the police.

When police personnel arrived and entered the house, Gobinda reportedly fell unconscious. He was rushed to Mandaliya Hospital, where he died while undergoing treatment.

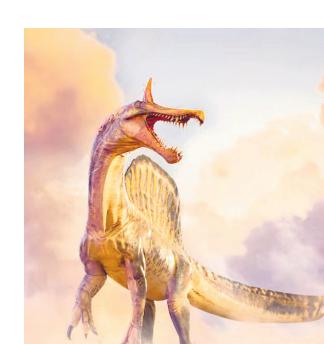


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Police said Rukmini's death might have occurred about three days earlier. The bodies have been sent for postmortem, and further investigation is underway. Brarajnagar SDPO Chintamani Pradhan visited the spot and supervised the inquiry.

Sahara desert odyssey yields major dinosaur discovery



about 20 inches tall, resembled a curved sword called a scimitar, and it had a large sail-like structure on its back and an elongated crocodile-like snout.

Along with the existing genus name Spinosaurus, meaning 'spine lizard', the researchers gave it the species name mirabilis, meaning 'astonishing', referring to its crest. A genus is a group of closely related species bearing similar traits. For example, lions and tigers are the same genus but different species.

It is only the second known species of Spinosaurus, a dinosaur that has gained fame in popular culture for its depiction in the Jurassic Park movies.

The other one, Spinosaurus aegyptiacus, was named in 1915

based on fossils from Egypt.

Spinosaurus, the only known semiaquatic dinosaur predator,

for hunting fish. The crest of Spinosaurus mirabilis is much larger compared to Spinosaurus aegyptiacus, and it has a more elongated snout, teeth more spread out from each other and longer hind limbs.

The researchers said its crest likely was for display, since it appears too fragile to have been used as a weapon, even though it was solid bone without the air sacs present in some other dinosaur crests. The crest, probably sheathed in keratin like a bull's horns, may have been vividly colored and instrumental in sexual or territorial competition or recognition between individuals.

"It's about love and life - attracting a mate, defending your hot feeding shallows," said University of Chicago paleontologist Paul Sereno, lead

author of the research published Thursday in the journal Science. "What else could be more important?"

The retracted location of its nostrils, farther back than usual, let it submerge most of its snout under water to stalk swimming prey for as long as necessary while breathing normally. In addition, its upper and lower rows of teeth fit neatly together during a bite, called interdigititation.

"Their large conical teeth without serrations that interdigitate form a 'fish trap' that is very good at piercing and trapping slippery fish in the jaws, preventing them from sliding," said paleontologist and study co-author Daniel Vidal of the University of Chicago and Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia in Spain.

Sereno called the Spinosaurus mirabilis discovery 'the coup de grâce for the aquatic hypothesis'.

Jenguebi, where the fossils were discovered, is a remote Sahara locality, with fossil-rich sandstone outcrops surrounded by sand dunes. For their 2022 expedition, the researchers set out from the city of Agadez in a convoy and drove off-road through desert terrain for almost three days, often getting stuck in the sand.

The journey paid off, as they discovered parts of three Spinosaurus mirabilis skulls and other bones, along with fossils of other creatures.

Long overshadowed in the public imagination by T. rex, Spinosaurus is now having its time in the spotlight.

"It's a dino-happening," Sereno said.

REUTERS

ODISHA BUDGET 2026-27

AMBITIOUS VISION MEETS SKEPTICISM

Mohan Charan Majhi's mega Budget draws mixed reactions from citizens and leaders



Among the marquee proposals are the ₹1,000 crore Jagannath Interpretation Centre in Puri and a World Tourism Centre, designed to place Odisha on the global tourism map

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Friday presented the Odisha Annual Budget for FY 2026-27 in the State Legislative Assembly, unveiling a massive budgetary outlay of ₹3,10,000 crore. Branded as a roadmap for "Lokanka Unnati, Rajyara Pragati", the budget is structured around six pillars; People First, Rural Empowerment, Prosperity for All, Our Legacy Our Pride, Technology Leading the Way, and People-Centric Governance, aimed at fostering inclusive growth, modernizing infrastructure, and strengthening social welfare.

Among the marquee proposals are the ₹1,000 crore Jagannath Interpretation Centre in Puri and a World Tourism Center, designed to place Odisha on the global tourism map. The new Digital Hundi - SAMARPAN platform will modernize temple donations, making religious contributions more transparent and accessible. Social welfare schemes are prominent, with the expansion of the Madhubaba Pension Yojana to benefit six lakh additional citizens and the launch of the Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangal Yojana, which provides ₹1,00,001 to girls from economically weaker families upon graduation.

Education receives a significant push with four new universities planned in Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, and Jharsuguda, alongside specialized colleges for engineering, agriculture, veterinary, fisheries, Ayurvedic, and homeopathy disciplines. Skill

development and innovation will be advanced through initiatives like the Dakshyata Vikas Yojana, the Rare Earth Corridor, and the Odisha AI Mission. Urban and rural development will be promoted through the Mukhyamantri Smart City Mission, Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission, and the Samrudhha Anganwadi Yojana. Connectivity projects include three major expressways—Berhampur-Jeyapore Road, NaMo Expressway, and Atal Expressway—linking East-West and North-South corridors. Bhubaneswar itself will see a transformation with new government buildings, a state-of-the-art museum, the Odisha Mandap Convention Centre, and a Police Memorial.

Educationist Naba Kishore Pujari praised the ₹42,565 crore allocation for education, highlighting the potential of new universities and specialized colleges, but cautioned that while technology is a budget pillar, the ₹23 crore AI Mission and ₹100 crore Smart City funds are relatively small compared to traditional infra-

structure. He noted that efficient execution would be critical, as Odisha has historically faced challenges in fund utilization. Social activist Narayan Prusty welcomed the online temple donation platform and the financial support for girls, calling the ₹20,000 grant at birth for girls from poor families "the most welcome step."

Youth activist Sunil Kumar Mishra acknowledged the focus on infrastructure, agriculture, and women's welfare but flagged concerns over unemployment, stating that there is no clear roadmap for large-scale government recruitment or job security. While skill development is encouraging, he warned that without stable employment, growth may not translate into real livelihoods.

Senior BJD leader Arun Sahoo added that the government had launched so many schemes that even their own MLAs and ministers would struggle to remember them, calling it "an elephant-like budget, but spending like ants."

Despite criticism, the ruling government highlighted the budget's long-term potential in education, tourism, infrastructure, and social welfare. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said, "The Developed Odisha" Budget 2026-27 is a transformative and welfare-oriented roadmap reflecting our commitment to inclusive growth and social justice. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, this historic ₹3.10 lakh crore budget will accelerate progress in education, skill development, agriculture, industry, and infrastructure. It prioritizes the poor, farmers, women, youth, SCs, STs, and marginalized communities, ensuring development reaches every village and household."

The Odisha Budget 2026-27 presents an ambitious vision for inclusive development, technological adoption, and global positioning. While citizens and experts largely welcome the social welfare and educational initiatives, skepticism remains regarding fund utilization, employment generation, and execution. The coming year will reveal whether this ₹3.10 lakh crore blueprint translates into tangible growth and prosperity for Odisha's people.

Recalling his tenure, the former Chief Minister stated

NCTB-2026 inaugurated at RD Women's University

Bhubaneswar: The two-day conference titled "National Conference on Translational Biotechnology (NCTB-2026): Innovation for Societal Impact" was formally inaugurated Friday at Rama Devi Women's University by the Department of Biotechnology. The inaugural ceremony was attended by eminent academicians and researchers from across the country. The chief guest of the opening session was Deepashikha Chakraborty from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc). In her keynote address, she underscored the importance of translating laboratory research into practical solutions that can directly benefit society. The session was presided over by the Vice-Chancellor Chandi Charan Rath, who reaffirmed the University's commitment to fostering innovative and socially impactful research. Raj Kumar Joshi, Head of the Department of Biotechnology and Convenor of the conference, delivered the welcome address.

According to Vigilance sources, the raids were carried out at three locations in Kalahandi

district on the strength of search warrants issued by the Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhawanipatna. During the searches, officials reportedly discovered a triple-storeyed residential building measuring approximately 5,300 sq ft at Hill Town, Bhawanipatna, constructed between 2022 and 2024, one four-wheeler (Toyota Urban Cruiser) and one two-wheeler, two Kubota

Care Hospitals marks 10th anniversary in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Care Hospitals celebrated its 10th anniversary Friday with a grand event at the Lumbini Convention Centre in Bhubaneswar. The festivities began with a captivating Odissi dance performance, setting a vibrant and celebratory tone for the occasion.

Kislay Anand, Zonal Chief Operating Officer of Care Hospitals, welcomed the guests and reflected on the hospital's journey. He highlighted how Aditya Care Hospital began a decade ago with just 80 beds and has since grown into a multi-specialty institution, providing advanced medical care at affordable costs. Originally focused on cardiac care, the hospital has expanded its services to include several specialties. Looking ahead, Anand announced that a 160-bed state-of-the-art independent oncology unit will be inaugurated by January 2027 to further enhance patient care.

The event was graced by Tathagata Satpathy, Editor of Dharitri and Orissa Post as the Chief Guest, and Adyasha Satpathy, CEO of Dharitri and Orissa Post as the Guest of Honour. Both felicitated employees who have made outstanding contributions across



HOLISTIC APPROACH: Dharitri and Orissa Post Editor Tathagata Satpathy and Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy grace the 10th Annual Day celebration of Care Hospitals in Bhubaneswar, Friday

OP PHOTO

various hospital departments.

Sharing his personal experience, Tathagata praised the cordial behaviour of the doctors, nurses, and healthcare staff. He noted that while corporate hospitals are often accused of exploiting patients, he had never faced such issues at Care Hospitals and wished good health to everyone present.

In her address, Adyasha emphasized the importance of ethical conduct among professionals. She stated that whether in media organisations or healthcare institutions, upholding high ethical standards is essential for all employees.

Mahendra Prasad Tripathy, Head of Cardiology and Clinical Director, reminisced about his 10-year association with the hospital, reflecting on its remarkable growth and achievements. Lokanath Dash, Associate Vice President of Corporate Communi-

cations, reaffirmed the hospital's commitment to delivering quality patient care.

From its modest beginnings in a small rented facility, Care Hospitals has expanded significantly, introducing modern treatment services, including AI-assisted and robotic surgeries. With the upcoming oncology unit, the hospital aims to further accelerate its services and meet the growing healthcare demands of the community.

ITEP through NCET 2026; applications open till Mar 10

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: The Odisha Higher Education Department has notified the admissions into the 4-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP) for the academic session 2026-27 will be conducted through the National Common Entrance Test (NCET) 2026. It will be organised by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

As per a notice issued by the NTA February 12, online applications for NCET-2026 are open from February 12 to March 10. The examination is tentatively scheduled to be held April 17 (Friday) in Computer Based Test (CBT) mode.

In Odisha, admission into ITEP from the academic session 2026-27 onwards will be based strictly on NCET scores. The programme will be offered in five state public Universities and eight government colleges, with a total sanctioned intake capacity of 1,300 seats.

After publication of percentile-based scorecards by NTA, eligible candidates will be required to apply through the SAMS portal by entering their NCET scores and selecting their preferred institutions. Merit lists will be prepared based on NCET percentile scores.

However, admissions into the 2-Year B.Ed, M.Ed, and B.H.Ed courses in Odisha will continue to be conducted through the existing SAMS process, and eligible candidates will have to appear in the entrance examination conducted by the State Selection Board (SSB), Odisha.

A full menu in an empty kitchen: Naveen on Budget

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 20: Leader of Opposition and Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Supremo Naveen Patnaik Friday strongly criticized the Odisha Budget 2026-27 presented in the Assembly by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, likening it to "a full menu in an empty kitchen." In a statement issued here, Patnaik expressed deep disappointment, alleging that the so-called "double engine government" is steering the state in the reverse direction despite promising transformative development for the people of Odisha.

Patnaik remarked that under the present government, every newborn child in Odisha would effectively carry a per-capita loan burden of nearly ₹30,000. He warned that the state's total debt is expected to soon reach ₹1.30 lakh crore, a development he said could severely strain Odisha's finances and derail its development momentum as well as welfare initiatives.

Recalling his tenure, the former Chief Minister stated



that when the BJD government assumed office, much of the state's revenue was used to repay loans and service debts, leaving limited funds for development. However, through years of meticulous planning and fiscal prudence, his government significantly reduced the loan burden.

Patnaik accused the BJP government of pushing Odisha toward financial instability. He further pointed out that people had hoped the "Double Engine" model would bring double benefits, particularly increased

grant-in-aid from the Centre. Instead, he claimed, central remittances to Odisha have been shrinking year after year, especially over the past two years.

While welcoming the Chief Minister's tribute to farmers in his budget speech, Patnaik argued that the financial proposals fall short of addressing the real challenges faced by the farming community.

Describing the budget as filled with grand promises but lacking concrete measures for sustainable development, he concluded, "It is like a full menu in an empty kitchen."

Meanwhile, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has described the Budget as a welfare-oriented and forward-looking blueprint aimed at building a "Developed Odisha." The budget, presented in the State Assembly by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, outlines a comprehensive development strategy focusing on inclusive growth, infrastructure expansion, and sectoral advancement across the state, he stated.

Vigilance uncovers massive assets during raid on Kalahandi forester

PNN & AGENCIES



Bhawanipatna, Feb 20: Officials of Odisha Vigilance Friday uncovered substantial assets during simultaneous house searches linked to Forester Bhagbat Bhushan Behera. The searches were conducted following allegations that Behera, serving as forester of Bhatangpadar forest section under Bhawanipatna forest range in Kalahandi district, possessed assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

According to Vigilance sources, the raids were carried out at three locations in Kalahandi

district on the strength of search warrants issued by the Special Judge, Vigilance, Bhawanipatna. During the searches, officials reportedly discovered a triple-storeyed residential building measuring approximately 5,300 sq ft at Hill Town, Bhawanipatna, constructed between 2022 and 2024, one four-wheeler (Toyota Urban Cruiser) and one two-wheeler, two Kubota

harvester machines, four tractors and one Bolero vehicle, allegedly held benami.

In addition,

Behera was found to be in possession of nine valuable plots in and around Bhawanipatna town. The Vigilance Technical Wing is currently conducting measurement and valuation of the building and plots.

Officials

also recovered approximately 210 grams of gold ornaments. Details regarding bank deposits, postal savings, and other financial investments are being ascertained.

Behera

had entered government service August 20, 2000, as a forest guard in the office

of the Divisional Forest Officer (North), Kalahandi, with an initial salary of ₹3,000 per month. The investigation is ongoing, and further details are awaited.

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX
DOLLAR 90.97 ▲ 0.26		SENSEX 82814.71 ▲ 316.57
EURO 107.10 ▼ 0.3		NIFTY 25571.25 ▲ 116.90

of the Divisional Forest Officer (North), Kalahandi, with an initial salary of ₹3,000 per month. The investigation is ongoing, and further details are awaited.

HRAO to celebrate 40 yrs of service

POST NEWS NETWORK

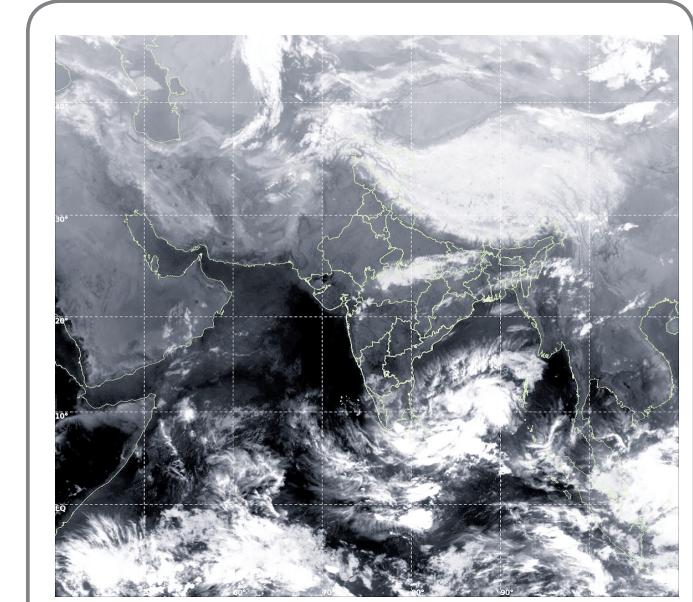


has a strong membership base of 388 hoteliers. HRAO continues to grow as a vibrant and unified platform for the hospitality industry in state with the primary objectives to facilitate sharing of important industry information, exchange innovative management ideas, and encourage professional collaboration among members. At the same time, HRAO remains committed in promoting the immense tourism potential of Odisha jointly with the positive support and cooperation

from the state government to position Odisha as one of the leading tourist destinations in the country.

"Through collective efforts and close cooperation with Tourism department, government of Odisha and stakeholders, we aim to strengthen the hospitality ecosystem and contribute meaningfully to the growth of Odisha's tourism economy," said HRAO chairman JK Mohanty.

"We are happy that the Tourism department has also introduced the State Tourism Advisory Council (STAC) under the chairmanship of tourism minister to review growth and speed up implementation of projects once in a year," HRAO members said.



WEATHER

	Max Temp	Min Temp	Humidity	Rainfall	CTC	FORECAST
	35.4°	16.0°	57%	Nil	32.4°	Dry weather likely to prevail



Municipality delimitation sparks political tension in Chhattrapur

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhattrapur, Feb 20: The delimitation of the newly formed Chhattrapur Municipality has triggered political tension, with opposition leaders staging a protest Friday in front of the Ganjam Collectorate against the inclusion of five gram panchayats.

Protesters rallied against the decision to include Aryapalli, Kanamana, Agasti Nuagan, Podapadar and Chikalkhandi within municipal limits. Despite security deployment, demonstrators attempted to enter the Collectorate premises. They submitted a memorandum to Ganjam Collector V Keerthi Vasan, demanding the withdrawal of the decision within seven days.

The protesters warned they would intensify their agitation until February 21.

Newborn's body found on roadside

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Feb 20: The body of a newborn boy was found near Godabarish Nagar in Rayagada town Friday morning, triggering outrage among residents, who demanded a thorough intervention.

According to sources, locals spotted the infant's body on the roadside behind Rayagada College and informed Rayagada Town police, who reached the spot, recovered the body and began an investigation.

Prima facie, it appears that someone might have abandoned the baby shortly after birth. However, it remains unclear whether the child is stillborn or died after being left at the location. Police said the exact cause of death would be ascertained after the investigation is over.

Student unrest erupts in CUO

7-day ultimatum to varsity admin as students agitate over academic mismanagement, various other issues



kilometres away from hostels, resulting in missed post-lunch classes. Protesters further accused Sanjay Kumar Pradhan and Manjushree Singh, heads of Agriculture and Dairy Science departments respectively, of authoritarian behaviour and mental harassment within academic and hostel spaces. "We are treated like prisoners, not scholars," a student alleged.

Students also questioned why almost all faculty members, including the Vice-Chancellor, are serving only in-charge capacities despite massive infrastructure spending. They demanded regular appointments, immediate declaration of results, suspension of the accused HODs, and systemic reforms.

The Vice-Chancellor in charge assured students that issues would be resolved within seven days. Agitating students, however, issued a clear warning: if no concrete action is taken, protests will intensify and classes will be boycotted indefinitely.

Students from the Dairy Science Department raised serious concerns about campus safety and welfare. One student accused the Chintamani canteen of repeatedly selling expired food items, despite regular complaints to the administration. Adding to the anger, female students highlighted the shutdown of water facilities since February 16, forcing them to struggle daily in the hostels. They also complained about the lack of transport facilities during lunch hours, despite the education building being over two

UCO BANK JAMUKOLI BRANCH Plot No.: 691/784, At: Jamukoli, P.O.: Panchagaon, Jatni, Dist.: Khordha-752050

DEMAND NOTICE (GOLD LOAN)

We have to inform the below mentioned Borrower that the following Gold Loan facilities has been sanctioned to you by **UCO Bank, Jamukoli Branch**. Despite our repeated requests, you have not yet repaid the amount due. Therefore, due to non-payment of installment/interest/Principal/Penalty, the account(s) have been classified as NPA as per the RBI Guidelines. Demand Notice was issued by the **Branch Manager** against the following Borrower of **UCO Bank, Jamukoli Branch**. The said Demand Notice could not be served by the below mentioned parties. The details are given below:

SI No.	Name & Address of the Borrower	Loan Amount / Outstanding Amount	Date of NPA / Date of Demand Notice	Details of Gold
1.	Borrower: Niruta Das (Deceased), Legal heirs of Late Niruta Das are: 1) Tamas Kumar Das, 2) Eleena Das, Both are At: Ashrapur, Panchagaon, Jatni, Dist.: Khordha, PIN-752050	₹ 1,36,000/- / ₹ 1,50,936.86 + future interest	30.12.2025 / 07.01.2026	Gross Wt.: 33.5 gm, Net Wt.: 31.5gm

That the Bank in exercise of powers conferred under the agreement/s executed by you in Bank's favour, hereby calls upon you to repay the full amount mentioned above plus interest & other charges within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, failing which the bank shall be entitled to Auction the above gold ornaments to recover Bank's dues as per the terms of Loan Agreement executed by you besides exercising other rights available to the Bank. We hope, you will avoid such situation and deposit the amount immediately.

Place: Jamukoli, Date: 20.02.2026 **Authorised Officer, UCO Bank**



Punjab & Sind Bank (A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Where service is a way of life

REDEMPTION NOTICE

Notice for Sale of Immoveable Properties

Date : 18.02.2026

1. M/s. Jagwani Projects Pvt. Ltd. (Borrower), 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053
2. M/s. LAAJ Led Lights Pvt. Ltd. (Borrower), 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
3. M/s. Transhimalayan Logistics Pvt. Ltd. (Borrower), 23/A/560, Block -N, Ground Floor, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
4. Mr. Gordhan Das Jagwani (Mortgagor / Guarantor), S/o. Shri Khil Das Jagwani, 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
5. Mr. Anil Kumar Jagwani (Mortgagor / Guarantor), S/o. Shri Gordhan Das Jagwani, 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
6. Mrs. Lajwanti Jagwani (Mortgagor / Guarantor), W/o. Gordhan Das Jagwani, 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
7. Shri Sunil Kumar Jagwani (Mortgagor / Guarantor), S/o. Shri Gordhan Das Jagwani, 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
8. Mrs. Savitri Jagwani (Mortgagor / Guarantor), W/o. Shri Paras Ram Jagwani, 651, Block - O, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.
9. Mrs. Jyoti Jagwani (Mortgagor / Guarantor), 568, Block-N, Gr. Floor, Gangotri Apartments, New Alipore, Kolkata-700053.

Reg:- Redemption notice under rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Section read with 13(8) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in A/c. of M/s. Jagwani Projects Pvt. Ltd., M/s. LAAJ Led Lights Pvt. Ltd. & M/s. Transhimalayan Logistics Pvt. Ltd. (A/c Nos. 0147130000517, 0147130010522, & 0147160000538) from Branch Office ARB, Kolkata (Previously with B/O, IBD Kolkata).

The undersigned being authorized officer of **Punjab & Sind Bank** and in exercise of its powers conferred under section 13(4) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 has proposed to realize the bank's dues by Sale of the said properties/assets as described below through E-Auction.

And whereas the Sale of the below mentioned properties will be done on "As is basis and whatever is basis" through Sale has been fixed Rs. 1447.77 Lakh at reserve price as mentioned below in respect of the immovable property and as per other terms and conditions as stipulated under the said Acts/Rules.

Your attention is invited to the Section 13(8) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to rule 8(6) of the Security Interest of the security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, in respect of the time available(i.e. 30 days), to redeem the secured assets. If you (addresses) fail to pay to the entire Bank's dues mentioned below together with all costs, charges and expenses, your right to redeem the mortgaged property would stand extinguished.

Name of the Borrowers & Guarantors : 1. M/s. Jagwani Projects Pvt. Ltd., 2. M/s. LAAJ Led Lights Pvt. Ltd., 3. M/s. Transhimalayan Logistics Pvt. Ltd.

Guarantors : 1. Mr. Gowardhan Das Jagwani, 2. Mr. Anil Kumar Jagwani, 3. Mrs. Lajwanti Jagwani, 4. Shri Sunil Kumar Jagwani, 5. Mrs. Savitri Jagwani, 6. Mrs. Jyoti Jagwani.

Demand Notice Date & Amount : 20.01.2016, Rs. 14,39,11,008.51

Total Outstanding as on 18.02.2026, Rs. 54,30,25,591.32 (In A/c. No. 0147160000517), Rs. 19,10,32,257.76 (In A/c. No. 0147130010522), Rs. 37,83,64,562.23 (In A/c. No. 0147160000538)

Sl. No.	Description of Property	Reserve Price
1.	Flat No. 4F in the front side on the fourth floor measuring 1600 Sq. Feet, super built up and 1200 Sq. Feet, carpet area with car parking space at and/or being Municipal Premises No. 49, Biplobi Dinesh Majumder Sarani, formerly 568, Block - N, New Alipore, P. S. - New Alipore, Kolkata - 700053 in Ward No. 81 of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, District - 24 Parganas (S).	Rs. 214.87 LAKH
2.	Flat No. 4R on the rear side of the fourth floor measuring about 700 Sq. ft. super built up at Premises No. 49, Biplobi Dinesh Majumder Sarani, formerly 568, New Alipore, Block - N, P. S. - New Alipore, Kolkata - 700053, in Ward No. 81 of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, District 24 Parganas (South).	Rs. 67.38 LAKH
3.	Ground Floor containing an area of 570 Sq. Feet, Super built up and about 475 Sq. Feet. Carpet area be the same a little more or less on the front side the ground floor of the building "Gangotri" apartment at and/or being Municipal Premises No. 49, Biplobi Dinesh Majumder Sarani formerly known as 568, Block - N, New Alipore, P. S. - New Alipore, Kolkata - 700053, in Ward No. 81 of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation, District 24 Parganas (South) Sub-Registration District Alipore.	Rs. 64.23 LAKH
4.	Ground Floor in Multi Storied Building at Mouza - Punja Sahapur, J. L. No. 9, R. S. No. 186, Touzi No. 93, Dag No. 414 (P) being the Municipal Premises No. 3, Jyotish Roy Road, P. S. - Behala, Kolkata - 700053, within the limit of Kolkata Municipal Corporation under Ward No. 117, District - 24 Parganas (South) measuring 1000 Sq. Feet.	Rs. 50.26 LAKH
5.	Equitable Mortgage of Flat No. 1A & 1B on 1st Floor of G+4 storied building measuring a super built up area 1020 Sq. Ft. and carpet area 765 Sq. Ft. at or being the Municipal Premises No. 59, Nalini Ranjan Avenue. (Previously known as 376/1, Block-G, New Alipore) under Police Station - New Alipore, Kolkata - 700053, in Ward No. 81 of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, District - South 24 Parganas.	Rs. 348.61 LAKH
6.	Equitable mortgage of all that piece and parcel of lease hold land containing an area of more or less 0.7583 Acres together with a two storied building standing thereon having an area of approximately 800 Sq. Ft. in each floor and a tin shed structure measuring approximately 7000 Sq. Ft. lying and situated in Mouza - Chandipur (J. L. No. 9), P. S. - Uluberia, District - Howrah under Chandipur Gram Panchayat.	Rs. 248.80 LAKH
7.	Flat No. D-5 on the second floor at Block-D having a superbuilt up area 1114 Sq. Ft. be a little more or less consisting three bed rooms, one dining and drawing, one kitchen and two bath and privy comprised in Dag Nos. 624/1093, 143 and 177, Mouza - Punja Sahapur, P. S. - Behala, registry office Alipore, District 24 Parganas (South), within the limits of Calcutta Municipal Corporation (S. S. Unit), Ward No. 117, Holding No. 37, S. N. Roy Road, Kolkata - 700038.	Rs. 56.00 LAKH
8.	Equitable Mortgage of all that land measuring more or less 3 Cottahs, together with ground plus three storied residential building, Ground Floor 1140 Sq. Ft. pucca and 215 Sq. Ft. asbestos shed, 1st floor 1190 Sq. Ft. area, 2nd floor 1190 Sq. Ft. area and 3rd floor 917 Sq. Ft. along with 175 Sq. Ft. asbestos shed area more or less situated at Municipal Premises No. 23/A/560, Block "N", New Alipore, (Now Premises No. 37, Biplobi Dinesh Mazumder Sarani), Kolkata - 700053, P. S. - New Alipore.	Rs. 360.00 LAKH
9.	Equitable Mortgage of all that part and parcel of flat on Ground floor, Southern side, measuring super built up area of 900 Sq. Ft. at Mouza - Dumdum Cantonment, P. S. - Dumdum, District - North 24 Parganas at Dag No. 2035, Khatian No. 1, J. L. No. 13, R. S. No. 177, Touzi No. 3194 at 34/8, U. K. Dutta Road, within the local jurisdiction of south Dumdum Municipality.	Rs. 23.56 LAKH
10.	Equitable Mortgage of Flat No.1C measuring 650 Sq. Ft. at first floor at Village - Sundara, Unit No. 13, Khatia No. 145/87, Plot No. 339/947, Kissam - Gharbari-II, Tahasil + P. S. + Sub Registrar - Barbil, District - Keonjhar.	Rs. 14.06 LAKH

Note : There is No Encumbrance on properties mentioned at Sl. No. 1 to 10.

Authorised Officer
Punjab & Sind Bank

Date : 18.02.2026
Place : Kolkata

state

Student unrest erupts in CUO

7-day ultimatum to varsity admin as students agitate over academic mismanagement, various other issues

POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/ Sunabeda, Feb 20:

The Central University of Odisha in Koraput district witnessed intense unrest on campus Friday as hundreds of students staged a massive protest in front of the administrative building, accusing the university authorities of prolonged mental harassment, academic mismanagement, and playing with the future of scholars.

The agitation was directed against the in-charge Vice-Chancellor Narasingha Chattan Panda, whom students held responsible for what they described as "institutional paralysis."

Students alleged that semester results of the Forestry, Agriculture, and Dairy Science departments have not been declared for nearly two years, pushing final-year and research scholars into uncertainty.

Tribal students, in particular, said delays in verification and documentation have blocked access to government

fellowships and stipends, leaving many in financial distress.

Dibya Jyoti Nanda, a student of the Agriculture Department, alleged that the university functions without clear rules or academic discipline. He pointed out that an examination notice was issued with a back date, informing students just one day earlier that exams would be held February 21, despite incomplete courses and irregular classes.

Students from the Dairy Science Department raised serious concerns about campus safety and welfare. One student accused the Chintamani canteen of repeatedly selling expired food items, despite regular complaints to the administration. Adding to the anger, female students highlighted the shutdown of water facilities since February 16, forcing them to struggle daily in the hostels. They also complained about the lack of transport facilities during lunch hours, despite the education building being over two

kilometres away from hostels, resulting in missed post-lunch classes. Protesters further accused Sanjay Kumar Pradhan and Manjushree Singh, heads of Agriculture and Dairy Science departments respectively, of authoritarian behaviour and mental harassment within academic and hostel spaces. "We are treated like prisoners, not scholars," a student alleged.

Students also questioned why almost all faculty members, including the Vice-Chancellor, are serving only in-charge capacities despite massive infrastructure spending. They demanded regular appointments, immediate declaration of results, suspension of the accused HODs, and systemic reforms.

The Vice-Chancellor in charge assured students that issues would be resolved within seven days. Agitating students, however, issued a clear warning: if no concrete action is taken, protests will intensify and classes will be boycotted indefinitely.

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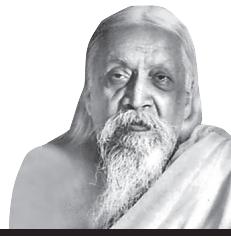
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ENGAGEMENT OF APPRENTICES



That which we call the Hindu
religion is really the Eternal
religion because it embraces
all others.

SRI AUROBINDO



Art of Delay

It's telling that Punjab is still kicking the can down the road on appointing a regular Director General of Police, even after the Supreme Court flagged the "acting DGP" culture as a serious institutional flaw.

For over three years now, Gaurav Yadav, technically an "acting" DGP, has been calling the shots in Punjab Police. That's longer than most bureaucrats stay at a single desk in New Delhi. And yes, that very arrangement drew the apex court's ire, precisely because it goes against the spirit (if not the letter) of the Prakash Singh judgment, which sought to insulate police leadership from political expediency.

The state government's official line seems to be that it's waiting on the UPSC to communicate next steps, an argument that feels more like a stall tactic than a strategy. After all, the court's directive clearly empowers the UPSC to push for compliance, not to act as a go-between.

What's striking is how this delay feeds into a deeper problem: the public perception, and sometimes reality, that police leadership can be held in suspended animation for years, with all the institutional uncertainty that invites. Police forces thrive on stable command, continuity of strategy, and clarity of authority. The longer a state dithers on "acting" arrangements, the more it undermines that very foundation.

It can be argued that Punjab isn't alone. Several states have flirted with acting chiefs rather than regular appointments. But that doesn't absolve any of them, particularly when the Supreme Court has signalled that this shouldn't be normal administrative practice.

If Punjab wants to credibly claim it takes rule-based governance seriously, it should walk the talk: forward a proper panel of candidates, let the UPSC do its job, and install a full-time DGP. Anything less is just bureaucratic inertia dressed up as prudence.

63 lateral entries and 3,000 empty chairs

For years now, we've been told that India's bureaucracy is being "reimagined." More agile. More specialised. More fit for a complex, 21st-century economy.

The numbers tell a different story. As informed in the Rajya Sabha, nearly 3,000 posts across the IAS, IPS and IFS are vacant. The IAS alone is short by over 1,300 officers. The IFS, the face of India abroad, is functioning with a deficit that would make any corporate HR head break into a cold sweat. This isn't a minor staffing glitch. It's structural.

Now enter lateral entry. This reform was supposed



BABUDOM BYTES

Dilip Cherian

to disrupt the cosy generalist club. Since its launch in 2018, just 63 appointments have been made across ministries. Seven years, 63 people. That's not disruption; that's a rounding error. Which raises a fair question: was lateral entry meant to fix a talent deficit or merely signal reform?

Because if the goal was to infuse domain expertise into policy-making, the scale simply doesn't match the rhetoric. If the goal was to compensate for a shrinking intake through the UPSC pipeline, it clearly hasn't.

Meanwhile, governance doesn't pause for recruitment bottlenecks. Trade negotiations, climate diplomacy, cyber security, and financial regulation don't wait for files to be filled. An understaffed babudom doesn't just stretch officers thin; it stretches institutional capacity.

The larger worry isn't vacancies per se. Governments can and do recalibrate cadre strength. The concern is drift, a gap between ambition and execution.

A small circular, a big signal

Delhi's babu grapevine has delivered a small but delicious irony.

The Centre has apparently told senior officials to "promptly dispose" of letters from Members of Parliament. So far, so routine. But here's the kicker: they are to do so without leaning on that sacred relic, known as the pre-printed, copy-paste reply. Yes, that one where the template begins with "I am directed to refer to your letter..." and ends with something so non-committal it could run for office!

A fresh note now solemnly reminds officials that elected representatives "occupy a very important place in our democratic set-up." One imagines this line was typed with the straightest of faces. After all, MPs are not exactly pen pals looking for polite acknowledgements; they are supposed to represent millions of citizens. Their letters are not spam. Or at least, not all of them.

What triggered this bureaucratic awakening? No one is saying. But it doesn't take Sherlock Holmes to suspect that some MPs may have grown tired of receiving replies that felt... recyclable. Change the name, tweak a line, press send. Governance, by template.

To be fair, standardisation has its uses. It keeps files moving and language uniform. But when every response reads as a mildly bored algorithm assembled it, it signals something deeper: disengagement. A mechanical state talking back to a human mandate.

The real test, of course, is not whether the templates disappear. It's whether the replies begin to show signs of thought, specificity, accountability, or even a timeline.

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

WISDOM CORNER

Creating is one thing; telling the story is one thing. I see myself more as a storyteller than a story creator.

S S RAJAMOULI

If you set your goals ridiculously high and it's a failure, you will fail above everyone else's success.

JAMES CAMERON

Movie directors, or should I say people who create things, are very greedy and they can never be satisfied

AKIRA KUROSAWA

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1916: The Battle of Verdun, one of the most devastating engagements of World War I, began.

1925: The American weekly magazine The New Yorker began publication under Harold W. Ross.

1965: Black revolutionary leader Malcolm X was assassinated while giving a speech in Manhattan. A profound and charismatic leader of the American civil rights movement, Malcolm disagreed with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s messages of nonviolence; his ideologies centered on Black power and the right to self-defense—views that made him many enemies.

1972: On this day US President Richard Nixon became the first sitting U.S. president to visit China. The visit took advantage of the rift that had begun to form between China and the Soviet Union to strengthen US-China relations.

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 husbandry

Sir, At a recent high-level review Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi underscored the rapid deployment of Artificial Intelligence in animal husbandry and dairy management, moving from concept to rollout within a month. The initiative envisions AI-enabled sensors and data platforms to monitor cattle health, detect early signs of disease, track nutrition levels, and even interpret behavioural changes that signal stress or discomfort. By translating these indicators into actionable alerts for farmers and veterinarians, the system will act as a bridge between animals and humans. The expected outcomes include higher milk yields, reduced mortality, timely medical intervention, and improved breeding practices. Farmers stand to benefit from lower costs and better productivity, while veterinary services become more targeted and efficient. Beyond economics, the initiative reflects a humane approach—leveraging technology to understand and alleviate animal suffering. If implemented effectively, it could transform rural livelihoods while fostering a more compassionate and scientifically managed dairy ecosystem.

RS Narula, PATIALA

Vote economics

Sir, The freebie culture of state governments when elections are round the corner has come under severe criticism of the Supreme Court. While a government is fundamentally obliged to provide essential services to the public, revenue-deficit states allocating substantial amounts for freebies put strain on the exchequer. Freebies are announced with no other purpose other than getting political mileage and securing votes. Worse, many freebies are announced when election code of conduct is in effect. Instead of using this money for infrastructure development, huge amounts are diverted for providing freebies. In some cases freebies are thrust upon some sections of people who do not need it. In many cases there is no rationale in providing such freebies. One negative side of providing freebies is that it makes people over-dependent on government. When a government works towards the wellbeing of people, especially the vulnerable sections, the government wins the heart of people and secure votes. When a government performs well, it gets good judgement from people.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

RISING SYNERGY



If India can leverage its demography, democracy and diversity, then India's growth into a world power is unstoppable. Macron realizes it, appreciates and endorses it. But does Indian leadership realize its own strength and seek to preserve and build on it?

an independent political identity apart from alignment with America or China, it must embrace India. This perspective was amply manifested in Macron's latest visit to India. Macron asserted that both countries oppose domination of any kind from India-Pacific to any field of technology in any part of the world. He likened friendship with India to a sovereign alliance. Prime Minister Modi in his response said, "Both countries believe in a multipolar world and are working diligently to make it happen".

The ties between France and India in defence sector are growing stronger day-by-day. It is evident from the facts that France is next only to Russia in exporting defence equipment to India. It will be no surprise if France overtakes Russia in near future if one takes into account the increasing number of agreements on the sale of fighter jets, submarines, and the joint production of defence material. To counter China and consolidate power in Asia, France is set to co-manufacture Rafael aircrafts, H-125 helicopters, HAMMER missiles, scorpena submarines and the fifth generation of jet engines.

France has been the first country in the world that recognizes India as an independent power centre, a credible democracy, offering economic opportunities for the world. There has been a consensus in French politics that if European Union has to carve out

America to Pakistan. The collaboration between France and India is not limited to export of arms. Keeping the importance of emerging technologies in strategic thinking, France and India have constituted a Joint Advanced Technology Group which will co-develop emerging technologies, secure military supply chains, and maintain the competitive strategic advantage. This Group also included critical minerals, collaboration on AI, digital technology, aerospace and innovation. This initiative falls under the broader framework of 2026 India-France Year of Innovation.

The partnership is evolving innovatively. Prime Minister and President Macron jointly inaugurated the India-France Innovation Forum in Mumbai on 17 February, calling it a reflection of the deepening strategic partnership, shared democratic values, and expanding collaboration in innovation and technology. This will open up scope for work for scientists, researchers, traders, and entrepreneurs from both countries. France and India are becoming active in the fields of AI, space, and aviation.

The AI World Conference, currently in progress in India was initiated jointly by France and India. Both countries are working for democratization of AI which should be used for

common good. Both leaders inaugurated the Franco-Indian Centre for AI in health, jointly led by AIIMS, Sorbonne University and the Paris Brain Institute. Prime Minister Modi dreams of taking India into the top three AI powers in the world. In this journey, India would need the support of developed countries like France.

As France is perceived to be the voice of the European Union, the deepening of partnership will be good for India's expanding relationship with the other 26 European countries. The recently concluded FTA with the European Union is one sign of such corollary dividends. Also, France is seeking to recalibrate its profile in Africa and is intending to draw India into Africa in a triangular collaboration. The French bases in the Indian Ocean and India-Pacific have lent strategic support to India. India-France friendship has yielded tangible results so far and one can be optimistic that the elevation of ties to Special Global Strategic Partnership will manifestly shine in many parts of the world.

Finally, Macron's strong endorsement of the UPI system puts India into a league of its own. Macron said, "India builds something no other country in the world can.... a digital identity for 1.4 billion people, a payment system that now processes 20 billion transactions every month, a health infrastructure that has issued 500 million digital health IDs."

The sheer size of coverage of any new technical initiative is unparalleled in India which is the most populous democratic country in the world. So, if India can leverage its demography, democracy and diversity, then India's growth into a world power is unstoppable. Macron realizes it, appreciates and endorses it. But does Indian leadership realize its own strength and seek to preserve and build on it?

The writer is Professor of Practice, NIIS Group of Institutions

INFA

SPECTRUM INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mother tongue language of future



Bhagirathi Jena

ACCORDING TO UNESCO, ON AVERAGE, A LANGUAGE DIES OUT EVERY OTHER WEEK

Somewhere in the world today, in a rural hinterland, on the foothills of a jungle, or on a mountainous terrain in a tiny hamlet, an elderly woman is whispering a story to her grandchild. A mother is singing a lullaby to make her child sleep. The language they use is one she inherited through a legacy that only the clan to which they belong can truly understand. It is a fragile, beautiful moment, but it is also a somber countdown; in two weeks, that voice may be silenced forever.

According to UNESCO, every 14 days, a language dies. This is the stark reality we confront as we gather for International Mother Language Day 2026 under the theme, "Youth Voices on Multilingual Education."

This day is not merely a celebration of linguistic diversity; it is a stand against the systematic loss of identity.

When a language fades, we lose entire universes. We lose indigenous knowledge that could cure diseases, agricultural practices perfectly adapted to local

ecosystems, and philosophical concepts that offer alternative worldviews. Yet, 40% of the global population still lacks access to education in a language they speak or understand. When we treat a mother tongue as a "barrier" rather than a foundation, we tell a child that their ancestors have nothing to contribute to the modern world. This exclusion is the root of systemic unfairness, silencing human potential before primary school even ends.

This is where the theme of 2026—"Youth Voices on Multilingual Education"—becomes our most powerful weapon. Language preservation is not an exercise in nostalgia; it is a matter of justice and equity. It requires fostering the political will to develop strategies that recognise the rights of all indigenous peoples. Fortunately, a tectonic shift is underway.

Technology is emerging as a powerful tool for revitalisation, but the true power lies in the hands that wield it.

Enter the youth of 2026: the "Digital Fire-Keepers." They

are the generation taking languages once whispered in secret and shouting them across social media. They are using AI tools to translate under-resourced dialects, building digital archives for oral histories, and turning the digital desert into a vibrant forest of many voices. They understand that multilingual education is not about choosing between the global and the local, but about embracing both.

Praiseworthy initiatives are lighting the way. The National Education Policy 2020's advocacy for mother tongue-based instruction is a landmark shift. In Odisha, the "Aame Padhibha Aama Bhasare" initiative will bring education to tribal children in their own languages, proving that a child learns best when rooted in their own culture. Institutions like KISS (Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences), have championed Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education. Kerala's "Namath Basai" similarly demonstrates the transformative power of vernacular instruction in tribal

areas wherein, it has succeeded in retaining hundreds of tribal children in their online classes using their mother tongue as language of instruction.

To the youth of today, we say: Your voice is the most sophisticated technology on Earth. Every time you speak your mother tongue, you are keeping a universe alive. Every time you teach it to the next generation, you are passing on a gift that transcends borders and time. By remaining rooted in the language of your blood while mastering the languages of the future, you are the living bridge between the elderly woman whispering her story and the generations yet to come.

You ensure that her story doesn't end in two weeks. You ensure that it echoes for the next thousand years as a vital, irreplaceable part of our planet's priceless linguistic heritage. Your voice is not just an echo of the past; it is the first word of the future.

The writer is a Senior Officer at the Parliament of India.

INFA

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Venu GS, KOLLAM



DELHI

TWO STATES

DELHI GOVT TO HIGH COURT

Private schools can't collect unregulated fee from April 1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



cause the Act prohibits it."

"The Act prohibited for the earlier year also, but it has somehow been kept in abeyance. From April 1, 2026, if they want to collect fees, which is unregulated, they cannot do it," the senior law officer said on behalf of the Delhi government.

"Giving a proposal for fees is allowed (in the Act) prior to the start of the academic year. No prejudice will be caused," he added. Raju defended the February 1 notification -- the Removal of Difficulties Order -- and said the process to determine school fees started 'earlier' than prescribed so that the fee is determined before the new academic session, in accordance with the new law.

He said under the Act, the process has to begin in July of the preceding academic year and accused the government of 'rushing'.

"The order, he said, was in the interest of schools, students and parents. The court listed the matter for hearing February 24 and also extended till then the February 10 deadline set by the Delhi government for private schools to form the SLFRCs.

The court asked the senior counsel appearing for the Action Committee Unaided Recognised Private Schools to explain why they did not want to set up the SLFRCs.

Senior advocate Akhil Sibal said the February 1 notification is legally unsustainable as it changes the timeline prescribed in the Act.

To support this, centres of excellence will be set up in emerging technology domains, along with large-scale skill development programmes, the release said.

The policy also places strong emphasis on digital inclusion and connectivity.

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 20: The Kerala cabinet Friday approved the state's Information Technology Policy 2026, setting ambitious targets to boost jobs, exports and digital governance as part of its push to become a major technology and innovation hub.

The new policy aims to secure at least a 10 per cent share of India's IT exports and create a minimum of five lakh new jobs in IT and allied sectors, an official release said after Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan-chaired cabinet approved the policy.

According to it, the government plans to triple IT infrastructure space across the state through private participation and decentralised growth, while increasing the number of startups to 20,000.

A key focus of the policy is building a knowledge-based economy driven by intellectual property and advanced technologies.

Kerala is targeting a 5 to 10 per cent share of the Indian economy in high-tech areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, electronics, genomics, defence and space technologies.

To support this, centres of excellence will be set up in emerging technology domains, along with large-scale skill development programmes, the release said.



The policy also places strong emphasis on digital inclusion and connectivity.

The government has pledged to ensure 100 per cent internet access to all households through fibre-optic connectivity. Digital education will be strengthened by introducing new ICT textbooks for Classes 1 to 10, aligned with next-generation technologies, while around 25 lakh students are to receive specialised training over the next five years.

In governance, the policy proposes a major shift towards data-driven administration. More e-governance applications will move to cloud-based platforms, and a single user interface will be developed to provide easy access to all citizen-centric government services.

Predictive and prescriptive governance services are also planned, along with a responsible data usage framework and stronger data privacy protections. To avoid duplication, the government intends to end the practice of departments separately collecting and maintaining public data.

Instead, information will be stored in a single system and shared with authorised departments through regulated APIs. State-controlled data repositories will be created to support data-driven solution companies, and open-source technologies will be encouraged, especially for software developed using public funds, the release said.

The government said the policy was prepared after detailed consultations, including the formation of a committee and seeking public feedback on the draft, and is designed to rapidly transform Kerala into a future-ready digital economy and a leading innovation hub.

new urban locations.

Global Capability Centres are expected to be encouraged, while startups will benefit from co-working spaces, angel networks and micro venture capital translation centres.

To ensure resilience, a Critical Infrastructure Fund will be set up to support the smooth functioning of IT parks during natural disasters or public health emergencies.

Inclusivity has also been highlighted, with measures to promote participation of women, persons with disabilities and transgender persons in the IT and high-tech workforce, the release said.

As part of the long-term vision, the government will launch special technology missions, including the Kerala Electronics and Semiconductor Mission, Kerala AI Mission and Kerala Future Tech Mission, aimed at building world-class capabilities in critical sectors.

A Digital Transformation Mission will also be formed to provide shared digital tools, analytics platforms, subsidised cloud space and GPU access to businesses, the release said.

The government said the policy outlines several steps to attract investment, including incentives for data centres, simplified labour laws, land pooling for new IT parks, and the expansion of plug-and-play workspaces to

portedly showed an artery forceps, after which doctors at the medical college offered to remove it next week. "However, we do not want any further issues and moved to a private hospital. The doctors here will scan and locate the exact position and will perform the surgery soon," Shabin said.

He said the family wants the instrument to be removed from his mother's body at the earliest and alleged that doctors at the medical college had said no compensation would be paid for the error.

Permanent homes for landslide survivors

Vijayan to inaugurate 280-km Phase 1 Akkulam-Chettuva Waterway Feb 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

a study, a dining area, a kitchen, and a storage space.

The township also includes a health centre, an anganwadi, a common marketplace, and a community centre.

Wayanad District Collector Dr Meghasree described the development as a 'major milestone' for the district administration.

"The keys to the first batch of beneficiaries will be handed over by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on the evening of February 25.

The district administration has taken considerable effort to achieve this, and the government's timely directions helped us reach this milestone," she said.

The draw was held in the presence of Minister for Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes O R Kelu, at the MSA Auditorium in Meppadi. Suryalatha, another beneficiary who lost her house in the landslide, said her long wait had ended.

"We have been waiting for this moment for several years. We are very happy to receive a house," she said.

However, some residents expressed concern that they had been left out despite suffering heavy losses in the 2024 disaster. As many as 46 residents of Padavettikunnu in Chooralmala alleged they were excluded from the rehabilitation scheme for landslide victims.

"Our names were not included in the welfare scheme, and we did not get houses. The authorities say that we will also be considered, but nothing has happened in the last one-and-a-half years," said Amaravathi, one of the residents.

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER
 e-Tender Notice No. 4620-GRC-CE-C-SO-06-2026: For & on behalf of President of India, Chief Engineer (CON)/Garden Reach invites e-tender for the following work : Following tender has been uploaded on website www.reps.gov.in The tender will be closed at 12.00 hrs. on due date. **Brief Description of Works** : Balance work for Dumre-Rourkela steel Plant Connectivity-Execution of Earthwork in connection, Construction of Minor Bridges, Drains works, P. Way linking works, Supply of P.Way fittings, Transportation of P.Way Materials, Supply of Ballast, Construction Goomties, approach road and other allied works. **Approx. Cost** : ₹ 54.76 Crore, **Bid Security** : ₹ 28,88,200/-, **Completion Period** : 12 months. **Closing Date** : 18.03.2026. Interested tenderers may visit website www.reps.gov.in for full details/ description/specification of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these items will be accepted. **NB** : Prospective Bidders may regularly visit www.reps.gov.in to participate in all other tenders." (PR-1215)

in multiple verticals including logistics and tourism, an official release said here Friday. V Joy, MLA, will preside over the function scheduled at 4.30pm, where Minister for Electricity K Krishnankutty will be the chief guest. The CM will also inaugurate on the occasion the Chilakoor Tourism Project, and a string of other development initiatives completed by the Inland Navigation department as part of the West Coast Canal Renovation project.

The West Coast Canal Renovation Project is being implemented by Kerala Waterways Infrastructure Limited (KWIL).

Surgical forceps found in woman's abdomen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

5 YRS AFTER PROCEDURE

Kochi, Feb 20: An artery forceps was found inside the abdomen of a Punnaprav native, five years after she underwent surgery at Alappuzha Medical College in Vandanan, relatives said Friday. Usha Joseph was shifted to a private hospital in Kochi Friday to undergo a procedure to remove the surgical instrument.

According to relatives, Joseph underwent surgery for the removal of a uterine fibroid at the medical college on May 2021.

Recently, Joseph consulted a doctor, suspecting that the pain was due to a kidney stone, who advised an X-ray examination, he said.

Shibin said the X-ray re-

portedly showed an artery forceps, after which doctors at the medical college offered to remove it next week. "However, we do not want any further issues and moved to a private hospital. The doctors here will scan and locate the exact position and will perform the surgery soon," Shabin said.

He said the family wants the instrument to be removed from his mother's body at the earliest and alleged that doctors at the medical college had said no compensation would be paid for the error.

TENDER BULLETIN NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY

(An autonomous organization under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India), First Floor, NSIC-MDPB Building, Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi 110020, Phone: 011 69095250, Website www.nta.ac.in, mail: procurement@nta.ac.in.

Two Bid System (Tech & Fin) Tenders are invited online on behalf of NTA from the eligible and experienced Agencies/ PSUs/firms for the following various activities in connection with the forthcoming NEET (UG) 2026 Exam.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Earnest Money (EMD) (Rs.)	Last Date of Submission
1	GeM/2026/B/7238608	CCTV Surveillance	Rs.25.00 Crores	Rs.25 Lakh	6th March 2026
2	GeM/2026/B/7240881	Frisking & Crowd Control	Rs.7.00 Crores	Rs.7 Lakh	7th March 2026
3	GeM/2026/B/7238683	Biometric (Aadhaar based)	Rs. 15 Crores	Rs. 15 Lakh	7th March 2026

Tender Form available at www.gem.gov.in & link available on NTA's website www.nta.ac.in Submission through e-Tendering on GeM portal only.

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Sd/ Director (Procurement)

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E - AUCTION SALE NOTICE

AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY Appendix IV-A (See proviso to Rule 8 (6) & Rule 9(1)) E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) and Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of IDBI BANK LTD., Secured Creditor, will be sold on AS IS WHERE IS, AS IS WHAT IS, AND "WHATEVER THERE IS" AND WITHOUT RECOURE basis on 23.03.2026, for recovery of due to the Secured Creditor from - A Ham Fish, Prop.: Rojeda Khatun (Mortgagor) / Guarantor: Zulfeqbar Ali Saqueb, Both are Address-1: Kaji Sahi, Nanga Mahalla, Near Masjid, Bhadrak Town, Bhadrak, Odisha, PIN-756100, Address-2: Khata No-324, Plot No-1060, Quazisahi, Baliorada, Purunabazar, Nanga Mahalla, Bhadrak, Odisha, PIN-756100

Important date
19.03.2026 (11.00 A.M to 1.00 P.M)

3. Last Date of Submission of Bid along with EMD 20.03.2026 (Till 4.00 P.M)

4. Date and Time of e-auction 23.03.2026 (11.00 A.M to 12 Noon with unlimited extension of 5 min).

5. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in www.baanknet.com and IDBI Bank's website i.e. www.idbibrain.com

For any clarification, the interested parties may contact, Shri Lalit Kumar Patra, AGM, Branch Head (M) 876340140, E-mail: lalit.patra@idbi.co.in, Smt. Suchismita Dutta, Manager, Retail recovery (M) 9830508961, E-mail: suchismita.nandy@idbi.co.in. For e-auction support, you may contact PSB Alliance Pvt Ltd, Mob No.: 82912020/E-mail: support.baanknet@psballiance.com.

This is 30 days' Notice under Rule 8(6) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) / Mortgagor(s) of the Loan.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in www.idbibrain.com Secured Creditor's website

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 20.02.2026

Sd/- Authorised Officer, IDBI Bank Ltd.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Tech

giant Microsoft Friday launched 'Elevate for Educators in India', an initiative designed to skill 20 lakh teachers in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and reach 2 lakh schools and educational institutions by 2030, top officials said.

Microsoft Vice Chair and President Brad Smith launched the initiative during his visit to a CM SHRI school in the national capital. India is the first country in Asia to launch the programme, which is set to

be scaled across all 75 CM SHRI schools here.

"As AI becomes part of everyday learning, we want to ensure it strengthens education, preserves human judgment, and earns the trust of educators and learners. By taking AI at this scale across India, we want it to open new opportunities and deliver meaningful outcomes for teachers and students," Smith said. According to the Delhi government, CM SHRI Schools are designed as comprehensive institutions aligned with the vision of a developed India by 2047, focusing on knowledge, skills and values.

**GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA
OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, KODALA**
 Odisha, Pin - 761032, e-Mail : nackodala@gmail.com
 Lt. No.472/ Dev / 2026
e-NOTICE
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. KOD-NAC-18/2025-26
 No.13001331/2526 : The Executive Officer, NAC, Kodala, On behalf of Governor Odisha invites for consultancy or bidders of eligible class registered with the State Govt. and bidders of equivalent grade/class registered with central Govt./MES/Railways according to norm of e-procurement system in online mode for the work as per DTCN.

1. Name of the Work : Civil Work
 2. Number of Work : 04 Nos.
 3. Estimated cost : As per DTCN
 4. Period of Completion : As per DTCN
 5. Date and Time of availability of Bid Document in the Portal : From 10.00 A.M. of Dt. 02.02.2026 to 05.00 P.M. of Dt. 06.03.2026
 6. Last date and time for receipt of Bid in the Portal : 05.00 P.M. of Dt. 06.03.2026
 7. The bid received online shall be opened on 11.00 A.M. of dt. 07.03.2026
 8. Name and Address of the Officer : Executive Officer, NAC, Kodala inviting Bid
 Further details can be seen from the Procurement Portal : www.tendersorissa.gov.in

national

of the day quote

Cleaning Yamuna was a legacy problem. When we took over, it was evident that the previous government did not pay much attention to river. We started revamping the existing infrastructure, including the planned construction of 12 new STPs

REKHA GUPTA | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI

Democracy is truly strengthened when both the ruling and opposition parties work in tandem and always keep in mind the letter and spirit of our Constitution

ASHIM KUMAR GHOSH | GOVERNOR, HARYANA

When there is no correct data, we could not prepare an effective action plan or future strategy. Earlier, our approach was problem-to-solution. Now we are working towards universal and long-term solutions based on data

YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH

SHORT TAKES

Delhi HC grants bail to Thar driver

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has granted bail to the driver of a speeding Thar who allegedly mowed down two persons in Chanakypuri in August last year. Justice Manoj Jain directed that Ashish Bachchan be released on bail considering his young age, absence of previous antecedents and "overall facts of the case". The car of the 26-year-old accused allegedly ran down two persons around 6.30 am August 10, last year near Gate Number 3 of Talkatora Stadium.

Shah launches part 2 of VVP

Nathapur (Assam): Union Home Minister Amit Shah Friday launched the second phase of the Vibrant Village Programme (VVP) from Assam and inspected a stretch of the Indo-Bangladesh border. During the first of his two-day visit to the poll-bound state, he also accused the Congress of allowing infiltration and not initiating development during its rule. Shah launched the second phase of the VVP across the country from here in Assam's Cachar district, and asserted that the project would help stop migration from border areas and prevent infiltration.

SC rejects plea to bar Babur names

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a plea seeking a direction to restrain the construction, establishment or naming of any mosque or religious structure in the name of Mughal emperor Babur or Babri Masjid. After a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta showed its disinclination in entertaining the plea, the counsel appearing for the petitioner withdrew it. "Dismissed as withdrawn," the bench said.

Activist arrested over fake KAS defamation

Bangalore: Social activist Snehayam Krishnan was arrested for allegedly creating fake documents and uploading a fabricated audio clip on social media to defame a senior KAS officer, police said Friday. Krishnan, a resident of Mysuru, was taken into custody by the Central Crime Branch, they said.



If money continues to be distributed unchecked, how will democracy survive? This amounts to the murder of democracy

ASHOK GEHLOT | FORMER CHIEF MINISTER, RAJASTHAN

TVK FIRM ON NO ALLIANCE WITH BJP

Actor-politician Vijay-led TVK on Friday asserted that the party would not forge an alliance with the BJP, despite what it described as mounting pressure from the saffron party



NH toll plazas may go cashless from April 1

NHAI proposes only FASTag, UPI payments

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: Highways authority NHAI is considering discontinuing cash payments at highway toll plazas from April 1, requiring commuters to use only digital modes such as FASTag or UPI for toll payments.

Post implementation, all toll payments at National Highway fee plazas will be processed exclusively through digital modes, using FASTag or Unified Payments Interface (UPI), the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) said.

The authority said it is contemplating completely discon-

tinuing cash transactions at the National Highway fee plazas across the country from April 1, 2026, in order to develop a fully digital National Highway tolling ecosystem.

The proposed measure is aimed at consolidating the gains achieved in Electronic Toll Collection and strengthening the efficiency & reliability of National Highway fee plaza operations, it said.

The transition will help to enhance 'Ease of Commuting' for National Highway users by improving lane throughput, reducing congestion at fee plazas and bringing greater consistency and transparency in toll transactions.

In the past few years, over 98 per cent penetration of FASTag has significantly transformed



toll collection practices in the country. At present, an overwhelming proportion of toll transactions are processed electronically through RFID-enabled FASTag affixed to vehicles, facilitating seamless and contactless movement across toll plazas. In addition, UPI payment facilities have been operationalized at the National Highway toll plazas, ensur-

ing availability of instant and accessible digital payment options for National Highway commuters nationwide.

As per National Highway fee rules, vehicles entering a fee plaza without a valid, functional FASTag are charged twice the applicable user fee, if the fee payment is made in cash. Whereas National Highway users who opt to pay via

UPI are charged only 1.25 times of the user fee for the applicable vehicle category.

These initiatives have collectively advanced the objective of reducing dependency on cash transactions and digitizing the tolling framework.

Plaza-level assessments indicate that cash-based payments contribute to congestion, increased waiting times during peak traffic periods and transaction-related disputes.

A complete transition to digital only mode of payment will strengthen operational efficiency, improve traffic management, minimise delays and enhance overall National Highway user experience at over 1,150 fee plazas on various National Highways and Expressways in the country.

Fresh tension in Karnataka's Bagalkote

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bagalkote (Karnataka), Feb 20: A tense situation prevailed in Bagalkote Friday as several people took to the streets and allegedly hurled stones at meat shops despite prohibitory orders being in place, prompting police to resort to a mild lathi-charge, police sources said.

Superintendent of Police Siddharth Goyal said the procession had begun from the old town at about 3.30 pm and was nearing completion when the stone-pelting incident occurred around 9.30 pm Thursday near a mosque at Kila Oni in Navanagar area.

"There was a shoe rack in mosque and two stones were kept beneath it to support it. One of those stones was used and it fell on our police personnel. No one sustained serious injuries," he said.

According to the senior official, Tanzeer has been named as the prime accused.

"In the video footage, he is clearly seen pelting two stones. I am making it very clear that only one person pelted stones. No sticks or weapons were used," Goyal said.

Seven others were arrested for allegedly obstructing police personnel while they were discharging their duty.

The police have registered an FIR on its own under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including sections for unlawful assembly, rioting, attempt to murder, assault or criminal force to deter a public servant from discharge of duty, and for intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace.

"We have arrested eight people including Tanzeer," the SP said.

"After this incident, the procession continued very peacefully. Leaders from both communities cooperated with us. As a preventive measure, we have clamped prohibitory orders. The situation is under control," he added. The accused were identified based on video evidence and strict action has been initiated.

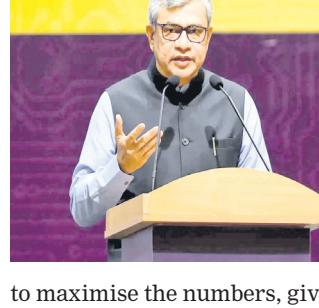
Adequate security arrangements have been made and the situation remains under control, he added.

Prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita have been imposed in parts of Bagalkote from midnight of February 19 to midnight of February 24.

India AI Summit draws \$250bn infra commitments

70 nations back Delhi declaration, more expected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Feb 20: India's AI Impact Summit has secured investment commitments of over \$250 billion in infrastructure and already garnered support from 70 countries for the proposed Delhi Declaration, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said Friday, calling the event a "grand success."

Vaishnav said the summit saw participation from over 5 lakh visitors, reflecting strong domestic and global engagement with India's AI push.

He added that the number of countries signing the Delhi Declaration is expected to cross 80 by the time the summit concludes Saturday. While the Minister did not provide details of the Summit, slated to be unveiled Saturday, sources said the US is also on board.

Vaishnav said the summit saw strong global backing, with 70 countries already signing on to the proposed Delhi Declaration. The number of signatories is expected to cross 80 by the time the event concludes on Saturday, he added.

"There is a huge consensus on the declaration, we just want

to maximise the numbers, given the size of the Summit that has happened," he said.

The minister said full details of the Delhi Declaration would be shared transparently after the summit ends.

He also criticised the opposition, saying whatever little effort was made by the Congress to disrupt the summit was rejected by India's youth, asserting that the event had overwhelming public support.

The India AI Impact Summit brought together global policymakers, industry leaders and technology experts, positioning India as a key player in shaping international AI governance and infrastructure development.

"More than five lakh visitors participated in the exhibition,

learnt a lot, and interacted with many experts from around the world. We had practically every major AI player in the world participating in large numbers. We had so many startups getting the opportunity to showcase their work. Overall the quality of discussion was phenomenal," he said.

Be it the ministerial dialog, the leaders plenary, the main inauguration function, or the Summit overall, the quality of participation and dialog was phenomenal, Vaishnav pointed out.

"Everybody felt happy that we have brought the discussion about responsible and ethical AI to the forefront," he said.

The investment pledged has crossed \$250 billion for infra-related investments and about \$20 billion for the VC/deep tech investments, which have been committed by investors. Vaishnav said noting that the numbers are important, but what is important also is the world has confidence in India's role in the new AI age.

The last action summit had 60 signatories in the final declaration, the India AI Impact Summit has already surpassed the 70 milestone.

PROTEST AT AI SUMMIT IYC workers held; Cong-BJP face off

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: A group of Indian Youth Congress workers Friday staged a dramatic 'shirtless protest' at an AI Impact Summit exhibition hall, walking around holding t-shirts with slogans against the government and the India-US trade deal printed on them, triggering a strong reaction from the ruling BJP, and the police to arrest four of them.

The scene unfolded around noon inside Exhibition Hall No 5 at the Bharat Mandapam, as protesters repeatedly raised the slogan, "PM is compromised".

Wearing or holding matching white t-shirts with images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump printed on them, along with slogans such as "India-US Trade Deal", "Epstein Files" and "PM is compromised", the IYC workers, numbering at least 10, walked in the hallway, sending it into a state of commotion.

The protest, which lasted a few minutes before the group was bundled out of the hall, caught the guests and other visitors by surprise, many of whom watched on in disbelief, given the significance of the AI Summit that India is hosting.

Following the incident, the

Delhi Police arrested four IYC workers in connection with the protest at the Summit venue, with a senior officer saying that the police are probing a wider conspiracy angle in the case.

Earlier, around 10 people were detained after the protest.

The BJP slammed the Congress for the protest, alleging that a "ruckus" was created at the venue to sabotage India's global image at the behest of former party chief Rahul Gandhi.

Congress leader Pawan Khera, in a video posted on X, said the IYC "removed the posters" and made the country notice the "cracks in the walls."

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra said, "For the Congress, I have just three words - topless, braless and shameless."

Talking to PTI Videos, Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan termed the protest an "act of sedition" and said the protesters exposed the "AI or against-India" face of the Congress. In a statement, IYC national president Uday Bhanu Chib said, "Peaceful protest is our right in a democracy, and we will continue to raise the voice of the youth."

He asserted that the organisation was not against the AI Summit but against "any compromise with India's interests."

to disperse the unruly mob.

"We are currently not allowing people to roam in the affected area unnecessarily and are using drones to monitor the situation," Upadhyay said.

Additional SP Suryakant Sharma confirmed that 49 people have been arrested so far, with more suspects expected to be identified within 24 hours.

District Collector Raghavendra Singh denied reports that stones were hurled at the temple, as claimed by some Hindu activists and told PTI that "stone-pelting occurred between two groups, leading to the violence, and the situation is currently under control. Curfew will not be imposed."

US leads AI brain race; India at 6th spot: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: The United States has bagged the first rank followed by China and Singapore while India has been ranked at the sixth spot, according to Global AI Brain Race Report 2026.

The study, published by esayhumaniser.io, evaluates over 100 countries using a weighted framework combining artificial intelligence (AI) R&D, economic integration, infrastructure, talent readiness, governance, responsible AI, public opinion and academic strength.

The United States ranks first with a final score of 82 out of

100, leading in AI R&D (19.15 out of 27.78), economic integration (22.22 out of 22.22) and infrastructure (16.21 out of 16.67).

China ranks second with a final score of 59 out of 100, supported by the world's largest AI education base with 107 top AI universities and strong R&D (17.22 out of 27.78).

Singapore ranks third with a score of 37 out of 100, despite having only two AI universities, due to exceptional academic quality with an average subject score of 90.50 and a global score of 82.00, combined with strong talent readiness (9.31 out of 16.67).

At the fourth and fifth spots are South Korea and the UK.

Tension prevails in MP town after communal clash; 49 held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jabalpur, Feb 20: Tension gripped Sihora town in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district after a clash between Hindu and Muslim groups led to stone-pelting and vandalism, prompting police to lob teargas shells, officials said Friday. They said 49 people had been arrested so far and efforts are on to nab others involved in the unrest.

The violence erupted around 10 PM Thursday near Azad Chowk, an area where a Durga temple and a mosque are located in close proximity.

While officials stated the situation is now under control and no injuries were reported, a

heavy police presence remains on the ground, and most local shops remained closed Friday.

Hindu organisations alleged that some miscreants broke the iron gate of the temple while an 'aarti' was being performed and also hurled stones while local Muslim residents said the clash

erupted when the special Ramzan prayer and temple aarti were taking place simultaneously.

Superintendent of Police Sampat Upadhyay said that after initial attempts to use "mild force" failed to disperse the crowd, police had to resort to firing eight to ten teargas shells

Wedding called off in UP after clash over bride's pet dog; 5 hurt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kanpur, Feb 20: A wedding ceremony in Uttar Pradesh's Fatehpur district was called off after a dispute over the bride's pet dog spiralled into a violent clash between the two families, leaving at least five people injured, police said Friday.

The incident occurred early Thursday at a guest house in the Khaga area, where Sumit Kesarwani, 25, a local jeweller, was to marry Tanu Kesarwani, 19, from Prayagraj.

The couple had been in a relationship for nearly two years and were entering into a love marriage with the consent of

their families, police said. Trouble began while wedding rituals were underway. The bride's pet dog, which had been brought along by her family and tied some distance from the venue, started barking.

Members of the groom's side allegedly tried to silence the animal, and one of them is accused of beating it. This triggered a heated argument that quickly escalated into a physical altercation.

Eyewitnesses said chairs and sticks were used during the scuffle.

Three members

national

of the day quote

In this election, it is very clear that the AIADMK-BJP alliance will be rejected by the people. They will come in third place. (Actually) we are talking about two parties that are not even in the race



MANICKAM TAGORE | CONGRESS MP

Arunachal's geographical location reinforces national security while serving as a gateway to Southeast Asia. Rich in hydropower potential, forests and biodiversity, the state is poised to become a hub of energy self-reliance and sustainable growth



KT PARNAIK | GOVERNOR, ARUNACHAL PRADESH

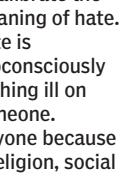
From an open space to a world-class gateway in just a few years. This transformation reflects a clear vision for a more connected and confident Assam



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA | CHIEF MINISTER, ASSAM

X POST
OF THE DAY

We need to recalibrate the meaning of hate. Hate is subconsciously wishing ill on someone.



Never wish ill on anyone because of their skin color, religion, social status, or country of birth. Twisting someone's words to manipulate others is evil. Wronging society for personal gain is evil.

@sabeer

SHORT TAKES

Manipur journalists hold protest in Imphal

Imphal: Journalists in Manipur staged a sit-in here Friday to protest against the assault of the senior editor of a local newspaper by armed men. During the protest, jointly organised by All Manipur Working Journalists Union (AMWJU) and Editors' Guild Manipur (EGM) at Keisampat Leimajam Leikai, the scribes raised slogans and held placards with "we oppose attack on media persons" and "stop intimidating media persons" written on them. Armed men intercepted the car of Khoirom Loyalakpa, the editor of Manipuri daily Naharolgi Thoudang, near Hatta Cemetery, around 10 pm Wednesday, police said.

128 fishermen from Gujarat in Pak jails

Gandhinagar: A total of 128 fishermen from Gujarat are currently languishing in Pakistani jails, the state assembly was informed Friday. State Fisheries Minister Jitu Vaghani shared this information while responding to a query raised by Aam Aadmi Party MLA Gopal Italia during Question Hour of the ongoing Budget Session. Vaghani said 128 fishermen are still behind bars in Pakistan as January 20.

3 of family held for 'murdering' trans

Ballia (UP): Days after a man died by suicide and the body of a 65-year-old transgender was found in the same house here, police have arrested his parents and wife on charges of murdering the latter, officials said Friday. Circle Officer (Bairia) Mohammad Faheem Qureshi said that three accused, Vijay Kumar Gupta, his wife Rita Devi, and his daughter-in-law Mona Kumari, were arrested Thursday.

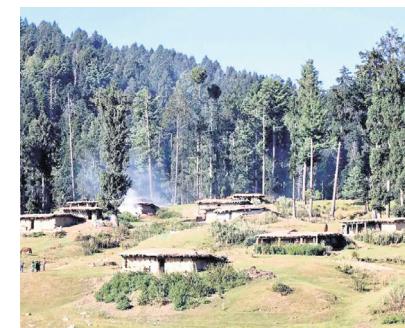


The situation in Bihar is extremely unfortunate. Our CM appears unconscious and unconcerned about ground realities. The BJP is using him like a puppet

TEJASHWI YADAV | LEADER OF OPPOSITION, BIHAR

OVER 41,900 FOREST RIGHTS CLAIMS IN J&K UNDER FRA

A total of 41,944 claims have been received across Jammu and Kashmir under the Forest Rights Act, with 28,925 individual forest rights claims and 13,019 community forest rights claims, the Union Territory government informed the Assembly Friday



DEFAMATION CASE

Rahul says case filed out of political malice

UP court fixes March 9 as next date of hearing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

defaming anyone. A false complaint has been filed by distorting my statement," Shukla quoted Gandhi as saying.

"The allegations have been made against me out of political malice with the aim of destroying my image and that of my party. I have never used derogatory words against anyone, nor have I used such language with the intention of defaming anyone," Gandhi told the court.

As the Congress leader emerged from the court after recording his statement, party supporters raised slogans hailing him. Gandhi smiled and waved at the crowd before leaving.

Gandhi entered the Sultanpur court around 10.40 am and left after recording statements around 11.15 am.

Ahead of the court hearing, some local Congress leaders had put up posters in Sultanpur that read 'Satyamev Jayate' (truth always triumphs).

The case dates back to 2018 when local BJP leader and former chairman of the District Cooperative Bank Vijay Mishra had filed a defamation complaint against Gandhi.



PAX SILICA

share trusted AI technology with the world and especially with partners like India," he said.

"And critically, India brings strength. Peace doesn't come from hoping adversaries will play fair. We all know they won't. Peace comes through strength. India understands this, India understands strong borders," he said.

"India understands this part of the world. That strength, that sovereignty is exactly what Pax-Silica amplifies. Because here's the truth, strength multiplies when it's connected."

India signed a pact to formally join the Pax Silica at a ceremony held at the AI Impact summit. It was attended by

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw, Helberg and Gor.

In his address, Vaishnaw framed the moment as one that transcends a ceremonial signing.

"We are not just holding a summit; we are building the future," he said, emphasising that new foundations and new opportunities are being created for the younger generation.

He underscored India's growing semiconductor capabilities, stating, "Today, India's talented engineers are designing the world's most advanced two-nanometer chips. The semiconductor industry will require

around one million new skilled professionals, and this is a very big opportunity for India."

New Delhi's decision to join the coalition came amid efforts by both sides to finalise the proposed trade deal and move forward on several other initiatives to solidify bilateral ties after a period of severe strain.

"For too long, we have allowed the foundations of our economic security to drift. We find ourselves grappling with a global supply chain that is massively over-concentrated," Helberg said.

"We watch as our friends and allies face daily threats of economic coercion and blackmail, forced to choose between their sovereignty and their prosperity."

Helberg said the US and India are affirming their embrace of a pro-innovation approach to AI and forging a supply chain for a solid foundation for prosperity.

"So today, as we signed the Pax-Silica declaration, we say no to weaponised dependency, and we say no to blackmail. And together, we say that economic security is national security."

"But we must be precise about what that word means. There are some who use the words like global governance and sovereignty in the same breath, just like Orwell used," he said.

India joins US-led 'Pax Silica' alliance

US Under Secretary for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg, welcoming India to the coalition, flagged challenges arising out of 'massively over-concentrated' supply chains for critical minerals and threats of economic coercion and blackmail'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: India Friday joined the US-led strategic alliance called 'Pax Silica' that aims to build a resilient supply chain for critical minerals and artificial intelligence with both sides projecting it as an initiative to cut over-dependence on one country, seen as an oblique apparent reference to China.

US Under Secretary for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg, welcoming India to the coalition, flagged challenges arising out of 'massively over-concentrated' supply chains for critical minerals and 'threats of economic coercion and blackmail'.

Though Helberg didn't name any country, it was almost clear that his remarks were directed at China's export controls on rare earth minerals and related products.

China has been controlling the flow of rare earth minerals which have a wide range of applications including in electronics, clean energy, aerospace, automotive, and defence sectors.

US Ambassador Sergio Gor, welcoming India to Pax-Silica, said the country brings strength to the coalition.

"Policies that will reinforce US-India tech cooperation will power AI innovation and adoption for years to come. We can



People offer prayers on the first Friday of Ramzan at Jama Masjid, in New Delhi, Friday

Cong appoints Vinod Jakhar as NSUI nat'l prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



work and leadership.

Jakhar, a Dalit leader who previously served as the president of the Rajasthan University Student Union, takes charge at a time when student politics is set to gain momentum with university elections approaching, including the Delhi University Students' Union (DUSU) polls.

Jakhar drew attention in September last year, when he was arrested and sent to jail on charges of vandalism at an RSS 'Shastra Pujan' event at the Rajasthan University.

India supports 2-state solution to Palestine issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: India Friday reaffirmed its support for a two-state solution to the Palestine issue and said it had joined

more than 100 countries and international organisations in a statement condemning Israel's attempts to expand unlawful settlements in the West Bank.

India did not figure in the initial statement that was endorsed by around 80 countries and organisations. Palestine's UN envoy Riyad Mansour released it Tuesday.

A fresh statement saw India and around 20 countries and organisations back it.

Asked why India was not part of the initial statement, External affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing that the document had not been negotiated by the countries and organisations as has been the norm.

"Our position on this particular issue was most recently expressed in the India-Arab League ministerial joint statement," he said.

In their meeting held in New Delhi January 31, India and the Arab League pitched for a sovereign and viable Palestine state living side-by-side with Israel.

Post SIR, voter base shrinks in Gujarat, Lakshadweep, Puducherry

In Gujarat, while the electorate before the SIR stood at 5.08 crore, it shrunk to 4.40 crore -- a net change of 68.12 lakh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



at 5.19 crore. After publication of final rolls, their total voter base came down to 4.50 crore -- a net change of 68.9 lakh.

In Gujarat, while the electorate before the SIR stood at 5.08 crore, it shrunk to 4.40 crore -- a net change of 68.12 lakh. In

percentage terms, a net change of 13.40 per cent.

In Lakshadweep, before the poll roll cleanup exercise, the voter base stood at 57,813. But after the publication of the final electoral rolls, it went down to 57,607 -- a net change of 206 electors. In percentage terms, a net change of 0.36 per cent.

In poll-bound Puducherry, the total number of electors before SIR commenced was over 10.21 lakh. It shrunk to 9.44 lakh when the final rolls were published -- a net change of 7.57 per cent in percentage terms.

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

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

The remaining 40 crore electors will be covered in these 17 states and five Union territories.

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 Union territories have seen frequent tweaking in schedules.

Like Bihar, political parties have approached the Supreme Court challenging SIR in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

international



Our party is faced with heavy and urgent historic tasks of boosting economic construction and the people's standard of living and transforming all realms of state and social life as early as possible

KIM JONG UN | LEADER, NORTH KOREA

US ALIEN FILES INCOMING

President Donald Trump said he would direct federal agencies to begin releasing government files related to aliens and unidentified flying objects, pointing to what he described as strong public interest in the issue. In a social media post, Trump said he would order Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth and other agencies to release the information, calling the matter "extremely interesting and important"



TRUMP TARIFFS

SC brings relief to nations

President Donald Trump paid a price for going it alone on tariffs - with the Supreme Court delivering a rare rebuke by ruling he lacked the power to declare an economic emergency and launch sweeping new taxes on imports



Liberation Day' tariffs

Trump used IEEPA to slap import taxes on nearly every country in the world last spring. On April 2, which Trump called Liberation Day, he imposed "reciprocal" tariffs of up to 50 per cent on goods from dozens of countries - and a baseline 10 per cent tariff on just about everyone else.

The 10 per cent tax kicked in early April. But the bulk of Liberation Day's higher levies got delayed by several months, and many rates were revised over time (in some cases after new "framework" agreements). Most went into effect August 7.

The national emergency underlying these tariffs, Trump argued at the time, was the long-running gap between what the US sells and what it

buys from the rest of the world. Still, goods from countries with which the US runs a trade surplus also faced taxes.

Major trading partners impacted by Liberation Day tariffs include South Korea, Japan and the European Union - which combined export a range of products to the US, like electronics, cars and car parts and pharmaceuticals. Following trade talks, Trump's rates on most goods stood at 15 per cent for the EU, Japan and South Korea ahead of Friday. But just last month, Trump threatened to hike levies on certain South Korean products to 25 per cent - and countries worldwide still face sector-specific, non-IEEPA tariffs.

Refunds could be 'a mess'

The Treasury had collected more than \$133 billion from the import taxes the president has imposed under the emergency powers law as of December, federal data shows. But the Supreme Court did not address whether the companies and individuals who paid those tariffs could be refunded. Many companies, including the big-box warehouse chain Costco, have already lined up to demand refunds in lower courts. Brett Kavanaugh, who dissented from Friday's decision, noted the process could be complicated. "The Court says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the Government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers. But that process is likely to be a mess," was acknowledged at oral argument, Kavanaugh wrote.

Tariffs on India linked to Russian oil

India has faced additional IEEPA tariffs, too. After Liberation Day, Trump slapped a 25 per cent levy on Indian imports - and later added another 25 per cent for the country's purchases of Russian oil, while also citing the emergency powers law, bringing the total to 50 per cent.

But earlier this month, the US and India reached a trade framework deal. Trump said Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to stop buying Russian oil, and that he planned to lower US tariffs on its ally to 18 per cent.

Meanwhile, India said it would "eliminate or reduce tariffs" on all US industrial goods and a range of agricultural products.

Indian's top exports to the US include pharmaceuticals, precious stones, clothing and textiles.

Trafficking tariffs' on Canada, China, Mexico

At the start of his second term, Trump used IEEPA to impose new tariffs on America's three biggest trading partners: Mexico, Canada and China.

To justify these tariffs, Trump declared a national emergency ostensibly over undocumented immigration and the trafficking of drugs like fentanyl and the chemicals made to use it.

The levies were first announced at the start of February 2025, but went into effect over time - and were at times delayed, reduced or heightened through further retaliation.

Ahead of Friday's decision, "trafficking tariffs" on Canadian and Mexican imports were 35 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, for goods that don't comply with the 2020 United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement. China, meanwhile, faced a 10 per cent fentanyl-related tariff. That's down from 20 per cent imposed by Trump earlier last year.

Spain's top court rejects father's appeal to halt daughter's euthanasia

REUTERS

Madrid, Feb 20: Spain's Constitutional Court has rejected an appeal by the father of a 25-year-old paraplegic woman who opposes her access to euthanasia, the court said in a statement Friday.

In 2021, Spain became the fourth European Union country to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide for people with incurable or severely debilitating conditions who wish to end their lives. In 2024, 426 people received assistance in dying, according to government data.

According to legal rulings, the woman, who is suffering from a psychiatric illness, attempted suicide several times by overdosing on medication before jumping from a fifth-floor window in October 2022, an act that left her paraplegic and in chronic pain.

In July 2024, a specialised expert committee in her region, Catalonia, approved her request for euthanasia. The procedure was scheduled for August 2, 2024, but her father has blocked it ever since.

Medical case reports state that the patient is suffering from severe, chronic and incapacitating pain from her injury, with no possibility of improvement.

The father, supported by the ultra-conservative advocacy group Abogados Cristianos ("Christian Lawyers"), argued that his daughter's mental illness could impair her ability to make a free and informed decision about ending her life.

France allows culling of around 200 wolves to protect livestock

REUTERS

Paris, Feb 20: French authorities have allowed the culling of around 200 wolves as packs are spreading in farmlands and roaming near large cities, Agriculture Minister Annie Genevard said Friday.

A little more than 1,000 wolves are present in France and her services have increased the limit to the culling to 21% - so a little more than 200 - from an earlier 19%, and it could be increased again to 23%, she said.

"The wolf is causing increasing damage to our livestock farms, plunging farmers into a state of stress and even terrible pain," she told the French radio station France Inter.

Last year, an acrimonious debate pitting farmers against animal protection groups over wolves, whose numbers, as well as attacks on livestock, are on the rise, ended with a vote in the European Parliament in favour of farmers. European lawmakers last May agreed to downgrade the wolf's status to "protected", which means EU countries can allow wolf hunting, but must still take steps to stop the animals becoming endangered.

Pak in clutches of poverty



Poverty, which stood at 21.9% in 2018-19, rose by almost 6.9% to reach 28.8% in 2024-25, showing an increase in all provinces

Percentage of people living below the poverty line had shown a declining trend from 50.4% in 2005-06 to 21.9% in 2018-19

khyber Pakhtunkhwa as compared to Balochistan, but no data has been provided about the province-wise rise in poverty.

The increase has reversed gains in the past, as the percentage of people living below the poverty line had shown a declining trend from 50.4% in 2005-06 to 21.9% in 2018-19.

When contacted, Chairman of the Poverty Estimation

Committee Arif confirmed that the committee submitted its recommendations and report to the government. However, he declined to comment when asked about the exact poverty prevalence rate in Pakistan, the paper said.

Earlier, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal had constituted the 17-member high-powered Poverty Estimation Committee.

He took action following the completion of the Household Integrated Economic Survey (HIES) 2024-25, and in line with the ministry's mandate to estimate national poverty and inequality figures.

According to official sources, the government calculates poverty using the Cost of Basic Needs (CBN) approach, adjusted by CPI-based inflation, to determine the threshold.

Europe's main military powers to make low-cost air-defence systems



This is the challenge of our times - technologies are changing... and we must respond very quickly

WŁADYSLAW KOSINIĄK-KAMYSZ | DEFENCE MINISTER, POLAND

while "autonomous platforms" are unmanned systems capable of independent decision-making. The 'Low-Cost Effectors and Autonomous Platforms' initiative, known as LEAP, involves the development of advanced low-cost air-defence systems - such as autonomous drones or missiles - the first project of which will be delivered by 2027, the UK government said in a separate statement.

"We have just signed a very important commitment on the joint development of drone-based strike capabilities, low-cost, joint production, and joint procurement of low-cost drone effectors and payloads," Polish Defence Minister Włodzisław Kosiniak-Kamysz said.

The paper reported that the increase was more marked in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa as compared to Balochistan, but no data has been provided about the province-wise rise in poverty.

The increase has reversed gains in the past, as the percentage of people living below the poverty line had shown a declining trend from 50.4% in 2005-06 to 21.9% in 2018-19.

When contacted, Chairman of the Poverty Estimation

7 Chinese tourists

drown in Russian lake

Moscow: Seven Chinese tourists and a bus driver are feared dead after a tourist bus driving across a frozen stretch of Lake Baikal in Russia's Siberia plunged into the water when the ice broke beneath it, local governor, Igor Kostyuk, said Friday via his channel in Telegram. One tourist managed to escape, and the search for the others continues, he said. The world's deepest lake, located north of Mongolia, is a popular destination for tourists. The Irkutsk region prosecutor's office said that a criminal case had been opened and the circumstances were being investigated. Chinese tourism in Russia has soared in the past years amid political rapprochement between the two neighbours and "no limits" strategic partnership declared last year, while mutual visa free travel regime has been introduced.

Gunmen kill 33

Abuja: At least 33 people have been killed after Islamic militants launched simultaneous attacks on a district in northwest Nigeria, according to the police. The attack took place on Wednesday in the Bui community of Kebbi state, police spokesman Bashir Usman said in a statement late Thursday night. The assailants crossed from Sokoto state, parts of which are occupied by the Laijawa insurgent group, Usman said.

Epstein fallout: British police search royal mansion

INVESTIGATION INTO KING'S BROTHER ANDREW GOES ON

REUTERS



of disbelief on his face.

The photograph of a man who was once a dashing naval officer and reputed favourite son of the late Queen Elizabeth was carried on the front page of newspapers in Britain and around the world, accompanied by headlines such as "Downfall".

Mountbatten-Windsor has always denied any wrongdoing in relation to Epstein, a convicted sex offender who took his own life in 2019, and said he regrets their friendship. But the release of millions of documents by the US government showed he had remained friends with Epstein

gapore and other places he had visited as the government's Special Representative for Trade and Investment.

The arrest of the senior royal, eighth in line to the throne, is unprecedented in modern times. The last member of the royal family to be arrested in Britain was Charles I, who was beheaded in 1649 after being found guilty of treason.

King Charles, who stripped his brother of his title of prince and forced him out of his Windsor home last year, said Thursday he had learned about the arrest with "deepest concern".

"Let me state clearly: the law must take its course," the king said. "What now follows is the full, fair and proper process by which this issue is investigated in the appropriate manner and by the appropriate authorities

CHARLES III | KING, UNITED KINGDOM

■ Police arrested Mountbatten-Windsor Thursday

■ Police investigating suspicion of misconduct in public office

■ Former prince was released after being held for 10 hours

■ King says law must take its course

long after the financier was convicted of soliciting prostitution from a minor in 2008.

Those files suggested Mountbatten-Windsor had forwarded to Epstein British government reports about investment opportunities in Afghanistan and assessments of Vietnam, Sin-

king's Sandringham estate in Norfolk, eastern England, where Mountbatten-Windsor now resides.

Thames Valley Police officers also searched the mansion on the king's Windsor estate west of London where Mountbatten-Windsor had lived before being forced out amid anger at the Epstein revelations.

Officers said late Thursday that the royal had been released under investigation. They said the searches at Sandringham had concluded but the searches in Windsor were continuing.

While being arrested means that police have reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed and that the royal is suspected of involvement in an offence, it does not imply guilt.

A conviction for misconduct in a public office carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, and cases must be dealt with in a Crown Court, which handle the most serious criminal offences.

of the
day quote**EARNINGS OPTIMISM
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At Cars24, we are deeply confident about the quality of the cars we sell. That confidence is what allows us to offer a Lifetime Warranty and stand by the most critical systems of the car for a much longer part of the ownership journey

HIMANSU RATNOO | CEO INDIA, CARS24

AGENCIES

Mumbai, Feb 20: Indian share benchmarks logged weekly gains, helped by a tactical bounce Friday, as optimism around earnings recovery fueled gains in banks, while worries about US-Iran tensions and AI disruption weighed.

The Nifty 50 added 0.46% to 25,571.25 Friday, and the BSE Sensex rose 0.38% to 82,814.71. They rose 0.4% and 0.2% for the week.

Twelve of the 16 major sectors logged weekly gains. The broader small-caps fell 0.2% while mid-caps added 0.1%.

State-owned banks were the top sectoral gainers, rising 5.5% for the week.

The index added 8.9% in two weeks on post-earnings optimism.

"PSU banks have been beating expectations while private sector banks have been lagging," said Suresh Ganapathy, managing director and head of financial Services research at Macquarie Capital.

Ganapathy added that strong asset quality, sub-40-basis-point credit costs, and potential for increase in foreign holdings been helping gains in state-owned lenders.

Private sector banks and financials rose 0.8% and 0.3% for the week, underperforming the

SHARES LOG WEEKLY GAINS

BSE SENSEX

FEBRUARY 20, 2026

PTI
GRAPHICS

PSU banks.

Among other gainers, energy and FMCG stocks added 2.4% and 1.7%, respectively, for the week.

However, the concerns over AI disruption in the IT sector and rising crude oil prices due to US-Iran tensions have dimmed earnings optimism, per analysts.

Higher crude prices are a negative for India, the world's third-largest crude oil importer.

While the market outlook has improved, with strong earnings and attractive valuations after 16 months of underperformance, geopolitical risks persist and AI-related disruption

could weigh in the near term, said Sunil Singhania, founder of Abakkus AMC.

India VIX - a measure of the market's expected volatility for the next 30 days - spiked this week to 14.36, just shy of an eight-month high hit on the day of the federal budget February 1.

The IT index fell 2.1%, marking a fifth consecutive week of losses, in its longest losing streak in six months on AI disruption fears.

Indian equities rebounded after yesterday's sharp correction, led by strong buying in large caps as investors favoured their better risk-reward over premium-valued midcaps.

Sentiment improved on clearer trade-agreement signals and India's entry into Pax Silica, which is expected to strengthen supply-chain security in AI, semiconductors, and critical minerals," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

He added that banking and metal stocks drove the recovery, while IT lagged. Volatility stayed elevated, with the India VIX spiking even as geopolitical tensions still linger.

"Softer inflation data from Japan supported expectations of accommodative global policy. Structurally, markets remain constructive, though near-term moves are likely to stay flow-driven amid global uncertainties," Nair said.

In European markets, Germany's DAX, Paris' CAC 40 and London's FTSE 100 were trading nearly 1 per cent higher in mid-session deals Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 880.49 crore on Thursday, while domestic institutional investors were also the net sellers of stocks worth Rs 596.28 crore.

Pressure on ₹: RBI sells \$10.02 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 20: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) net sold \$10.02 billion in December due to high volatility in the Indian rupee amid geopolitical tensions and uncertainties over US tariffs.

December becomes the seventh consecutive month of net dollar sales by the central bank in the spot currency market.

According to the RBI's monthly bulletin data, the central bank net sold \$9.710 billion in November, \$11.877 billion in October, \$7.910 billion in September, \$7.695 billion in August, \$2.540 billion in July, and \$3.661 billion in June.

Despite heavy intervention by the RBI, the currency touched its historic low level of 92 against the US dollar.

Post this, the gradual appreciation was seen in the currency, and major appreciation came after the announcement of the interim trade deal between India and the US, which reversed the flows of the foreign investors in the country.

"Foreign portfolio investments and Indian rupee staged a comeback with investor sentiments turning around following the India-EU free trade agreement and the interim India-US trade deal," the RBI said in a bulletin.



DECEMBER BECOMES THE SEVENTH CONSECUTIVE MONTH OF NET DOLLAR SALES BY THE CENTRAL BANK IN THE SPOT CURRENCY MARKET

RBI NET SOLD \$9.710BN IN NOV, \$11.877BN IN OCT, \$7.910BN IN SEPT, \$7.695BN IN AUGUST, \$2.540BN IN JULY, AND \$3.661BN IN JUNE

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Gold climbs ₹850; silver trades flat

NEW DELHI: Gold prices appreciated by Rs 850 to Rs 1,59,500 per 10 grams in the national capital Friday, while silver stayed flat at Rs 2,64 lakh per kilogram, tracking a firm global trend, according to marketmen. The yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,58,650 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) Thursday. However, silver prices remained unchanged at Rs 2,64,000 per kilogram. In the international market, spot gold gained \$30.83, or 0.62 per cent, to \$5,027.13 per ounce, while silver was trading 2.55 per cent higher at \$80.5 per ounce. "Gold has rebounded above USD 5,020 per ounce, while silver has also surged to around USD 81 driven by rising concerns over a potential US-Iran conflict," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research, Kotak Securities, said. She added that investors remained cautious ahead of key economic releases, including Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation, Q4 GDP, and flash PMI data.



Maruti Suzuki NEXA launches its first all-electric SUV, the all-new e-VITARA at Narayani Motors in Bhubaneswar Friday. The ceremony was attended by Prasant Kumar, DGM, SBI; Anil Mishra, RM, SBI; Gaurav Dave, Regional manager, Maruti Suzuki; Saurabh Yadu, TSM, Maruti Suzuki; Purushotam Budhraja, Dealer Principal, Managing Director, Narayani Motors and Bibhudatta Panda, GM, Narayani Motors

Strong mfg growth lifts private sector

REUTERS

Bangalore, Feb 20: India's private sector accelerated in February led by robust demand for goods even as services growth was broadly steady, according to a survey that also showed intensifying inflationary pressures.

HSBC's flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), compiled by S&P Global,

rose to 59.3 in February from January's 58.4 - the strongest in three months and above a Reuters poll median forecast of 59.0. The 50-mark separates expansion from contraction.

The improvement was supported by robust total new orders which rose at the quickest pace since November. Businesses attributed gains to strong demand, local tourism and

marketing efforts. International sales also increased at the fastest pace in five months, bolstering overall demand.

While the preliminary headline reading for manufacturing PMI rose to 57.5 from 55.4, the services PMI was little changed at 58.4 versus 58.5 in January.

Better sales supported hiring at a faster pace and optimism about year-ahead activity im-

proved to its strongest in a year. The survey also showed higher price pressures with input costs rising at their fastest rate in 15 months and pushing overall output charge inflation to a six-month high. Services firms faced the steepest rise in input price inflation in two-and-a-half years, while factory input price inflation remained unchanged from January.

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From 'buy America' to 'bye America', Wall Street exodus gathers pace

THE S&P 500 TRADES AT ROUGHLY 21.8 TIMES THE EXPECTED EARNINGS OF ITS COMPONENTS, WHILE STOCKS IN EUROPE TRADE AT ROUGHLY 15 TIMES' FORWARD EARNINGS AND THOSE IN JAPAN AND CHINA TRADE AT 17 AND 13.5 TIMES RESPECTIVELY

REUTERS

London, Feb 20: US investors are pulling money out of their own stock market at the fastest pace in at least 16 years as Big Tech returns fad and better-performing overseas markets look more attractive.

In the last six months, US-domiciled investors have pulled some \$75 billion from US equity products, with \$52 billion flowing out since the start of 2026 alone, the most in the first eight weeks of the year since at least 2010, according to LSEG/Lipper data.

The shift comes despite a weakening of the dollar against other currencies, which makes buying overseas assets more expensive for US investors. It's a compelling sign that the diversification away from US assets by some international investors in the past year is gaining traction.

tion among US investors.

Since the global financial crisis ended in 2009, the "buy America" trade has rewarded investors at home and abroad thanks to a strong economy and earnings growth and dominance in the tech sector leading to outsized gains in US stocks.

More recently, the AI boom pushed the S&P 500 index record highs last year, a strong buffer from US President Donald Trump's unpredictable approach to trade policy and diplomacy, as well as his attempts to undermine Federal Reserve independence.

LOOKING FURTHER AFIELD

But as concerns have grown about the possible risks from AI, as well as the costs involved, the lure of Wall Street stocks has ebbed. The surge in value in the US megacap tech stocks that have led gains until now are making investors

pickier and many are spotting more attractive opportunities elsewhere.

Bank of America's February fund manager survey showed investors switched from US equities to emerging market equities at the fastest rate in five years.

"I've had lots of conversations with our wealth business

at the performance of foreign markets in dollars and they're doing well, I'm missing out."

US investors have poured some \$26 billion into emerging-market equities so far this year, with South Korea the largest single country destination, with an inflow of \$2.8 billion, followed by Brazil, with \$1.2 billion, LSEG/Lipper data shows.

One of the clear results of Trump's policies has been the 10% decline in the dollar against a basket of currencies since last January. While that is a disadvantage for US investors hunting for opportunities abroad, dividends in

dollar terms from better performing overseas markets will also be pumped up.

In the last 12 months, the S&P 500 has risen around 14%. In dollar terms, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 is up 43%, Europe's STOXX 600 has surged 26%, Shanghai's CSI 300 has returned 23% and Seoul's KOSPI has doubled in value.

European banking stocks, one example of cyclical stocks that typically benefit when economic growth picks up, surged 67% last year and are up a further 4% so far in 2026.

LSEG/Lipper data shows that since Trump's inauguration in January last year, US-domiciled investors have poured nearly \$7 billion into European equity products, compared with an outflow of roughly \$17 billion during the four years of Trump's first term from 2017 to 2021.



US INVESTORS SHIFT TO EMERGING MARKETS, EUROPE, AND JAPAN

WEAKER DOLLAR BOOSTS ATTRACTIVENESS OF FOREIGN MARKETS FOR US INVESTORS

AI STOCK RALLY SLOWS, PROMPTING SHIFT TO INDUSTRIAL AND DEFENSIVE STOCKS

At the performance of foreign markets in dollars and they're doing well, I'm missing out."

US investors hunting for opportunities abroad, dividends in

SUPER 8s SHOWDOWN

Heavyweights collide

T20 World Cup 2026 enters decisive phase

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 20: The 10th edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup now shifts gears into its most compelling chapter - the Super 8s. After weeks of high-voltage contests, narrow escapes and headline-grabbing upsets, the 20-team spectacle has been trimmed to eight contenders.

From February 21 to March 1, the race for semi-final berths will intensify in a single round-robin battle across two fiercely competitive groups.

Pakistan will take on New Zealand in the opening match of the Super Eights phase of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Colombo, while reigning champions India face South Africa in a rematch of the thrilling 2024 title decider.

Seven of the eight pre-seeded sides have justified their rankings by progressing, but the stage also features one stirring underdog story: Zimbabwe, who forced their way into the elite bracket with a fearless campaign.

Group 1: Group toppers' clash

Co-hosts India headline Group 1 and will lock horns with two other group toppers, the ever-dangerous West Indies cricket team and the resurgent South Africa national cricket team.

Underdogs Zimbabwe replaced pre-tournament favourites Australia to complete the quartet. Zimbabwe have emerged as the surprise package of the tournament, riding momentum and belief into the Super 8s. Their fearless brand of cricket now faces its sternest examination.

India's clash with South Africa February 22 in Ahmedabad promises early fireworks, while their March 1 showdown against the West Indies in Kolkata could well determine semi-final destiny.

Group 2: Old rivals, new stakes

If Group 1 is about power and unpredictability, Group 2 is



■ Defending champions India, 2024 runner-ups South Africa, two-time champions West Indies and Zimbabwe are in Group A
■ While the 2009 champions, Pakistan, the 2014 champions, Sri Lanka, two-time winners England, and New Zealand are in Group B
■ All teams will play three matches against other teams in their group, with the top 2 teams from each group advancing to semi-finals

TODAY'S CLASH
New Zealand vs Pakistan
Time- 7:00 pm

steeped in rivalry and pedigree. The mercurial Pakistan national cricket team shares space with two-time champions (2010 & 2022) England, perennial dark horses New Zealand and a rejuvenated Sri Lanka.

Opening the Super 8s February 21, New Zealand and Pakistan will set the tone in Colombo. England and Sri Lanka renew hostilities a day later in Kandy, while the England-Pakistan encounter February 24 looms as a blockbuster in what could be the group's defining fixture.

The Format: No second chances

Each group will play in a single round-robin format, meaning every side gets three matches. Only the top two teams from

each group will advance to the semi-finals, leaving little margin for error.

Momentum, net run rate and temperament under pressure will be decisive. With just a week of action separating ambition from elimination, every over could tilt the tournament narrative.

AUS END CAMPAIGN ON WINNING NOTE

Pallekele: Already out of Super Eights contention, Australia beat Oman by nine wickets in their inconsequential final group clash of the T20 World Cup here Friday. Captain Mitchell Marsh remained unbeaten on 64 off 33 balls while his opening partner Travis Head made 32 as Australia chased down the modest target of 105 with 62 balls to spare, reaching 108 for one in 9.4 overs. Earlier, Australia's bowlers underlined their experience with a disciplined display, strangling Oman's batting line-up and dismissing them for a modest 104. Pace Xavier Bartlett (2/27) and spinner Adam Zampa (4/21) showed their class after captain Mitchell Marsh won the toss and opted to field. For Oman, Wasim Ali was the highest scorer with 32 runs.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hobart, Feb 20: Outplayed at home, the Indian men's hockey team would be eager to bounce back and make a fresh start under new skipper Hardik Singh when it begins the FIH Pro League's overseas leg with a game against Spain here Saturday.

The Hobart leg of the series, which also features hosts Australia, will be held till February 25 at the Tasmania Hockey Centre.

The recent Rourkela leg proved to be a painful learning curve for the Indians with losses to Argentina and Belgium. Regular skipper Harmanpreet Singh has taken a break to welcome his second child from the upcoming clutch of matches.

The team views these fixtures as a vital opportunity to test combinations, refine structure, and build momentum ahead of the upcoming FIH World Cup and the subsequent Asian Games.

After the campaign-opener against Spain, a high-octane clash against Australia is lined up for Sunday.

They will face Spain again February 24 before concluding the leg with a final match

against the formidable Australian side February 25.

India and Spain have been evenly-matched in their last 10 encounters, claiming four regulation wins each, alongside two draws that India went on to win in shootouts.

Against Australia, high-scoring drama has been a constant. The hosts hold the statistical edge in their last 10 meetings with six wins to India's two (and two draws).

Two-time Olympic bronze medallist Hardik will lead the

FIH PRO LEAGUE: HOBART LEG

against the formidable Australian side February 25.

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Two-time Olympic bronze medallist Hardik will lead the

As a team, we have reviewed our recent matches, learned our lessons, and are entering Hobart with a highly positive and aggressive mindset

HARDIK SINGH

side that also features young players like Amandeep Lakra and Manmeet Singh, both of whom are looking to build on their recent senior debuts.

"It is a tremendous honour to lead the national team in a

prestigious tournament like the Pro League. While we will certainly miss Harmanpreet's presence on the pitch, his absence provides a valuable opportunity for the rest of the group to step up and take charge," said Hardik.

"As a team, we have reviewed our recent matches, learned our lessons, and are entering Hobart with a highly positive and aggressive mindset

Rising stars such as Angad Bir Singh, Araiheet Singh Hundal, and Aditya Arjun Lalage will also be eager to prove their mettle in the forward line.

Sharing his thoughts on the young additions to the squad, Hardik said, "I am incredibly excited about the new faces joining us for this tour. Youngsters bring very fresh, fearless energy to our attacking lineup.

"They have worked exceptionally hard to earn their spots, and playing against top-tier teams like Australia and Spain is the perfect platform for them to express themselves.

"The entire group is motivated to support them, execute our plans, and play the brand of hockey India is known for."

AUSTRALIA TOUR FIASCO Pak govt revokes Butt's 2-year ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lahore, Feb 20: The Pakistan government Friday revoked national hockey team skipper Ahmad Shakeel Butt's two-year ban imposed by the national federation (PHF), terming the step as "illegal and unconstitutional".

Just before resigning from his position as Pakistan Hockey Federation president Thursday, Tariq Bugti banned Butt for two years for his criticism of the PHF following the skipper's outburst against the mismanagement during the recent Australia tour.

But patron-in-chief, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appointed interim president of the PHF Muhyuddin Ahmed Wani reversed the decision, stating it was an "illegal and unconstitutional step" by Bugti.

Bugti had resigned Thursday in the wake of a huge fall out after the national side's return from Australia, where they faced logistical nightmares and had to stay in Airbnb residences despite the state-run Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) releasing 10 million rupees to the PHF for five-star hotel accommodation of the team during its FIH Pro League matches in Canberra.

A senior official of the Inter-Provincial Coordination Ministry (which looks after all sports related issues) confirmed that Prime Minister Sharif had immediately accepted Bugti's resignation and appointed Wani as ad-hoc president of PHF and Brig Musratullah as Director-General.

ISL 2025-26 FC Goa edge past Mohammedan SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 20: FC Goa registered a comfortable 2-0 victory over Mohammedan Sporting Club to secure their first win of Indian Super League 2025-26 season at the Kishore Bharti Krirangan here Friday.

The victory provisionally lifted FC Goa to the top of the table with four points from two matches, while Mohammedan are yet to score their first goal after two games. Pol Moreno opened the scoring in the fourth minute, and their advantage was doubled in the 32nd through a Dejan Drazic penalty as The Gauers went into half-time with a 2-0 lead.

Pol Moreno was adjudged the Player of the Match. FC Goa struck early, as Moreno powered a header past Subhajit Bhattacharjee, leaving the Mohammedan goalkeeper with no chance. The Gauers scored their second just before the water break by winning a penalty. Drazic stepped up and calmly dispatched the resulting penalty.

Both sides made threatening moves in the closing stages, but could not apply the finishing touches to convert those chances.

India register dominant win over Nepal

POST NEWS NETWORK



out from 19 deliveries, which included two fours and a six. The opening pair ensured there were no alarms in the chase.

Nepal's bowlers tried to contain the run flow, with Baidhanath Chaudhary conceding 21 runs in 2 overs and Mohammad Sabir giving away 20 runs, but the target proved too small to defend.

For his match-winning five-wicket haul, Jigar Thakkar was adjudged Player of the Match.

The match was played in the presence of distinguished guests, including Subrat Kumar Behera, CEO of the Odisha Cricket Association (OCA); Sumit Jain, President of the Asian Deaf Cricket Association (ADCA) and Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA), and Sagarkanta Senapati, General Secretary of the Odisha Deaf Cricket Association (ODCA), adding prestige to the occasion.

Gar Thakkar, who produced a sensational spell of bowling, claiming 5 wickets for 13 runs in 4 overs, dismantled the Nepal batting order. He was well supported by Akash Saini, who returned figures of 1 for 9 in 3 overs, and Sanith Shetty, who

picked up 1 for 12 in 4 overs.

Chasing a modest target without loss in just 5.2 overs, Deepak Lamba led the charge with an unbeaten 28 off 13 balls, striking four boundaries and a six, while Sanith Shetty played a composed knock of 25 not

begin their campaign against Vietnam March 4 in Perth, followed by a match against Japan March 7 at the same venue. The

last group stage match will be against Chinese Taipei March 10 in Sydney.

The top two sides from each group, along with the two best

Mensik upsets Sinner in Doha, sets SF with Fils

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Doha, Feb 20: Jakub Mensik caused a major upset in the Qatar Open when the 20-year-old stunned World No 2 Jannik Sinner in the quarterfinal of the ATP 500 event.

Mensik beat Sinner 7-6(3), 2-6, 6-3 for the biggest win of his career at ATP ranking.

Two years ago, the Czech notched his maiden Top 5 victory against Andrey Rublev during his breakout run to the championship match in Doha.

The 2025 Miami champion Mensik is now 4-2 against Top 5 opponents, a tally that includes victories against ATP No. 1 Club members Novak Djokovic and Sinner, and he is up three spots to No 13 in the ATP Live Rankings as a result of his exploits in Doha so far, ATP reports.

"Before the match I knew about Jannik's quality. A great guy, a great champion. Already what he has done in his young

career, it's pretty impressive, so I knew it was going to be a tough one. But even with that thought, I came to the match to win it, and actually having a winning mindset," Mensik said.

He will bid to reach the final in the Qatari capital for the second time on Friday, when he faces the 21-year-old Fils.

Frenchman Fils earned his first tour-level semi-final appearance since last April by overcoming Jiri Lehecka 6-3, 6-3.

third-placed teams, will progress to the quarter-finals. The four quarter-final winners will qualify for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil.

The losing quarter-finalists will contest the play-offs for the two remaining direct spots allocated to the AFC for the World Cup.

Grace Dangmei is the highest-capped player and top-scorer in India's squad with 23 goals in 91 appearances. Anju Tamang is the senior-most player at 30 years of age. Just like in the 2022 edition squad, the 20-year-old Shilky Devi Hemam is the youngest in the Indian squad.

FIVE UNCAPPED PLAYERS IN INDIA'S 26-MEMBER SQUAD FOR AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP NEXT MONTH

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 20: India Friday named six uncapped players in a 26-member squad for next month's AFC Women's Asian Cup football tournament in Australia, with hopes of reaching the quarterfinals by punching above its weight.

A quarterfinals berth will allow the team to have a shot at FIFA World Cup qualification for the first time.

Among the 26 players in the squad, eight were part of the



and forward Kaviya Pakkirisamy are the uncapped players named in the squad.

Placed in Group C, India will

THE SQUAD:

Goalkeepers: Panthoi Chanu Elangbam, Shreya Hooda, Sowmya Narayanasamy.

Defenders: Astam Oraon, Juli Kishan, Martina Thokchom, Nirmala Devi Phanjoubam, Sanju, Sarita Yumnam, Shilky Devi Hemam, Sushmita Lepcha, Sweety Devi Ngangbam.

Midfielders: Anju Tamang, Aveka Singh, Babina Devi Lisham, Jasoda Munda, Sanida Nongrum, Sangita Basfore.

Forwards: Grace Dangmei, Kaviya Pakkirisamy, Lynda Kom Serto, Malavika P, Manisha Kalyan, Pyari Xaxa, Rimpaa Haldar, Soumya Guguloth.