



PC's revelation

Priyanka Chopra Jonas reveals what made her move to Hollywood when she was at her peak in Mumbai

LEISURE | P2



Trump's global tariffs

US Supreme Court rules against President Trump's global tariffs imposed under emergency law

INTERNATIONAL | P10



The oil shift

India's recalibration of crude oil imports marks a shift from opportunistic discount buying to disciplined geopolitical risk

BUSINESS | P11



Poor form continues

India's hopes of a revival were dashed as they suffered a 0-2 loss to Spain, continuing their unabated slump in FIH Men's Pro League

SPORTS | P12

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CM approves projects worth ₹44,241 crore

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Majhi, the High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA) approved 10 major industrial projects with a total investment of ₹44,241.97 crore, having the potential to generate 8,765 employment opportunities across eight districts of the state. "Odisha is shifting its focus from traditional industries to new-age, technology-driven sectors. Through these strategic HLCA approvals, we are creating opportunities for emerging businesses, strengthening advanced manufacturing and renewable energy capacity, and accelerating our journey towards Samruddha Odisha by 2036," the CM said Chairing the 44th HLCA meeting here Saturday.

The projects span key sectors including rare earth manufacturing, semiconductor, cement, automobile & auto-components, telecom infrastructure, and power & renewable energy, and are distributed across Khurda, Koraput, Malkangiri, Dhenkanal, Puri, Nayagarh, Kalahandi and Deogarh districts.

Emphasising the importance of execution and timely grounding of projects, the Chief Minister said, "Our focus is not only on attracting investments but on ensuring their timely materialisation. Approvals must translate into construction and production within predictable timelines. Through coordinated action under the spirit of Team Odisha, we are strengthening institutional mechanisms to ensure seamless transition from intent to implementation." **MORE P4**



CONSERVATION EFFORT: Juvenile giant tortoises are released on Floreana Island as part of a project to reintroduce the species to its native habitat in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador **AP PHOTO**

Liquor in tetra packs soon: Min

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The state government is set to permit the sale of liquor in tetra packs as part of a broader push to reduce environmental risks associated with glass bottles. The proposal was announced in the State Assembly Saturday by Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan.

Responding to a query in the House, Harichandan said the revised excise policy will allow alcoholic beverages to be sold in tetra packs, similar to fruit juice packaging. The move is aimed at promoting safer packaging, easier handling and improved disposal of liquor containers across the state.

According to the Minister, replacing glass bottles with tetra packs is expected to curb breakage-related hazards and support environmentally friendly practices. He said the policy change aligns with the government's focus on sustainability and reducing waste. At the same time, the government will continue to encourage the reuse and recycling of glass bottles wherever they remain in circulation, as part of its broader environmental conservation efforts.

Child marriage in 12 dists higher than national avg

Data placed in the Odisha Assembly exposes a troubling reality: while the state's child marriage rate of 20.5 per cent is below the national average, at least 12 districts, mostly from southern and western parts, remain far above it. The figures, shared by Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida in response to a question by BJP MLA Amar Kumar Nayak, highlight stark regional disparities. Poverty, gender bias and poor access to education continue to drive early marriages. The state needs targeted, accountable interventions, not routine assurances, to dismantle entrenched social practices and protect adolescent girls' rights

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Fresh figures placed before the Odisha Assembly reveal that 12 districts in the state report child marriage rates above the national average, raising fresh concerns about entrenched social practices and uneven progress in prevention efforts.

Replying to a question in the House, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida said Odisha's overall child marriage rate is



20.5 per cent, lower than the national average of 23.3 per cent. However, she acknowledged that several districts continue to record alarmingly high numbers.

Nabarangpur has the highest incidence at 39.4 per cent, followed by Nayagarh (35.7 per cent) and Koraput (35.5 per cent). Rayagada accounts for 33.2 per cent, while Malkangiri stands at 32.4 per cent, indicating a concentration of early marriages in parts of southern and western Odisha.

Other districts exceeding the national average include Mayurbhanj (31.3 per cent), Keonjhar (29 per cent), Gajapati (28.1 per cent), Balasore (26.4 per cent), Boudh (25.3 per cent) and Angul (25 per cent).

Despite the state's aggregate rate being below the national figure, the clustering of high

prevalence districts points to stark regional disparities in social development.

Parida attributed the persistence of child marriage to five major factors: deep-rooted customs and traditional beliefs, gender discrimination, poverty, social insecurity and lack of education among adolescent girls. She noted that these drivers continue to sustain the practice despite legal safeguards and awareness initiatives.

The data was shared in response to a query by BJP MLA from Barachana, Amar Kumar Nayak, who sought details on the extent of child marriage and the steps taken by the government to address it.

In its reply, the government said it is stepping up awareness campaigns, expanding educational outreach and strengthening community-level interventions. It also emphasised improved inter-departmental coordination to protect children's rights and prevent early marriages in vulnerable areas.

The revelations have renewed calls for focused, district-specific strategies to tackle social vulnerabilities and hasten efforts to eliminate child marriage in Odisha.

4 of 6 stranded Odias return from Thailand

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: In a coordinated rescue effort, four of the six Odia youths who were stranded in Thailand have safely returned to Odisha. The returnees — Jayanta Kumar Mallick, Hemanta Kumar Behera, Manaranjan Sahu, and Bijay Kumar Swain, arrived in the state Saturday bringing relief to their anxious families.

The six youths, residents of Kendrapara and Bhadrak districts, had travelled to Thailand in August 2025 after securing jobs at a plywood company.

However, they later alleged that their employer failed to pay their wages and that they were subjected to severe hardships. Distressed by their situation, the youths reached out for help through social media, appealing to the Odisha government for assistance in returning home.

Acting swiftly on the appeal, the Ministry of External Affairs, in coordination with the Office of the Chief Resident Commissioner of the Odisha government in New Delhi, the Directorate of Odisha Paribar, and the district administrations of Kendrapara and Bhadrak, initiated efforts to secure their repatriation.

As a result of these joint measures, four of the stranded youths have now been brought back safely. The remaining two are yet to return.

KENDRAPARA SCHOOL HORROR

4 teachers, peon held for minor's gangrape

PNN & AGENCIES

Kendrapara, Feb 21: Five staff members of a private English-medium school in Rajkanika, including four teachers and a peon, have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the gangrape of a Class VII girl student over the past two months.

According to Sukanta Kumar Patra, SDPO of Pattamundai, one of the arrested teachers, a woman, is charged with abetment in the crime. The accused have been identified as Biswaranjan Sahoo, Rashmi Kant Biswal, Chandan Prusty, Minati Bai (all teachers), and Rashmi Rana (school peon).

Police allege that three teachers and the peon repeatedly sexually assaulted the 12-year-old girl inside the school premises, threatening her and her younger brother to prevent her from speaking out.

The victim informed her father, who had recently returned from work outside the state, and he immediately contacted the State Child Helpline. The case was then reported to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) of Kendrapara.

A four-member team led by CWC chairperson Swagatika Parida, including members of



the District Child Protection Unit and the Child Helpline Coordinator, visited the victim's home and conducted an inquiry.

Acting on the CWC's directions, the father lodged a formal FIR at Rajkanika police station Saturday. Rajkanika police registered a case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and began an investigation.

All five accused have been arrested, said Sanjay Kumar Mallick, IIC of Rajkanika Police Station.

The victim's statement will be recorded under Section 180 of BNSS, and she, along with the accused, will be produced before the ADJ-cum-Special POCSO Court under Section 183 BNSS. The child will also be presented before the CWC for support and protection, officials added.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Court can go against the govt? Really?

Shah: Infiltrators to be removed from voter list, country in 5 yrs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 21: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Saturday asserted that Naxalism would be eliminated from the country by the March 31 deadline set by the government, while illegal immigrants would be removed not only from the electoral rolls but also from the nation in the next five years.

Attending the 87th CRPF Day Parade here on the second of his two-day visit to Assam, Shah said, "Because of the CRPF personnel, we can confidently say that by March 31, 2026, the country will be completely free from Naxalism." In the second event of the day, Shah asserted that if India can be free of Naxals, it can also be free of infiltrators.

"Illegal immigrants would be removed not only from the electoral rolls but also from the country in the next five years," Shah said.

He was addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone for a new campus of the Assam Police 10th Battalion, which he said would be constructed on 347 acres of land freed from encroachments by infiltrators in the state's tribal belt.

Could Andrew's arrest bring down British monarchy?

AGENCIES

London, Feb 21: The arrest of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor has triggered a rare and uncomfortable question: could legal scrutiny of a senior royal destabilise the British monarchy itself? Royal scandals are hardly new, but direct entanglement with the criminal justice system is exceptionally rare. To find a truly comparable moment, historians often look back centuries.

The most dramatic confrontation between crown and law occurred under Charles I. Arrested, tried and executed for treason in 1649 amid the English Civil War, his fate shattered the once-prevailing belief that monarchs were divinely protected from earthly justice. England briefly became a

republic under Oliver Cromwell. That episode remains a stark reminder that when monarchy collides with criminal process, the consequences can extend far beyond one individual.

Other royal controversies, though serious, did not reach that legal threshold. Richard III was long suspected of involvement in the disappearance of the Princes in the Tower, but he was never tried. James II lost his throne during the Glorious Revolution of 1688 over perceived abuses of power rather than a prosecutable crime. In 1936, Edward VIII abdicated amid constitutional crisis and later controversy over his links to Nazi Germany, including his meeting with Adolf Hitler. None of these episodes, however, involved a modern police arrest

in a media-saturated age.

For much of the 20th century, the monarchy benefited from a culture of deference. The press often shielded private indiscretions from public view. That insulation eroded dramatically in the late 20th century, particularly during the turbulent 1990s, which Elizabeth II famously described as her "annus horribilis." The rise of tabloid journalism and later digital media dissolved traditional barriers. Today, silence breeds suspicion rather than respect.

Andrew's arrest unfolds in this transformed landscape. His previous role as the UK's Special Representative for International Trade and Investment saw him cultivate relationships with global elites. Critics long questioned whether the bound-



ary between public duty and private networking was sufficiently clear. The 2010 "cash for access" controversy involving Sarah Ferguson reinforced perceptions that proximity to royalty could be monetised. Subsequent allegations and in-

vestigations only compounded reputational strain.

Under Charles III, the monarchy appears more exposed than it did during his mother's long reign. Elizabeth's longevity and personal popularity often softened institutional shocks.

Charles, by contrast, presides over a leaner monarchy with less public patience for missteps. As a constitutional monarch, he cannot intervene in legal proceedings without provoking crisis. His power lies in symbolism and public trust, not executive authority.

The critical question is not whether Andrew's arrest will immediately topple the monarchy—it almost certainly will not—but whether it chips away at the intangible assets on which the institution depends: dignity, stability and moral distance from everyday politics. The monarchy survives not because it wields governing power, but because it commands belief. When a royal becomes entangled in the criminal courts, that aura of separation weakens.

leisure



CINDY'S GRATITUDE TOWARDS LIFE SO FAR

Hollywood actress Cindy Crawford, who recently turned 60, is excited and grateful for what life has given her so far. The actress took to her Instagram and wrote in the caption, "60 is the new 60! Grateful for all of it. Thank you for the birthday wishes".

DENISE SHEDS LIGHT ON ABUSIVE MARRIAGE

Hollywood actress Denise Richards has said that the alleged abuse that she suffered at the hands of Aaron Phypers was a "slow burn". The actress split from her husband last July after six years of marriage amid allegations of abusive behavior.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you will show everyone what you're capable of. You are likely to come up with great ideas and work strategies, which will prove productive. However, if appreciation doesn't come your way, Ganesh says you must learn to take disappointment in your stride.

TAURUS
The time you previously spent on certain activities may not yield results as expected, predicts Ganesh. You will be reluctant to travel today. Your may find yourself wanting more space and freedom of expression. A stroll with your sweetheart, hand in hand, may be the highlight of your day, says Ganesh.

GEMINI
You will end up having an argument with people owing to your aggressive nature. These people could slander your reputation on account of your enmity. However you will be able to defeat them. They will have to give up against your intellectual superiority. Be wary, says Ganesh.

CANCER
Today looks set to be a day full of extremes, especially when it comes to your shifty moods. However, you will need to keep reminding yourself of not getting overly emotional or impractical. Otherwise you may end up being in complicated situations, warns Ganesh. It is high time that you gave due consideration to your health and eating habits. Consciously cultivate change.

LEO
Your children's health may be a cause of concern today, says Ganesh. The best way to put your and your family's fears to rest would be by paying a quick visit to the doctor. As always, kids remain a surprise package of delights; the happiness of your children shall double your joy as a parent. But then, Ganesh reminds, only a healthy kid is a happy kid.

VIRGO
Expenditures will be like oil spills- wasteful and dirty. But cosmic energies and positivity are gathering wind today, and you should do well to make full use of them in your personal and professional life, says Ganesh.

LIBRA
Ganesh says today is the right day to get closer to your loved one. You will spend the evening with your beloved. Today you will be mentally very energetic too. Make the most of the day.

SCORPIO
There are strong indications that today you will be receptive and sensitive towards the needs of other people. Negative vibes will disrupt your thinking, and you will rely on the company of close friends to keep you in good cheer. Do not succumb to the pessimism that might cloud your thought today as it is only a passing phase, advises Ganesh.

SAGITTARIUS
No pains, no gains. So, when you go through a lot of turmoil and toil hard for your work, the rewards are definitely going to be fruitful, says Ganesh. Time for get together and soiree with family and friends! In a nutshell, a day with lot of fun activities.

CAPRICORN
Despite repeated failures, very few realise that the key to success is in having the patience of a saint. Vexation invariably leads to an outburst which, in turn, can ruin your reputation and future prospects in innumerable ways. Today, Ganesh advises you to keep your calm and smile back even if faced with an adverse situation. Doing as directed may help you overcome troubles and take the right decisions.

AQUARIUS
Be sure of your strengths and decisions, and Ganesh guarantees you success. You don't care what others think about you, but don't be so indifferent that you ignore their choices, preferences and comforts completely. The smile of your sweetheart will work like a charm and you will forget all your worries, feels Ganesh.

PISCES
Ganesh warns that your expenses could be twice as much as your income or profit. You need to be more careful in money matters. It is not an auspicious day for any new work, new deal or any new beginnings. Ganesh indicates that things will look up after two days or so.



Reason Priyanka moved to West

Mumbai: Global star Priyanka Chopra Jonas has candidly spoken about her cross-continental career and the perception that she "left" Bollywood at the height of her success. In a recent interaction with Firstpost, the actress reflected on the turning point that led her to explore opportunities in Hollywood and clarified that stepping away from Hindi cinema was never her original intention. Addressing the speculation around her move to the West, Priyanka said, "I don't think I ever wanted to leave Bollywood. I felt limited for many reasons when I was working in Hindi films. I wanted to expand. I was kind of pushed into wanting to look for opportunities that would be exciting to me as an artiste. I

landed up working in America, and now, I feel like, after almost 12 years or so, I am finding the momentum to pick and choose really amazing work, and that's not easy." Over the past decade, Priyanka has built a formidable presence internationally, balancing mainstream entertainers and performance-driven projects. However, she emphasized that her bond with Indian cinema remains intact and deeply personal. "I love my Indian films. I am really happy to be back in Varanasi, India, again, and I would hate to have to choose between the two. I never have. I feel like I straddle both worlds, and I enjoy working in both industries," she added.

Shweta's new milestone



Mumbai: Actor and producer Shweta Tripathi marked a new milestone in her cinematic journey by attending the Berlin International Film Festival for the first time. Known for her association with independent and content-driven films, Shweta described her Berlinale experience as that of a "student of cinema," immersing herself in screenings, discussions and cross-cultural exchanges. Her relationship with international film festivals dates to her debut feature *Masaan*, directed by Neeraj Ghaywan. The film premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and went on to win two awards, including the FIPRESCI Prize. At Berlinale this year, Shweta participated in panel discussions, watched a range of international films and attended a live orchestra screening of a Charlie Chaplin classic. She also interacted with global creatives, including writer Jack Thorne. She went on to share, "For me, festivals are where cinema breathes differently. You're reminded that stories don't belong to one country. They belong to everyone." Now expanding her role beyond acting into production, Shweta has expressed a desire to take her future projects to global platforms. Her focus, she said, remains on storytelling that travels across borders. "I love festivals. I love the conversations, the curiosity, the celebration of storytelling. This is just the beginning. See you over there," she concluded.

Mrunal open to arranged marriage



Mumbai: Actor Mrunal Thakur has opened up about conversations around marriage at home, saying she is open to the idea of an arranged match. Her remarks come amid recent rumours linking her to Dhanush. Mrunal is currently promoting her film *Do Deewane Seher Mein*, co-starring Siddhant Chaturvedi, which released in theatres February 20. Speaking to Showsha India, she shared that discussions about her settling down have become increasingly frequent at home. "It's literally like daydreaming, in parents' minds, wedding bells are always ringing," she said, adding that the subject surfaced again during a recent exchange with her father. "In fact, last night my dad told me, 'Now you need to get settled.'" She recalled responding by suggesting that her family help find a prospective match. "And I said, 'Why don't you call your sister and ask if she knows a good guy for your daughter?'" she said, describing how the conversation soon turned humorous. "He asked, 'Where is the guy?' And I said, 'Exactly - where is the guy?' If you're asking me this, what should I say then? This is every household's story." Her comments reflect the familiar expectations many families have around marriage while indicating that she remains pragmatic about the idea.

MULTILINGUAL DRAMA FEST: DAY II

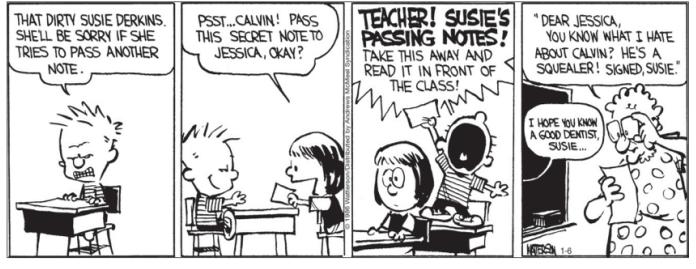


Artistes of West Bengal's Ebam Amra staged Bengali play *Andha Yug* on the second evening of the event at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Saturday. Written by Dharamveer Bharati, the drama was adapted and directed by Kallol Bhattacharya. City-based theatre troupe Satabdira Kalakar is organising the 5-day National Kalinga Natya Mahotsav to mark its golden jubilee year celebration.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

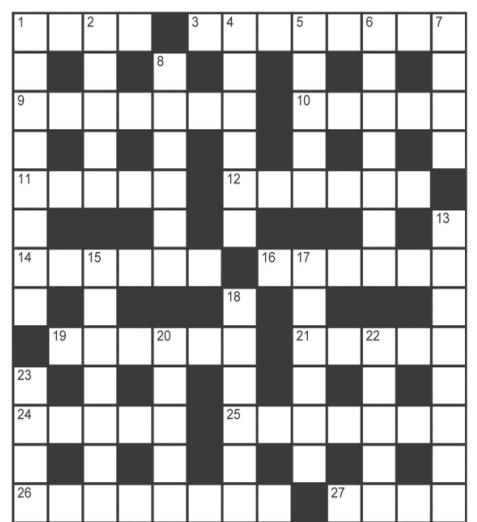


BREVITY



FUN POST

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Kennel cry
 - 3 Academic types
 - 9 Tough guy
 - 10 Bisect
 - 11 Utopian
 - 12 Vow
 - 14 Vacation spot
 - 16 Hound dog
 - 19 Error
 - 21 Eagle's claw
 - 24 Vacuum tube filler
- Down**
- 25 Embroidery frame
 - 26 Suspenseful adventure story
 - 27 Notice
 - 7 Lawn starter machine
 - 8 Farm
 - 13 Venomous sea creature
 - 15 Disrespectful laugh
 - 17 Fall
 - 18 Hub
 - 20 Waterway
 - 22 Crazy birds
 - 23 Hostilities ender

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Sales manager found dead; foul play suspected

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 21: A sales manager of a pharmaceutical company was found dead under suspicious circumstances at a house in the Civil Township area under Raghunathpali police limits here Saturday morning, with cops suspecting foul play.

The deceased, identified as Bhagirathi Swain, 35, from the Nuagaon area of Jagatsinghpur district, had reportedly arrived in Rourkela two days earlier to resolve a financial dispute with acquaintances. He was staying at a house near the LIC office in the Civil Township locality.

According to Raghunathpali inspector-in-charge (IC) Suraj Jhankar, Swain hosted a dinner with three to four friends Friday night. His body was discovered inside the house the following morning.

Police officials said Swain had sustained a deep head injury, and blood was seen coming from his mouth, strengthening suspicions of murder. Acting on a complaint filed by his relative, Pramod Parida of Chhend area, police registered a case (98/26), recovered the body, and sent it for postmortem.

"We are awaiting the post-mortem report to determine the exact cause of death," the IC said.

Police have detained two of Swain's friends for questioning, while another individual is reportedly absconding.



STIR AGAINST STIR: Police personnel try to stop Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha activists during a clash with Congress workers amid a protest over the Youth Congress disruption at the AI Impact Summit, in Indore, Saturday

India & Brazil eye \$30bn trade target

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: India and Brazil Saturday set an annual bilateral trade target of USD 30 billion by 2030 even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva discussed implications of the US Supreme Court striking down Trump administration's reciprocal tariffs.

Following wide-ranging talks between Modi and Lula, the two sides signed nine pacts including one on cooperation in areas of rare earth minerals and another on forging a futuristic digital partnership.

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs P Kumaran said at a media briefing that there was a discussion between the two sides on US trade policy and the implications of the US supreme court judgement.

"Both leaders agreed that it is a rather new development that both sides need to study its implications and wait for further developments by the US administration," he said. "We will be essentially in wait and watch mode on how the administration responds to this judgement and whether any further steps are taken and to study the implications for our trade," he said.

US President Donald Trump has imposed a new 10 per cent global tariff after the US Supreme Court struck down the reciprocal tariffs. Kumaran said Modi and Lula agreed that the bilateral trade should be doubled to USD 30 billion by 2030. **P8**

Trump hikes global tariffs to 15%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Washington/New Delhi, Feb 21: A day after US President Donald Trump imposed 10 per cent tariffs on all the countries, including India effective February 24 for 150 days, the POTUS, who lambasted the Supreme Court for delivering a verdict against his sweeping tariffs, announced an additional 5 per cent hike in the global tariffs, Saturday.

Commenting on the 10 per cent tariff, the Indian government Saturday said it is studying these and their implications.

"Based on a thorough, detailed, and complete review of the ridiculous, poorly written, and extraordinarily anti-American decision on Tariffs issued yesterday, after MANY months of contemplation, by the United States Supreme Court, please let this statement serve to represent that I, as President of the United States of America, will be, effective immediately, raising the 10 per cent Worldwide Tariff on Countries, many of which have been "ripping" the US off for decades, without retribution (until I came along!), to the fully allowed, and legally tested, 15 per cent level," Trump said in a social media post.

"During the next short number of months, the Trump Administration will determine and issue the new and legally permissible Tariffs, which will

continue our extraordinarily successful process of Making America Great Again," he added.

In a proclamation titled 'Imposing a Temporary Import Surcharge to Address Fundamental International Payments Problems' dated February 20, Trump said he is imposing, for a period of 150 days, a "temporary import surcharge of 10 per cent ad valorem" on articles imported into the US, effective February 24.

In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda in his second term, the US Supreme Court ruled that the tariffs imposed by Trump on nations around the world were illegal and that the President had exceeded his authority when he imposed the sweeping levies.

Further, a fact sheet issued by the White House said Trump is invoking his authority under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, which empowers him to address certain fundamental international payment problems through surcharges and other special import restrictions.

The fact sheet noted that some goods will not be subject to the temporary import duty because of the needs of the US economy.

The goods include certain critical minerals, metals used in currency and bullion, energy, and energy products; natural resources and fertilisers that cannot be grown, mined, or otherwise produced in the



US; certain agricultural products, including beef, tomatoes, and oranges; pharmaceuticals; certain electronics; passenger vehicles, some light trucks, certain medium and heavy-duty vehicles, buses, and certain aerospace products.

Trump lashed out at the Supreme Court justices who ruled against him, calling them "fools and lapdogs". The US President also said that "nothing" changes in the trade deal with India in the wake of this verdict, as he responded to the ruling by announcing an additional 10 per cent global levies on items imported into America.

"Nothing changes. They'll (India) be paying tariffs, and we will not be paying tariffs. So deal with India is they pay tariffs. This is a reversal for what it used to be... So we made a deal with India. It's a fair deal now, and we are not

paying tariffs to them, and they are paying tariffs. We did a little flip," Trump said.

The Indian commerce ministry said the government is studying the developments on the US tariffs and their implications.

The US had imposed a reciprocal tariff of 25% on India in August. Later, an additional 25% was imposed for buying Russian crude oil, taking the total tariffs on India to 50%.

Meanwhile, earlier this month, both countries agreed to finalise an interim trade deal, under which Washington agreed to cut down the tariffs to 18 per cent. So far, the punitive 25 per cent has been removed. The remaining 25 per cent exists.

After the proclamation, the tariffs on Indian goods will be 10 per cent from the existing 25 per cent. Now Trump has again announced hiking these tariffs to 15 per cent. This levy, if notified, will be over and above the existing MFN or import duties in the US.

The Congress Saturday demanded that the government put the interim trade agreement on hold and renegotiate the terms of the deal. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said the government must also ensure that the interests of Indian farmers are fully protected during negotiations and asked the government to categorically state that it will not allow any import liberalisation to the American side.

BEDLAM OVER PADDY CONTINUES FOR 4TH DAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The Assembly witnessed pandemonium for the fourth consecutive day Saturday as Opposition BJD and Congress MLAs created ruckus over the alleged mismanagement in paddy procurement.

Opposition members raised anti-government slogans, displayed placards and banners near the Speaker's podium, leading to the adjournment of proceedings.

Speaker Surama Padhy had called an all-party meeting Friday to resolve the deadlock, but it failed to yield any result as pandemonium continued Saturday.

As soon as the House assembled for the day at 10:30am, Opposition BJD and Congress members, raising slogans, rushed to the Well. Similar scenes were witnessed Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Padhy urged the members to cooperate and return to their seats but her appeals fell on deaf ears. She first adjourned the House till 11:30am, but as similar scenes continued upon resumption of proceedings, she extended the adjournment till 4pm.

Congress members, wearing black headbands, highlighted the problems faced by farmers at state-run mandis.

Despite CM Mohan Charan Majhi announcing on the floor



Drones flew over Srimandir 10 times in 19 months: Min

Bhubaneswar: Drones were illegally operated at least 10 times above and near the Srimandir in the last 19 months, the Assembly was informed Saturday. Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan also said that devotees of Lord Jagannath have donated over Rs 304.57 crore to the temple in a span of 14 years and over 58 kg of mixed gold to the shrine in 44 years. Replying to a written question by BJD legislator PK Deb, Harichandan said, "Ten cases have been registered at Singhadwar police station in Puri after detection of drones being flown since June 2025. While final forms have been submitted in two cases, the investigation of the remaining eight cases is ongoing." According to the order issued by the Puri district administration, flying drones above and near the shrine was prohibited and treated as an offence.

of the House that the government will procure the entire paddy from farmers, the Opposition members demanded assurance from the administration to stop the practice of 'katchi-chhatni'.

They also demanded the payment of ₹3,169 per quintal of paddy, comprising both MSP and input subsidy.

Deputy leader of Opposition Prasanna Acharya of BJD said, "Since day one, the government has been saying it would procure paddy and farmers would get proper price. Has it happened so far? Farmers are not being given ₹3,169 per quintal and there is huge 'katchi-chhatni'... Whatever payment is made, comes too late."

Acharya said the Opposition does not want disruption in the House. "The government is not listening to the farmers. What has been announced is not being implemented in the procurement centres (mandis). Let the government bring a motion to discuss the matter," he said.

Speaking to reporters outside the Assembly, Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam alleged that the state government is ignoring the plights of farmers, who are being forced to go for distress sale of paddy.

"The BJP made announcements keeping an eye on farmers' votes, but after coming to power, it did not keep its promises. The BJP announced ₹800 input subsidy per quintal of paddy, but the government is now giving ₹731. The farmers are at the receiving end," Kadam said.

BJP member Sanatan Bijuli, however, condemned the Opposition for regularly disrupting the Assembly proceedings.

SIR TO BEGIN IN ODISHA APRIL 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls will begin across Odisha April 1, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) RS Gopalan said Saturday.

The CEO said preparatory work, including a mapping exercise, is underway to ensure smooth implementation of the revision process ahead of upcoming elections. "The SIR will start in Odisha April 1, 2026," he said and urged citizens to verify their details in the 2002 SIR list and report discrepancies, if any, to authorities.

The exercise aims to ensure a clean electoral roll by removing duplicate and ineligible entries, correcting errors, and adding eligible voters left out.

Climate change adds to woes of 'tiger widows' of Sunderbans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gosaba (Sunderbans), Feb 21: Even in knee-deep murky waters, Rina Sarkar is nimble on her feet as she navigates the slippery mudbanks of Chargheri village on Satjalia island in the Sunderbans. She is one of the 150 local women who have come to the embankment, walking through a dense forest, to plant 2,000 mangrove saplings as part of a green initiative.

Rina, like several of her companions, is a 'tiger widow' - a local woman whose husband has been taken by the Bengal tiger. "In 2022, my husband, Sudip to Sarkar, went to catch fish and crabs, and never returned. He was killed by a tiger," Rina says as her voice trails off.

According to locals, there are

thousands of 'tiger widows' in the expansive Sunderbans region - their lives riddled with social ostracisation, financial instability, and psychological distress. The situation has been exacerbated in recent years, amid rising instances of human-tiger conflict, primarily due to the adverse effects of climate change.

While there are legal provisions to provide compensation for wildlife-related fatalities, and several non-government organisations (NGOs) and community-based initiatives to help 'tiger widows', these women continue to face challenges.

Debaroti Das, who works with Purbasha Eco Helpline Society (PEHS), a Sunderbans-based NGO, says, "Human beings have three basic needs for survival. In the Sunderbans, however, there



PC: BRITANNICA

are not many sources of income; here, attaining a quality life is near impossible. Even if people somehow manage to build a house, frequent cyclones that hit the region destroy them."

The husband of Anima Mondal, a resident of the Chargheri village, was killed by a tiger around 20 years ago when he went to catch

crabs - one of the few sources of income in the region, selling for up to ₹800 per kg.

The attack did not just leave Anima without a husband, the family's main breadwinner, but also turned her into an outcast. She was believed to be a bad omen and labelled as 'swami-khejo'.

To make matters worse, many

'tiger widows' are denied financial compensation for wildlife-related fatalities under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

In recent years, the Sunderbans has been a hotbed of climate change, facing an existential threat from rising sea levels, frequent and intense cyclones, and increasing salinity in water. These have also led to an increase in the frequency of human-tiger conflicts, according to experts.

For instance, in 2015-2016, the region had shrunk by 210 sq km since the 1960s due to rise in sea level. Also, a gradual reduction in sediment flow from rivers to the Sunderbans region has resulted in loss of land mass.

Das says, "Habitat for both humans and tigers is getting submerged due to rising sea level. When the islands where

tigers live submerge, the animal moves to human-inhabited areas, resulting in more number of attacks."

Climate has led to an increase in water salinity, threatening the health of mangrove forests and the quality of soil and crop. This has also caused disruptions to fish populations in the region, affecting livelihood of residents who depend on them for income.

"In search of fish and crabs, village residents are forced to enter forests illegally, and fall prey to tiger attacks," Das says.

Every year, around 40 people are targeted by tigers in the region. This number is expected to rise, as no suitable tiger habitat will be left in the Sunderbans by 2070 because of climate change and rise in sea level, according to a 2019 study.

10 industrial projects for 8 dists

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, at a meeting of the High-Level Clearance Authority (HLCA), approved 10 major industrial projects worth ₹44,241.97 crore across eight districts of Odisha.

The projects span sectors such as rare earth manufacturing, semiconductors, cement, automobile and auto-components, telecom infrastructure, and power and renewable energy, and are spread across Khurda district, Koraput district, Malkangiri district, Dhenkanal district, Puri district, Nayagarh district, Kalahandi district, and Deogarh district.

In the semiconductor sector, ASP Semicon Private Limited will set up a semiconductor memory chip modules plant in Khurda district with an investment of ₹4,620 crore, creating 2,500 jobs and strengthening Odisha's electronics and semiconductor ecosystem.

In the rare earth segment, Magnova Private Limited has proposed an investment of ₹1,050 crore in Khurda district to establish an integrated high-performance magnet manufacturing facility.

Further strengthening advanced manufacturing, Bharat Forge Limited will invest ₹3,000 crore in Dhenkanal district to establish an automotive, aerospace, and defence components manufacturing



unit, generating around 1,000 jobs and positioning Odisha as a high-precision engineering hub.

The cement sector also saw major expansion, with NCL Industries Limited investing ₹2,000 crore in Koraput district, and Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited setting up an integrated cement plant in Malkangiri district with an investment of ₹2,000 crore.

A key highlight was the strong push for renewable energy infrastructure. Adani Hydro Energy Twelve Limited will invest ₹9,731.47 crore in Nayagarh district, while Sangamam CD Hydro Consortium will invest ₹9,000 crore in Koraput district. Greenko OR01 IREP Private Limited has proposed ₹7,506.94 crore in

Kalahandi district, and Jindal Green PSP Two Private Limited will invest ₹3,711.56 crore in Deogarh district to set up pumped storage hydropower plants. These projects are expected to strengthen Odisha's long-term energy security, grid stability, and renewable integration capacity.

In the telecom infrastructure sector, Shreetch Data Limited will invest ₹1,622 crore to establish a cable landing station in Puri district, enhancing digital connectivity and positioning the state as a strategic data gateway on the eastern coast.

Highlighting Odisha's growing competitiveness and the need to seize emerging global opportunities, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said

that with global supply chains evolving and new trade avenues opening, the state must act with speed and strategic clarity.

The approved projects reflect Odisha's shift towards high-value sectors, clean energy leadership, semiconductor ecosystem development, advanced manufacturing, and regionally balanced industrialisation. With swift decision-making and investor-friendly governance, the Government of Odisha continues to position the state as a preferred destination for both core and emerging sectors.

Concluding the meeting, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi outlined a three-pronged action plan for departments, members of the High-Level Clearance Authority, and senior officials to sustain investment momentum and strengthen Odisha's competitive edge.

"To remain ahead in an increasingly competitive investment landscape, we must pursue targeted investor outreach and proactively secure high-value projects.

We must also ensure speed and ease through robust systems backed by strict Service Level Agreements, and reduce project turnaround times by empowering field-level mechanisms to swiftly resolve bottlenecks. These coordinated efforts will help Odisha remain a preferred destination for global investment," he said.



MGM and Orissa Cricket Association Chairman Pankaj Mohanty awards a scholarship to Suvrajita Mishra, while Editor of Argus Digital Sangram Sarangi and **Dharitri & OrissaPOST** Editor Tathagata Satpathy, are present at BB Memorial Convocation in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

Maharashtra man held in City for cyber fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: Police, during its special drive 'Cyber Kawach', busted an organised cyber fraud syndicate operating in the City under Khandagiri police limits. One youth from Maharashtra was arrested in this connection near Durga Mandap, Dumduma, officials said Saturday.

Acting on reliable inputs, a police team conducted a raid and apprehended Omkar Sanakar Prajapati (25), a native of Maharashtra currently residing at Khandagiri Bari in the City.

During investigation, police found that Prajapati, along with his associates Kundan Borkate of Nagpur and Ashutosh Lenka of Khandagiri Bari, was allegedly operating an organised cyber fraud syndicate.



The gang reportedly used mule bank accounts to route and launder money generated through illegal online gaming, betting, crypto trading, and gambling apps.

The accused allegedly lured financially vulnerable individuals, particularly from slum areas, with promises of easy money and fraudulently collected multiple bank accounts, ATM cards, SIM cards, and banking credentials in their names. These accounts were

subsequently used to transfer and withdraw illicit funds.

The syndicate reportedly earned a commission of ₹30,000 per savings account and ₹50,000 per current account.

Police said Prajapati failed to give a satisfactory explanation for his presence in Bhubaneswar. During sustained interrogation, he confessed to his involvement and disclosed details of the syndicate's modus operandi.

Digital examination of his mobile phone revealed incriminating chats, banking documents, transaction records, and digital wallet access details.

He was forwarded to the court after completion of legal formalities. Further investigation is underway to trace other associates and unravel a wider network.

Camp to promote official use of Odia

Bhubaneswar: A two-day training camp to promote the use of the Odia language in official government work was organised in Bhubaneswar. The programme was conducted by Odia Bhasa Pratisthana under the aegis of the Odia Language, Literature and Culture department. A total of 100 government officers from 13 departments of the Odisha government participated. The camp focused on enhancing Odia writing skills, sentence construction, drafting of official letters and notes in Odia, administrative usage of the language, preparation of official orders, selection of administrative terminology, spelling accuracy, translation from English to Odia, and execution of official work in Odia using computers and the OSWAS platform. Renowned academicians and experts including Ramesh Chandra Mallick, Baishnab Charan Mohanty, Kailash Chandra Tikayat Ray, Surendra Kumar Dash and Smrutiranjana Mishra served as trainers and guided the officers during the sessions. Among those present were Debaprasad Dash, Director of the Odia Bhasa Pratisthana; Chandrasekhar Hota, Secretary of the Odisha Sahitya Akademi; Smita Mohanty and Additional Secretary of the Odia Language, Literature and Culture department.

HRAO hails tourism push in Budget

Bhubaneswar: The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) welcomed the state Budget 2026-27 presented by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, noting its recognition of the tourism and hospitality sector's growing role in economic development. The Budget provided a strong boost to tourism with a 25 per cent increase in allocation and several forward-looking measures, including a new Homestay Policy, creation of a ₹150 crore Tourism Land Bank, and a revised tourism policy offering capital subsidies of up to ₹100 crore. It said the government's vision to develop 15 priority destination areas and attract 5 crore tourists by 2047 reflected a long-term, growth-oriented approach. The special focus on infrastructure was particularly encouraging. The allocation of ₹1,000 crore to transform Puri into a premier religious tourism destination, along with ₹500 crore for an international cruise terminal and marine aquarium, was expected to significantly strengthen Odisha's tourism ecosystem and global appeal. The proposed eco-restoration of Chilika Lake was a timely and commendable step. Addressing ecological challenges while promoting sustainable eco-tourism would help preserve this unique natural asset and enhance its appeal to responsible travellers. Overall, the Budget reflected the government's commitment to building a sustainable, infrastructure-driven, and globally competitive tourism sector. From destination development to ecological conservation, the measures were expected to accelerate Odisha's emergence as a world-class tourism hub while safeguarding its cultural and natural heritage. HRAO appreciated the leadership of CM Majhi and Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida for their proactive efforts to strengthen the tourism sector in collaboration with stakeholders.

Global Cleantech Expo concludes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The two-day Global Cleantech Expo - Odisha 2026 concluded here Saturday, emerging as eastern India's largest exhibition on clean energy and sustainable mobility.

The event brought together industry leaders, policymakers, innovators, and investors to foster collaboration and accelerate India's green energy transition.

The expo saw participation from over 100 exhibitors and partners, attracted more than 10,000 visitors, and featured over 10 conference sessions with more than 100 eminent speakers.

Supported by the Green Initiative of the Government of Odisha and Grid Corporation of Odisha, and powered by the Odisha Cleantech Association and National Energy Technology Research Alliance, the event reinforced Odisha's position as a key hub for clean technology, innovation, and sustainable growth.

MGM Green Energy, along with its subsidiary Neoteric Energy, was among the prominent participants at the expo. Both companies have made notable contributions to the clean energy sector over the years.

The company has an existing portfolio of 14 MW of solar power plants installed across Odisha, along with a total of 8.5 MW of wind power capacity across Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan.

OASME lauds scrapping of Professional Tax

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha Assembly of Small & Medium Enterprises (OASME) expressed its appreciation to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi for abolishing the Professional Tax in the state. The decision is expected to provide significant relief to businesses, professionals, and entrepreneurs across Odisha. "This move will boost the state's economic growth and promote a business-friendly environment. Abolition of Professional Tax had been a long-standing demand of OASME," said Satwik Swain, Secretary General, OASME. "We commend the Chief Minister's commitment to simplifying tax structures and reducing the tax burden on citizens. This decision will positively impact the state's economy and encourage entrepreneurship," he added. OASME said the decision would particularly benefit micro and medium enterprises, the backbone of Odisha's economy. The abolition of Professional Tax was expected to improve liquidity and encourage greater investment in the state.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Pipili, Dist.-Puri, SL No:422 dated 10.02.2026, I GITANJALI MISHRA, W/o Surjyanarayan Mishra resident of Village At/PO-Rupadeipur, PS-Balanga, Dist.-Puri, Odisha declare that I have changed my name from SUMATI MISHRA to GITANJALI MISHRA. Henceforth, I shall be known as GITANJALI MISHRA for all purposes. Sd./- GITANJALI MISHRA

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Bhubaneswar dated 29.01.2026, I, Sanskruti Nayak, DOB: 18.12.2004, residing at Plot No. 2775/3906, Brahmeswar Patna, Bhubaneswar - 751018, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha would like to inform all concerned authorities that my Mother's name is incorrectly spelled as Souvagyalaxmi Nayak. The correct name of my mother is Souvagya Laxmi Swain for all purposes.

Advancing inclusion, accessibility & empowerment

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 21: The Yi Odisha Ability Summit 2026 emerged as a landmark platform driving inclusion, accessibility, and empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) across Odisha. Designed as a one-day, multi-stakeholder engagement, the summit brought together policymakers, administrators, corporates, CSR leaders, disability rights experts, innovators, institutions, and community leaders to co-create a shared roadmap for inclusive development, sustainable livelihoods, and universal access in Bhubaneswar. The summit commenced with a soulful musical performance by a group of visually impaired artists, symbolising dignity, ability, and inclusion. This was followed by a formal registration and networking session that fostered meaningful interaction and collaboration among stakeholders.

YI ODISHA ABILITY SUMMIT



The inaugural session featured context-setting addresses by representatives of Young Indians and leading disability rights advocates, including Justice Bidyut Ranjan Sarangi, former Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court and former Acting Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, who currently serves as a Member of the National Human Rights Commission. He emphasised the human rights of persons with disabilities, effective implementation of the RPwD Act, district-level inclusion

models, constitutional safeguards, and the vital role of institutions in ensuring dignity, equality, and justice. The summit agenda featured high-impact thematic sessions on Universal Access; Skilling and Institutions; Industry, Innovation and Inclusive Livelihoods; CSR and Capacity Building; Career Opportunities; and Sports, Aspirations, and Social Capital, fostering dialogue on advancing inclusion and empowerment. The sessions brought together leaders and experts from

leading organisations including TPCODL, Skill Council for Persons with Disability, Tata Steel, Jindal Steel & Power, Vindhya E-Infomedia, AKM Robotics and its Founder Ashish Mahana, Tech Mahindra Foundation, Odisha Power Generation Corporation, Utkal Alumina International Limited, Sunshine Hospital, Union Bank of India, and Tushi Motors, among others. In total, 27 corporates representing diverse sectors and scales were recognised for their contributions, while sharing insights and best practices to advance inclusive growth. Jaago Motion and Sign-express were recognised as trailblazers for making inclusivity an easy and accessible choice across sectors. Inspiring personal journeys were also shared, including that of a visually impaired coder from Cognizant, Kunalata, who spoke about promoting NeoMotion and advancing assistive innovation.

| WEATHER | | | |
|----------|-------|-------|-------------------------------|
| | BBSR | CTC | FORECAST |
| Max Temp | 35.4° | 32.4° | Dry weather likely to prevail |
| Min Temp | 17.5° | 16.4° | |
| Humidity | 58% | 74% | |
| Rainfall | Nil | Nil | |

MSME park in limbo despite ₹12cr spend



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kesinga, Feb 21: An MSME park in Kurupada village under Kesinga block in Kalahandi district has remained incomplete for five years despite an expenditure of ₹12 crore, triggering resentment among farmers who lost their land for the project.

The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) park was planned on 180 acre land acquired from 150 farmers in 1983 for a proposed paper mill by JK Paper. The land had been acquired at a low price with assurances of employment, farmers said.

In 1984, the then chief minister Janaki Ballabh Patnaik laid the foundation stone for the proposed paper mill project. However, the mill was never set

work, the park has remained non-functional for the past five years. The land is now overgrown with bushes, and no industrial unit has been set up.

Farmers said they had hoped that even if they lost their land, the establishment of the paper mill or subsequent industrial units would provide them with jobs. "Years have passed, but we are still waiting eagerly," one farmer said, expressing frustration over the delay.

The affected farmers have demanded that if the park is not made operational, their land should be returned. They have warned of a road blockade on National Highway 26 if their demands are not addressed.

Local industrialists have also urged the state government, now led by the BJP, to take immediate steps to operationalise the park, saying it would benefit the region's economy and generate employment.

When contacted, Alok Ranjan Bai, an engineer with IDCO's Bolangir division, said the government has changed and no fresh instruction has been received so far regarding the project.

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When contacted, Alok Ranjan Bai, an engineer with IDCO's Bolangir division, said the government has changed and no fresh instruction has been received so far regarding the project.



RISKY PROPOSITION: Students of a high school at K Nuagaon in Kandhamal district, packed like sardines, travel in a tractor trolley to their examination centre for their annual HSC examination Saturday

3 arrested for youth's murder

CHHATRAPUR: Police in Chhatrapur have solved the murder of a 28-year-old youth within 24 hours of case registration and arrested three people in connection with the crime. The victim, R. Raja Rao of Aruguni village, was allegedly attacked with a sword and sticks near Rikapalli Gate under Chhatrapur police limits. Police seized a mobile phone, a sword and two sticks from the accused. Addressing a press conference, Chhatrapur SDPO Chandan Kumar Ghadai and Inspector-In-Charge Sabyasachi Malla said the killing stemmed from previous enmity. The accused were identified as Chandan Raut, 27, and his brother Sunil Raut, 22, both of Debinagar Sahi in Chhatrapur town, and their associate Ashish Behera, 22, of Byareka Sahi. Police said earlier disputes, including quarrels over a volleyball game, had led to tension between the victim and the accused. Further investigation is underway.

NGT seeks response over air pollution in Talcher

POST NEWS NETWORK

Talcher, Feb 21: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has sought responses from Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. (MCL), the state government, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), the Angul District Collector, East Coast Railway (ECOR) and the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) over worsening

air pollution in Talcher in Angul district.

The tribunal directed the authorities to place relevant facts before the court April 16 while hearing a petition related to deteriorating air quality in the coal-bearing region.

According to the petition, Air Quality Index (AQI) in Talcher has frequently reached alarming levels. MCL has set a pro-

duction target of 125 million tonnes of coal for the current financial year. The Talcher coalfields, spread over about 500 sq km, are among the largest coal reserves in the country.

Talcher recorded an AQI of 312 January 22, 2025, making it the second most polluted city in the country on that day, according to available data.

The petitioner, social activist

Rajkishore Sahu, alleged that coal transported from mines by trains and trucks is often not covered with tarpaulin sheets despite mandatory provisions, leading to the spread of coal dust and a rise in air pollution levels.

Taking note of the seriousness of the matter, the tribunal issued notices to all concerned parties and sought their responses by April 16.

Hospital sealed over minor girl's delivery

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur Road/Dharmasala, Feb 21: The district administration Saturday sealed Laxmi Hospital in Jajpur Road following a case involving the delivery of a minor girl who was allegedly impregnated by a 70-year-old man.

Earlier, police arrested the hospital owner and the accused in the case and forwarded them to court.

According to officials, a complaint was lodged at Jajpur Road police station last Sunday eve-

ning after it came to light that a 16-year-old girl, who was staying in a rented house in the Kopanda area under Vyasaganar Municipality, was pregnant.

Police said the accused, identified as 70-year-old Padmanabh Satpathy, allegedly maintained an illicit relationship with the minor and she was seven months pregnant.

After the girl complained of abdominal pain, the accused admitted her to Laxmi Hospital, where doctors conducted the delivery.

A team led by the Chief District

Medical Officer (clinical establishment) visited the hospital Monday, and initiated an inquiry into the incident. As some patients were undergoing treatment at the time, authorities had said the hospital would be sealed after arrangements were made to shift them.

Officials of the district health department, along with the administration and in the presence of police, vacated the premises Saturday, and sealed the hospital. Further investigation into the case is underway.

Woman among 4 arrested with 279 gm brown sugar

JALESWAR: Balasore police arrested four persons, including a woman, and seized 279 gram brown sugar in two separate raids conducted Friday. In the first operation, an eight-member police team led by Sub-Inspector Banita Nayak raided the home of Rubina Bibi, 27, in Rajpur village. After receiving tip-off regarding illegal drug trafficking, officers discovered 259 gram brown sugar concealed within a secret cavity in a wall. Police estimate the street value of the seized drugs at more than ₹26 lakh. Rubina, the wife of Sirajuddin, was arrested and booked under case (102/26) before being produced in court. In a second raid along the Panughata road, police apprehended three men acting suspiciously. The suspects, identified as Sudarshan Jena and Babu Mukhi of Shikharpur, and Satya Prakash Hota of Gopa village, were found in possession of 20 gram brown sugar.

Self-immolation bid at Collectorate

BHADRAK: A 28-year-old woman attempted self-immolation inside the district Collectorate premises in Bhadrak on Saturday, alleging she was denied employment after completing a Diploma in Early Child Care (DECC) course. The woman, Bijayalakshmi Das of Shyamsundarpur village under Thidhi block, set her clothes on fire with a matchstick after learning the district collector was not in office. Officials and bystanders quickly doused the flames, and she was taken to the district headquarters hospital in a 108 ambulance. She sustained minor burns on her left leg and was reported stable. Bijayalakshmi said there is no government provision to appoint DECC-qualified candidates in Shishu Vatika pre-primary schools. She claimed repeated protests in Bhubaneswar had failed to yield results.

Brahmapur rly stn to be redeveloped at ₹93.19cr

BERHAMPUR: Brahmapur Railway Station in Ganjam district will be redeveloped at an investment of ₹93.19 crore, an official said Saturday. The redevelopment project aims to transform the station into a modern, passenger-friendly, smart and sustainable transport hub, which can comfortably meet future growth demands, he said. As a part of the project, a three-storey station building will be constructed, a 12-metre-wide foot-over bridge will be built, a quick watering system will be developed, platforms extended, and dedicated two-lane bus drops will be constructed, he said. The redeveloped station will also get a waiting hall for 500 passengers, five escalators, and eight lifts, he added. The station will incorporate modern and eco-friendly features such as green building standards, solar panels on rooftops, rainwater harvesting and stormwater reuse systems, solid waste management with proper segregation and a modern firefighting system, the official of the East Coast Railway (ECOR) said. The station's facade and interior spaces will reflect the Silk City's rich cultural heritage, he said. Elements inspired by local art will be integrated into the design, making the station not just a transit point but a landmark representing the cultural pride and identity of the city, he added.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, BANSPAL
E-mail : eerwbansapal@gmail.com

Letter No. _____ Date _____

"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works
Identification No Road Online NCB-11/2025-26

1. Name of the Work : Road Works in the District of Keonjhar for the year 2025-26. 2. Total Number of Work : 02 Nos., 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.5.83 Lakhs to 25.49 Lakhs (Approx.), 4. Class of Contractor : "C" & "B", "D" & "C" Class, 5. Period of Completion : As per annexure of e-Procurement Notice No. 11 of 2025-26. 6. Other Details : NA

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender Online for bidding | | Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification | Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/o S.E., R.W.D Banspal |
|--|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|---|
| | | From | To | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Banspal | Road Online NCB No.11 | Dt.24.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M. | Dt.06.03.2026 up to 5.00 P.M. | Dt.05.03.2026 up to 5.00 P.M. | 07.03.2026 At 11.00 A.M. |

Further details can be seen from the Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
R.W. Division, Banspal

OIPR-25001/25198/1/25-26/0001

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION, SUNABEDA
e-mail : eerw_sunabeda@yahoo.co.in

No.25001/212/2526 Date : 19.02.2026

Letter No.686/ Identification No Online Tender /11/RWD-SBD/2025-26

1. Name of the work : Road works Semiiliguda, Nandapur, Pottangi, Laxmipur, Bandhugaoon, Lamtaput Block, 2. Total Number of works : 7 nos works, 3. Estimated Cost : 6.00 to 39.00 lakhs, 4. Class of Contractor : "B", "C" & "D" Class, 5. Period of Completion : 01 month, 6. Other details :

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | Availability of Tender on-line for bidding | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| | | From | To |
| Superintending Engineer, R.W. Division, Sunabeda | Online Tender/11/RWD-SBD/2025-26 | 20.02.2026 at 11:00 A.M. | 27.02.2026 upto 03:00 P.M. |

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

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Rural Works Division, Sunabeda

OIPR-25001/251211/1/25-26/0001

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
PANCHAYAT SAMITI, GUDARI
E-Mail : ori-gudari@od.gov.in

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
e-Procurement Notice

IDENTIFICATION NO.02/2025-26 OF PANCHAYAT SAMITI, GUDARI
No.344/GPSSK/2026. (GPSSK, Tender) Dev Dated 20.02.2026

- The Panchayat Samiti, Gudari invites Percentage Rate Bids in Single Cover system in an ONLINE MODE for construction of Gram Panchayat Subhadra Shakti Kendra (Civil + Electrification + PH) as detailed in the Detailed Tender Call Notice (D.T.C.N) from the eligible class of contractors.
- No. of Works : 03 (Three) No.
- Cost of Tender Paper : Rs.6,000/- (Rupees Six Thousand) only
- Class of Contractor : "B" & "C" Class
- Date & Time of available in : 11:00 Hrs of 02.03.2026 to 17.00 Hrs. of website & receipt online : 16.03.2026
- Date of opening of : 18.03.2026 at 11:00 Hrs. Technical Bid
- The Bidder have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the State Govt. Portal website <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
- Any corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> only.

Sd./- Block Development Officer
Gudari

OIPR-19001/19045/1/25-26/0001

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,
NABARANGPUR (R&B) DIVISION, NABARANGPUR
E-mail ID : eerngpur@yahoo.com, Tel & Fax - 06858-222833 (O)

e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No.S.E (R&B)-31/2025-26/NGP
No.1926 Date : 19.02.2026

No.34001/112/2526 : Bid Documents consisting of work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender paper, EMD, Time of completion, Class of Contractors and set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. Website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

- Name of the Work : Electrical Work as mentioned in DTGN
- No. of Work : 06 Nos.
- Estimated Cost : Rs.6.05 Lakhs to 39.90 Lakhs
- Period of Completion : 2 Calendar of Months
- Date & Time of Bidding : From 11.00 hours of 27.02.2026 upto 16.00 hours of 09.03.2026
- Last Date & Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal : 16.00 hours of 09.03.2026
- Bids received online shall be opened on : 11.00 hours of 10.03.2026
- Name and Address of the Officer : Superintending Engineer, Nabarangpur (R&B) Division, Nabarangpur Inviting Bid

Further details can be seen from the www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer,
Nabarangpur (R&B) Division

OIPR-34001/34143/1/25-26/0001

UCO BANK **POSSESSION NOTICE**
For Immovable Property

Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building,
2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar,
Bhubaneswar-751009, Tel: 0674-2620423

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act., 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **UCO Bank, Bhubaneswar Main Branch** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Guarantors to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken **POSSESSION** of the property described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **UCO Bank, Bhubaneswar Main Branch** for an amount plus interest, incidental expenses & charges thereon.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

| BHUBANESWAR MAIN BRANCH/ Name and Address of the Borrower/Guarantors | Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date | Date of Demand / Possession Notice | Description of the Immovable Property |
|---|--|------------------------------------|--|
| Borrower: Syed Sahid Alii, S/o.: Shaukat Mohammad / Guarantors: 1) Rehana Begum, W/o.: Shaukat Mohammad, 2) Syed Samsher Ali, S/o.: Shaukat Mohammad, All are At: Mirkamalpatna, PO: Mangalabag, Dist.: Cuttack | ₹ 21,35,609.35 as on 31.10.2025 + interest & other charges thereon | 20.11.2025 / 21.02.2026 | All parts & parcels of Land & Building standing in the name of Rehana Begum, W/o.: Shaukat Mohammad situated at Mouza: Cuttack Sahar Unit No.: 22 Mirkamalpatna, PO: Mangalabag, SRO: Cuttack, Dist.: Cuttack, Khata No.: 1068/47, Plot No.: 985, Area: Ac.0.051 Dec., Bounded by North: Residence of Samsul Alam, South: Residence of Idan Bibi, East: Municipality Road, West: Municipality Road |

Place : Bhubaneswar, Date : 21.02.2026 Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA **E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**
(A Government of India undertaking)

REGIONAL OFFICE: Plot No.: 108-B, 1st Floor, Unit-VII
Surya Nagar, Near Gopabandhu Square, Bhubaneswar-751003
E-mail: recoveryhubro@centralbank.co.in

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 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 properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive /symbolic of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of **Central Bank of India - Secured Creditor**, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis on the date and time specified here in below, for recovery of due to the **Central Bank of India - Secured Creditor** from the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposit of the respective properties is mentioned here in below:-

| BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) | Name & Address of the Guarantor(s) / Mortgagors | Description of Properties | Demand Notice Amount / Demand Notice Date / Possession Notice Date | Reserve Price EMD Amount Bid Increase Amount |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| NAYAPALLI BRANCH / Borrower: 1) Ms Subhalaxmi Enterprises, Prop.: Mr. Ajay Kumar Majhi, S/o- Late Duryodhan Majhi, At: Kheranga Village, Near Marketing Gate, Chandabali, Bhadrak, Dist.: Bhadrak, Odisha, PIN-756131. | Guarantor / Mortgagor: Mrs. Jayantilata Majhi, W/o- Mr. Ajay Kumar Majhi, Village/PO: Kheranga, PS: Chandabali, Dist.: Bhadrak, Odisha, PIN-756131. | All that part and parcel of property in the name of Mrs. Jayantilata Majhi, W/o- Mr. Ajay Kumar Majhi, Mouza: Boudapur, Tehsil: Bhadrak, PS: Bhadrak, Dist.: Bhadrak, (1) Khata No.: 400/379, Plot No.: 220/1539, Area: Ac.0.017 dec. Bounded by- East: Plot No. 218, West: Private Road, North: Vendee, South: Rest Part of Plot. (2) Khata No.: 400/386, Plot No.: 219/1545, Area: Ac.0.153 dec. Bounded by- East: Plot No. 218, West: Private Road, North: Private Road, South: Vendee. | ₹ 2,04,29,936.00 + Interest & expenses thereon / 02.05.2025 / 01.08.2025 | ₹ 86,34,000/- / ₹ 83,400/- / ₹ 20,000/- |

- DATE & TIME OF E-AUCTION:** 10.03.2026 from 10.00 A.M. to 4.00 P.M. with Auto Extension of 10 minutes.
- Last Date & Time for Submission of EMD online on or before :** 10.03.2026 upto 4.00 P.M.
- Date and Time of Property Inspection:** 18.02.2026 to 09.03.2026 on any working day during office hours in consultation with the Nayapalli Branch Head.
- For Participating in the E-auction sale, the intending bidders should register their details with the service provider <https://baanknet.com/eauction-psb/bidder-registration> well in advance and shall get user ID & password. For detailed terms & conditions of the sale please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com> and Secured Creditor's website i.e. www.centralbankofindia.co.in. The interested bidders who require assistance in creating Login ID & Password, uploading data, please go through **USER MANUAL** in URL: <https://baanknet.com>. For any support please call on **Mob.- 8291220220 & mail id- support.baanknet@psballiance.com**.
- For any property related query, bidders may contact: **MRS. Dipika Sradhanjali, Branch Head, Nayapalli Branch, Mob. No.: 7381003530, E-mail id: bmbhub3530@centralbank.co.in** at any working day during office hours.
- The purchaser shall bear the applicable stamp duties/additional stamp duties/transfer charges, fees etc. and also all statutory/non-statutory dues, taxes, TDS, rates, fees etc. owing to anybody.
- Other terms and conditions are available in the auction site.

STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 9(1) OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Place: Bhubaneswar, Date: 17.02.2026 Authorised Officer, Central Bank of India

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

PROMISES & PITFALLS



Each new dawn brings the possibility of a new progress.

THE MOTHER

Engineered Exclusion

The Bharatiya Janata Party has been governing Gujarat for about 30 unbroken years now. Notionally Gujarat is a two-party state, but the Congress has not won an election, either Vidhan Sabha or Lok Sabha, since before the Babri mosque was pulled down. In this period the BJP has had the full scope and freedom to develop a structure of governance and law. Around 20 years ago, after the 2002 pogrom, there came into currency the phrase 'Gujarat Model'. We will take a look at what this model is and what it can reveal about New India.

The first element of the Gujarat Model is political exclusion of Muslims. There has been no Muslim BJP legislator or minister in Gujarat for decades and the party does not give them even tickets to contest. Absolute exclusion for the sake of exclusion. This has been replicated in New India, where the BJP in the last three Lok Sabhas has won two majorities and a substantial plurality but with zero Muslims. Today the BJP has around 90 Rajya Sabha MPs but with no Muslims.

The second element is through laws that are aimed at minority persecution. Illegal cattle slaughter is ostensibly an economic crime (Article 48 of the Constitution is about animal husbandry and improving breeds). But no white collar crime attracts life in prison, as Gujarat's laws on cows do. Duping banks and investors of thousands of crores does not attract life. The reason is that cattle slaughter has been made into a religious matter and this has been replicated around the country. Laws criminalising possession of beef came only starting in 2015 (first with two BJP states, Maharashtra and Haryana) and the lynchings started. Now the phenomenon is national.

Rajasthan's Cabinet has said it will replicate Gujarat's law which forcibly and legally ghettoises Muslims and prevents them from renting and buying property outside these ghettos.

Laws criminalising marriage between Hindus and Muslims began to be legislated in 2018 starting with Uttarakhand and are today in seven states. Laws and policies on citizenship and mass disenfranchisement are in place today and being rolled out across India.

This connects with the third element which is targeted persecution through use of state machinery. The New York Times reported this week that in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal, the government apparatus that once served to act neutrally is today being misused by a majoritarian state. This has become the norm actually. Around 2017, BJP state governments began to use bulldozers to raze homes and businesses, mostly of Muslims, in violation of law. Two reports, one by my organisation Amnesty International India and another by the Citizens and Lawyers Initiative, have recorded the manner in which governments have encouraged lawlessness and then stepped in with bulldozers.

The justice system has looked away from this for the most part and there is complicity in those organs of state which could curb excess and violence against individuals.

The fourth element is the manner in which the narrative around India and its communities is being shaped. The language is deliberate and it is meant to inject division. It has been successful at doing this. One way in which we can tell is that what used to be unusual and episodic is today endemic. Violence against individuals purely because of the faith they were born into is now normal. The total lack of action from the state, judiciary and media has made it so. Undoing it will not be easy and can only happen if there is not only a stop but a reversal of course, which is hard to see.

The fifth element of the Gujarat model is a low priority on human development. Gujarat ranks low in the HDI index, which is made up of three elements: income, health and education. This is the basis of the intellectual opposition to the Gujarat Model and the stressing by many of the Kerala Model which focused on the development of individuals.

The privileging of capital and its interests as hallowed over the interests of people, our sixth element, is one of the unspoken but understood and accepted facets of the Gujarat Model. It is communicated through maxims like 'government has no business to be in government'.

While all of the other five elements have found acceptability in society it is this sixth one that is slightly problematic. It is why the prime minister chafed at being the head of a 'suit boot ki sarkar' and constantly and tiresomely talks about his humility and his fakiri. The idea of a handful of corporate entities, run mostly by Gujarati businessmen of a particular community, owning most of the ports, mines, airports, refineries, spectrum and other goods associated with government patronage is not easy to sell to Indians. This is so especially because the benefits of this have not come to Indians who remain more or less in the same condition as they were in 2014. No amount of government generated data can alter their lived reality. It will likely be the one that will cause the structural failure of the model in time.

However, for now and for the foreseeable future, it is hard not to accept that the Gujarat Model has won and it is the base on which our New India has been constructed.



Aakar Patel

FOR NOW AND FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, IT IS HARD NOT TO ACCEPT THAT THE GUJARAT MODEL HAS WON AND IT IS THE BASE ON WHICH OUR NEW INDIA HAS BEEN CONSTRUCTED



Rakesh Mohan & Divya Srinivasan

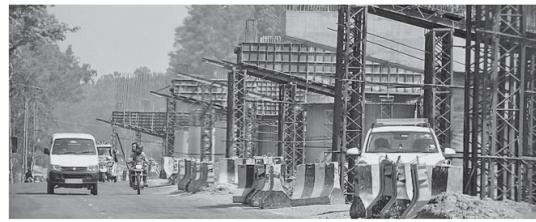
BY 2018, INDIAN BANKS' GROSS NON-PERFORMING ASSET RATIO HAD CLIMBED TO 11.2%, AMONG THE HIGHEST FOR MAJOR ECONOMIES

With infrastructure now seen as the leading engine of growth across the Global South, governments are under pressure to build – and fast. But for most, fiscal space is limited; development aid is thinning; and long-promised climate financing remains elusive. As a result, countries are turning to private capital and reviving an old idea with renewed urgency: public-private partnerships (PPPs).

According to the World Bank, in 2024, low- and middle-income countries received \$100 billion in private participation in infrastructure (PPI) investment, an impressive 20% increase from the five-year (2019-23) annual average of \$83.7 billion. Yet history recommends caution. While the logic of mobilizing private finance is often compelling, the record is mixed. Too often, emerging markets have relied on models proselytized by global development finance institutions without paying adequate attention to local institutional constraints.

Moreover, the bankability of some types of infrastructure projects – meaning a strong risk-return profile – tends to be limited, even in advanced economies. For example, very few highways have been developed by the private sector, which – for obvious reasons – is less inclined to supply non-remunerative public goods and services. This is even more the case with infrastructure projects, which typically come with a heavy burden of long-term debt.

India's experience is instructive. In the early 2000s, the country launched one of the world's largest PPP infrastructure programs, hoping to close massive gaps in ports, airports, highways, power, telecoms, and urban services. But the results have been mixed, partly because the expansion occurred just



Without institutional capacity and financial depth, PPPs can backfire, creating a vicious spiral of debt, delays, and disillusionment. For the Global South, the challenge is not just to build more infrastructure quickly, but to build it right

as India's development finance institutions (DFIs) were being wound down, following financial-sector reforms in the 1990s.

With the government favoring PPPs in the absence of a mature bond market DFIs, India leaned heavily on public-sector banks to fund long-gestation projects. But these institutions were not equipped to provide longer-term capital, assess risk, or appraise and monitor complex, risky infrastructure ventures. As PPP activity accelerated and private investment in infrastructure surged between 2007-14, so did bank lending to the sector. The share of infrastructure in non-food bank credit rose from 3.6% in 2007 to over 15% by 2015. Nominal bank credit to infrastructure increased more than six fold, from around Rs 1.4 trillion (\$15.4 billion) to Rs 9.2 trillion.

By the mid-2010s, structural weaknesses had become evident. Many road and power projects ran into land-acquisition issues, execution delays, and over optimistic demand projections. Revenues underperformed, costs escalated, and developers defaulted. The fallout was severe. By 2018, Indian banks' gross non-performing asset

ratio had climbed to 11.2%, among the highest for major economies. Public-sector banks, which had financed most of these projects, bore a disproportionate share of the stress, with NPAs of 14.6%, compared to 4.8% for private banks. Nearly Rs 4 trillion in public money was then spent on recapitalizing banks.

India is not an outlier. Spain's toll-road PPPs faced a similar reckoning: between 2010 and 2014, nine of ten radial road projects defaulted after traffic volumes collapsed, forcing government intervention. Even the United Kingdom, often cited as a PPP pioneer, ultimately scaled back its Private Finance Initiative, citing high long-term costs and opaque contracts. It has since begun the process of nationalizing its rail network, three decades after privatizing it.

Despite these failures, multilateral development banks have continued to promote PPPs indiscriminately. But it is time to ask why these projects fail, and what countries should do differently. The answer is not to reject PPPs, but to understand where they are viable and where they are not. Then we can focus on the institutional scaffolding that supports viable programs.

There is a growing need to revive DFIs at the national level to supplement the multilateral development banks. National institutions have a unique role to play in developing expertise in infrastructure financing, offering long-term loans, conducting project due diligence, and crowding in private capital through guarantees and co-lending structures.

But how can DFIs attract long-term funds? The key is to tap domestic savings, particularly from pension funds and the insurance industry, which in turn calls for greater efforts to promote long-term savings through these instruments. It is also important to develop domestic bond markets, as countries like South Korea and Malaysia have done.

Finally, governments need robust project-preparation facilities, realistic demand forecasts, and regulatory capacity, not just legal contracts with private partners. The stakes could not be higher. The OECD estimates global infrastructure needs at \$6.9 trillion annually through 2030, with developing countries facing the widest deficits. The climate crisis adds additional urgency: without resilient transportation, energy, and water systems, emerging economies will remain vulnerable.

India's experience offers a cautionary tale. Without institutional capacity and financial depth, PPPs can backfire, creating a vicious spiral of debt, delays, and disillusionment. For the Global South, the challenge is not just to build more infrastructure quickly, but to build it right.

Rakesh Mohan is President Emeritus and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP), New Delhi while Divya Srinivasan is a former research associate at the CSEP.

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SPECTRUM EUROPE

Geopolitics of Ukraine's EU membership



Danuta Hübner

IT'S UNIMAGINABLE THAT ONE DAY THE EU COULD SAY TO CANDIDATES THAT IT'S NOT READY TO OFFER THEM MEMBERSHIP

The unprecedented environment in which Ukraine has been preparing for European Union membership, reminds the fight for its future goes beyond the battlefield and security guarantees, including its reconstruction and integration. This accession is not only about the benefits of membership for Ukraine, but about it taking its share of responsibility for the European continent.

Ukraine's close ties with the EU did not begin with its application for membership. They have been growing since 1994, when the first EU-Ukraine partnership agreement was signed.

It's also true that when at start of 1990s preparing the first ever Eastern enlargement had begun, Ukrainian politicians and officials were expressing their deep worries that this major Eastern enlargement would be a new European iron curtain.

In 1990s, when countries of Central and Eastern Europe were preparing for EU accession, the world around was divided. New countries emerged

practicing democracy, but assertive regimes of autocrats and dictators remained in the neighbourhood. Accession to EU was a guarantee of the irreversibility of the transition to a market economy and democracy, freedom and security.

Today, geopolitical polarisation is much stronger and unpredictable. The EU is undergoing a profound revolution, reinventing itself to boost its security, competitiveness potential and its global role. Transatlantic relations, which were mutually reinforcing, are no longer so. Political will among 27 member states to move forward on the new "big bang enlargement" doesn't seem cast in stone.

There seemed to be an understanding that Ukraine's accession cannot be considered in the cost and benefit perspective only. There is hardly any public visibility of a debate about how EU will benefit from this enlargement economically and geopolitically, and how the global influence of Europe will be strengthened. The same is true for prevailing understanding that Ukraine's

accession would strengthen the EU competitiveness and innovation potential.

A deeper reflection on the new enlargement takes place mostly in some European think tanks. While this enlargement seems to be a European imperative, its link with European reforms, not long ago seen as necessary, has been lost.

When it was proposed by EC it was not trusted by Ukrainians, who saw it as a delaying full accession factor. Potentially redefined progressive integration might be used as an integration mechanism for a slower process. That might mean the new generation of Accession Treaty could offer progressive integration which would be rather a regressive one.

It is good to hear from EC that enlargement is the best geopolitical investment of the Union. It's clear that Russian invasion on Ukraine and political situation in Belarus are a proof of the failure of both European neighbourhood and enlargement policies.

Meanwhile, Chinese expan-

sion in Europe has exploded. The failure of presenting the reform of policies, shows rather a cautious position of EC in context of ambiguity of Council. The possibility of the big enlargement is off the table. Whatever the enlargement model will be, and I think the most likely a kind of regatta approach will be reality, one day the moment will be reached when there will be the Union of 35.

And it's unimaginable that one day the EU could say to candidates that it's not ready to offer them membership. There is no reason why a coalition of the willing could not launch such a debate. It is very important that the Union spares no effort and does not allow that in public domain appear ideas that are taking the credibility of the enlargement process down. This is undermining Europe's objective to enhance its global position, its democracy consolidation, its security.

The writer is an expert, Centre for International Relations, Poland

INFA

WISDOM CORNER

- Life's too short to deal with other people's insecurities.**
ANTHONY HOPKINS
- Life is a blur when one is essaying different roles; it is so fulfilling.**
AMITABH BACHCHAN
- You learned the two greatest thing in life, never rat on your friends, and always keep your mouth shut.**
ROBERT DE NIRO

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1942:** Three members of the White Rose, an anti-Nazi group that advocated nonviolent resistance, were beheaded in Munich. In the following months, many more were imprisoned for alleged connections to the group, and others were executed.
- 1980:** The US men's ice hockey team, a ragtag team of college players, defeated the Soviet Union's famed "Red Machine" during the Winter Olympics. Deemed the "Miracle on Ice," the historic upset, which occurred in the midst of the tense Cold War, boosted morale among Americans.
- 1997:** A team of British scientists working under the direction of Ian Wilmut at the Roslin Institute near Edinburgh announced the birth of Dolly the sheep, the first clone of an adult mammal. The momentous event invited controversy, however, about the possible misuses of mammalian cloning technology.

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 their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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

Shifting population

Sir, Over the past decade, the global centre of Christianity has shifted from Europe to Africa. While Europe had the largest Christian population in 2010, Africa now accounts for nearly one in three Christians worldwide. Rapid population growth and vibrant church movements in Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique have driven this rise. Islam has also expanded quickly across Africa due to similar demographic factors. In contrast, Christianity has declined in North America and Australia because of secularisation and lower fertility rates. For India, this shift means greater engagement with African churches in theology, education and missionary activity. It may influence interfaith dialogue, migration patterns, and global Christian networks affecting Indian denominations, while reinforcing the need for social harmony in a religiously diverse society.

RS Narula, PATIALA

Condemnable act

Sir, The unfortunate incident at the AI global summit in Delhi wherein youth activists from a party stormed and disrupted the ongoing event is really deplorable and disgraceful and has to be strongly condemned. It is really unfortunate that this has occurred when the nation is all set to showcase its technological capabilities and fast emerging as a global pioneer in the AI field. By turning it into a platform for disruption undermining national interests the organisation behind this protest has only undermined itself and tarnished its image in front of the public and the global community. For those behind this protest it may be just 'gimmicks' to remain in the political limelight but what they have forgotten is the more they stick to such cheap 'theatrics' the lesser they will be remembered and respected in society. It is high time that the opposition realised that though they have the rights to express dissent and raise issues in a democracy, it should not come at the cost of the nation's dignity. Ignoring this can push them to oblivion.

M Pradyu, KANNUR

MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY IRONY

Bengal's political discourse hits new low ahead of polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 21: Bengal's sharp political wit is increasingly giving way to personal attacks, crude exchanges and combative rhetoric...



has largely become a scramble for power, a transformation he believes has inevitably affected language.

State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya, a quintessential Bengali bhadralok, condemned what he described as "institutionalised aggression" in political speeches...

Veteran Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya called the current moment "an all-time low", lamenting that ideological contestation has given way to personalised attacks.

"One of the most significant reasons for this deterioration is the decline in intellectual depth among political leaders. Earlier, politicians read literature, philosophy and history. They had intellectual discipline and a broader worldview. Today, politics is confined to the immediate and the superficial," he said.

The 81-year-old politician argued that audiences have changed.

"If a leader uses abusive language, sections of the crowd applaud. Political discourse has become coarser. Politics, in many ways, has turned into

a closed pond. When it becomes insular and intellectually stagnant, degeneration is inevitable," he said.

The CPI (M), attempting to reassert itself after years of electoral decline, has been particularly vocal about what it terms a "collapse of political culture".

Left leaders frequently contrast today's verbal exchanges with an earlier era of structured ideological battles between Marxists, Congress stalwarts and emerging regional forces.

Sugata Bose, the history professor at Harvard University, traced the shift to the absence of towering leaders who once shaped Bengal's political imagination.

"One of the major reasons for the decline is that we no longer have leaders of the stature we once had in pre- and post-Independence eras. Earlier, politics and debates were based on ideology and policy. Now politics is about capturing power and money," the grandnephew of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and former TMC MP told PTI.

Bengal once prided itself on formidable orators - B C Roy, Jyoti Basu, Pranab Mukherjee,

Prafulla Sen, Ajoy Mukherjee, Somnath Chatterjee, Siddhartha Shankar Ray, Indrajit Gupta and Bhupesh Gupta - who differed sharply in ideology but kept debate rooted in policy and constitutional rigour, and never descending into personal rancour.

Political analyst Moidul Islam placed the change within a broader 15-year arc of 'depoliticisation'.

"Bengal was historically known for deep political engagement. Today, that space has shrunk. When substantive ideological positions weaken, politics degenerates into personality-driven rivalries and verbal abuse," he said.

Campaign strategists admit that sharp barbs energise cadres and dominate news cycles. Rally speeches increasingly include real-time rebuttals to opponents' remarks, creating a loop of accusation and counter-accusation.

Social media has accelerated the shift. Short, provocative lines travel instantly, rewarding those who compress aggression into shareable clips while nuanced arguments struggle for attention in the algorithm-driven arena.

As the 2026 polls near, some insiders expect the tone to soften to attract undecided voters, while others believe attacks will intensify as the contest tightens.

International Mother Language Day thus arrives steeped in irony. Leaders celebrate linguistic pride and Bengal's literary legacy, only to wield the same language as a political weapon. The concern now is not volume but values, whether Bengal can reclaim civility and ideological depth before the 2026 assembly contest intensifies.

Min compares soldier sacrifice with tree cutting for progress

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 21: Maharashtra Environment Minister Pankaja Munde has drawn a parallel between the sacrifice of soldiers at the border and the cutting of trees, including mangroves, for development, triggering sharp reactions on social media.

Activist Anjali Damania posted the viral clip on social media platform X Saturday, saying she felt sorry for the minister's 'intelligence' over the comparison.

Defending the rationale behind felling trees for development during an interaction at Mumbai Climate Week, Munde said, "The way a mother brings up her son and then has the audacity or guts to send him to the border to fight for the country, similarly, if we grow trees, we may have to cut them, but we can plant them somewhere else."

"You cannot say no to progress because we have to preserve trees. If we have to cut five trees for progress, we can grow 10 more trees. That is the only way," she added.

Munde said trees, like soldiers, protect people while they are alive and even when removed, contribute to development. "Think of those trees as soldiers. Till the time they are living, they are protecting us, and if they are taken off, they are still working for development," the BJP leader added.

The remarks come amid ongoing debates over mangrove cutting and urban infrastructure projects in Mumbai.

"We are sitting here in a five-star hotel talking about Mumbai Climate Week, having tea, coffee and cookies, but somebody is standing in the snow and the desert, playing with their lives for us." "They are sacrificing, so how are we thankful to them? That way, I treat those trees. These are my personal opinions," the minister added.

UNSHACKLE THE CHAINS

Girl survives marriage, domestic abuse horror; appears Class X exam



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beed, Feb 21: A 15-year-old girl from Maharashtra's Beed district, who survived the horrors of a child marriage and domestic abuse, began a new chapter in life as she appeared for her Class X exam, in a display of her strong will to pursue what she truly values by breaking free from the shackles.

The girl appeared for the Marathi subject exam Friday under full police protection.

The minor was forced into marriage by her guardians in December 2025 with a relative based in Pune, despite her protests. After the wedding, her husband moved her to Pune, which marked the beginning of the darkest chapter of her life, an activist said.

The girl was subjected to severe physical abuse by her husband and constant verbal harassment by her in-laws. However, instead of breaking under the pressure, the young girl chose to fight back against the injustice, he said.

Driven to the brink by the torture, she courageously approached the Pune police. Her

testimony led to a case being registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act against 11 individuals, including her husband and in-laws.

Following the legal intervention, she was moved to the 'Shakti Sadan' Swadhar Grah (rehabilitation home) in Beed. During this crisis period, she received critical psychological support from social activists.

While recovering from the shock of her ordeal, the survivor remained steadfast in her desire to complete her education. Fearing that her crucial academic year would be lost, she expressed her wish to appear for the board exams, social activist Tavashil Kamble said.

Recognising her grit, the administration moved swiftly to make the necessary arrangements. On Friday, flanked by police personnel for her safety, she arrived at the examination centre and appeared for her Marathi paper, he said.

"It is the need of the hour for such victims to join the mainstream of education and become self-reliant," Kamble said



A worker collects turmeric rhizomes during harvesting at a farm, in Sangli, Maharashtra, Saturday

Bus operators allege early requisition for polls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 21: The Joint Council of Bus Syndicates alleged that buses are being requisitioned in West Bengal for the 2026 Assembly elections even before the poll schedule has been announced, and termed the move 'unethical'.

In a statement, the representative body of private bus operators claimed that authorities have started picking up buses directly from routes, causing inconvenience to commuters and operators.

The council said it has written to

state Transport Minister Snehasis Chakraborty and Transport Secretary Saumitra Mohan, urging the department not to seize buses from roads but to coordinate with route committees and syndicates before requisitioning vehicles.

"Instead of picking up buses from the roads, the authorities should communicate with the owners of buses of respective routes and take buses in an organised manner," the council's secretary Tapan Banerjee said.

The body also flagged the issue of remuneration for buses deployed on

election duty, stating that discussions on daily payment - excluding diesel costs - are yet to be finalised.

"Until discussions are completed and clarity is provided on how much the Election Commission will pay per day, excluding diesel, such acquisition of buses from the roads is unethical," it said.

The organisation sought the intervention of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to resolve the issue at the earliest, while reiterating that operators would extend full cooperation for the conduct of elections.

MBVV police begins drive to recruit 921 personnel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, Feb 21: The Mira-Bhayander Vasai-Virar (MBVV) police has started a drive to recruit 921 personnel, including 81 drivers, a senior official said Saturday.

A total of 57,990 applications were received for the vacant posts, Additional Police Commissioner Datta Shinde said.

"These comprise 39,202 for police constable positions and 18,788 for driver roles. Notably, the applicant pool includes 12,712 women and five transgender persons. Physical measurement and field tests began on February 20 at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Maidan in Bhayander West," he added.

To ensure transparency, the entire process is being videoed using 69 cameras, candidates are being informed of their marks on the spot, and a grievance redressal cell is active to resolve doubts immediately, Shinde said.

A team of 551 personnel have been deployed to manage the daily influx of 2,500 candidates, he added.

2,165 missing kids traced in 2025: Mumbai police

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 21: The Mumbai police had a success rate of 99 per cent in tracing missing children in the city last year, officials said Saturday.

The city cops solved 2,165 of the 2,182 cases of missing minors in 2025 and reunited the traced children with their families, they said.

So far this year, the Mumbai police have registered seven cases about missing children aged up to five years and have traced all of them, the officials said.

To streamline investigations, the police department has classified missing minor cases into five age categories: 0-5 years, 5-10 years, 10-14 years, 14-16 years, and 16-18 years.

In 2025, about 55 per cent of the cases pertained to boys, and the rest to girls, said officials.



about 90 per cent, have been traced.

A total of 17 minors, including eight boys and nine girls, remain untraced. All of these missing minors fall in the age bracket of 16-18 years. Special teams have been deployed across the city to trace the remaining minors, they said.

Officials said in one case, a single child was traced and brought back home three to four times after repeatedly running away. Each time, police registered a case as per procedure and ensured the child's safe return.

Currently, three to four dedicated teams are working in different parts of the city, said a senior official, adding that the department aims to trace the remaining 17 minors at the earliest and reunite them safely with their families.

Earlier this month, the Mumbai police had said that certain social media handles were misrepresenting data and indulging in rumour-mongering regarding cases of missing and kidnapped children.

Bank of Baroda POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) table with columns: Name & Address of Borrowers/Co-Borrowers/Guarantors, Description of the Immovable Properties, Demand/Possession Notice Date, Outstanding Amount. Includes details for CUTTACK ROAD BRANCH, NIRAKARPUR BRANCH, and KHORDHA BRANCH.



A fortress is built to defend, to guard against disorder and uncertainty. In its earliest conception, law resembled such a structure, erected to protect society from arbitrariness and chaos

SURYA KANT | CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA

UNITING FORCES

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh Tripathi on Saturday called for greater unity among Indian Ocean Region (IOR) nations to address evolving maritime threats, including piracy, irregular migration and drug trafficking



of the day quote

The Congress using youngsters to defame the country -- there could be nothing more shameful than this



KIREN RIJU | UNION MINISTER

The Mercosur region is particularly important for us, and we are working to expand our India-Mercosur preferential trade agreement, to improve market access, to grow investments on both sides, to have technology partnerships, and to engage in sports, education, culture



PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

We have to live and die here. All Delhi-based parties, be it Congress, AAP, or the BJP, have no concern for the state. Their only interest is to annex power. This is why development occurs only under SAD tenure and stops immediately afterwards



SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL | SAD PRESIDENT

India, Brazil discuss fallout of US ruling on reciprocal tariffs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: India and Brazil on Saturday set an annual bilateral trade target of USD 30 billion by 2030 even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva discussed implications of the US Supreme Court striking down Trump administration's reciprocal tariffs.

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs P Kumaran said at a media briefing that there was a discussion between the two sides on US trade policy and the implications of the US supreme court judgement.

In their talks, the two leaders vowed to shore up bilateral ties in a range of other sectors including defence, energy, healthcare and digital public infrastructure while emphasising on deeper India-Brazil strategic engagement to navigate the fragmented geopolitical environment.

Modi said India and Brazil are unanimous that terrorism and its supporters are "enemies" of humanity even as he noted that both sides agreed that reform of global institutions is essential to address the challenges facing the world.

Lula is in India on a five-day visit from February 18 primarily to attend the AI Impact Summit and hold talks with Modi.

In 2024-25, India-Brazil trade volume reached USD 12 billion, with Indian exports amounting to USD 6.77 billion and imports from Brazil totaling USD 5.43 billion.

The prime minister said the agreement on critical minerals and rare earth is a major step towards building resilient supply chains.

Besides the pact on critical minerals, India and Brazil also firmed up a joint declaration on digital partner-



LULA IS IN INDIA ON A FIVE-DAY VISIT FROM FEBRUARY 18 PRIMARILY TO ATTEND THE AI IMPACT SUMMIT AND HOLD TALKS WITH MODI

IN 2024-25, INDIA-BRAZIL TRADE VOLUME REACHED USD 12 BILLION, WITH INDIAN EXPORTS AMOUNTING TO USD 6.77 BILLION AND IMPORTS FROM BRAZIL TOTALING USD 5.43 BILLION

ship, and signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for cooperation in areas of mining, MSMEs, health-care and traditional knowledge system.

"Our cooperation in the field of defence is also continuously growing. This is a great example of mutual trust and strategic coordination. We will continue to strengthen this win-win partnership," he said.

Modi noted that the voice of the Global South becomes stronger and more confident when India and Brazil work together.

"The India-Brazil partnership on the global stage has been strong and influential. As democratic countries, we will continue to advance the priorities and aspirations of the Global South," he said.

"We believe that every problem must be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. India

and Brazil are unanimous that terrorism and its supporters are enemies of all humanity," he said.

In his remarks, Lula slammed terror attacks in Kashmir, and said terrorism must not be linked to any religion or nationality.

The president said that the "turbulent global environment" requires India and Brazil to deepen our strategic ties and that dialogue between the two powers is an engagement of "superlatives".

"We are not just the two biggest democracies of the Global South. This is a meeting of a digital superpower with a renewable energy superpower. We are both mega diverse countries and we both defend multilateralism and peace," he said.

The Brazilian leader argued that there is no possibility of a fair and sustainable development in a conflict-ridden world and quoted Modi's remarks at last year's BRICS summit that one can't run "21st-century software on 20th-century typewriters".

In his statement, Modi said India-Brazil relations have long benefited from President Lula's vision and that his visit has given new energy to the strategic partnership between the two nations.

Communal clashes over loudspeaker during prayers in MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jabalpur, Feb 21: The violent clash witnessed in Sihora town of Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district between Hindu and Muslim groups was triggered by the use of loudspeakers at one of the two places of worship during prayers, a senior police official said Saturday.

The violence erupted around 10 pm Thursday near Azad Chowk, an area where a Durga temple and a mosque are located in close proximity. Sources earlier said trouble began when an 'aarti' was being performed at the temple and Ramzan prayers were underway at the mosque at the same time.

Talking to PTI over phone, Inspector General of Police (Jabalpur Zone) Pramod Verma said, "Members of both the communities had earlier agreed not to use loudspeakers when prayers and religious services are underway at the other place of worship, but this agreement was violated by one of them. Loudspeaker noise during prayers led to arguments, which escalated to stone-pelting between two communities." "We have now removed loudspeakers from both the places of worship," he said.

He said a reminder has been issued for strict adherence to the state government's December 2023 order regulating and banning the use of loudspeakers beyond permissible decibel limits at religious places.

The notification was issued December 13, 2023, soon after Mohan Yadav took oath as chief minister. Meanwhile, Sihora remained peaceful Saturday after the communal tensions as around 500 police personnel, some equipped with anti-riot gear, were deployed in the town, and drones were used for aerial surveillance to keep a tab on sensitive areas, police said.

SIR IN KERALA

Around 9 lakh names deleted in final voter list

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 21: The ECI Saturday published the final electoral roll in Kerala after the SIR exercise, with around nine lakh names removed from the list.

The total number of voters in the state now stands at over 2.69 crore. The Election Commission of India also shared a link-<http://electoralsearch.eci.gov.in>-enabling the public to check their names on the updated list.

According to data released by the ECI at a press meet Friday, the revised electoral roll has 2,69,53,644 voters, compared to 2,78,50,855 before the Special Intensive Revision began in October last year.

As many as 8,97,211 voters were removed following the SIR exercise, the ECI said. In the revised list, male voters number 1,31,26,048, female voters 1,38,27,319, and transgender voters 277, officials said.

The number of overseas voters in the updated roll is 2,23,558, while service voters stand at 54,110.

ECI officials said 36.88 lakh voters were issued notices for hearings as part of the SIR process, of whom 53,229 were excluded from the final list.

Meanwhile, the voter list of the State Election Commission, based on which the 2025 local body elections were conducted, had 2,86,07,658 voters.

The ECI said an additional 4,01,368 applications for correction, inclusion and deletion were received between January 31 and February 16.

The Commission added that aggrieved voters can approach it after the release of the final list for inclusion or deletion.

The final list will also be provided to political parties for verification.



ACCORDING TO DATA RELEASED BY THE ECI AT A PRESS MEET FRIDAY, THE REVISED ELECTORAL ROLL HAS 2,69,53,644 VOTERS, COMPARED TO 2,78,50,855 BEFORE THE SPECIAL INTENSIVE REVISION BEGAN IN OCTOBER LAST YEAR

AS MANY AS 8,97,211 VOTERS WERE REMOVED FOLLOWING THE SIR EXERCISE, THE ECI SAID

IN THE REVISED LIST, MALE VOTERS NUMBER 1,31,26,048, FEMALE VOTERS 1,38,27,319, AND TRANSGENDER VOTERS 277

Officials added that names can be included in the electoral roll until the last date for filing nominations for the Assembly elections.

Kerala, which has a large number of people working abroad, has 2.23 lakh overseas voters as per the new electoral roll released by the Election Commission of India (ECI) following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise Saturday.

According to ECI data, a total of 2,23,558 people have registered as overseas voters in the state.

The highest number of overseas voters is from Kuttiaadi constituency in Kozhikode district with 16,002 voters, followed by 12,424 in Nadapuram (Kozhikode district), 8,601 in Tirur (Malappuram district) and 8,097 in Kalliasseri (Kannur district).

SHORT TAKES

4 sentenced to death in 21-yr-old murder case

Ballia (UP): A court in Ballia Saturday sentenced four individuals to life imprisonment in a murder case that dates back 21 years, related to rivalry, police said. The prosecution stated that on November 3, 2004, at around 11 pm, Lallan Pandey and his son Jitendra Kumar Pandey from Balihar village were on their way to a Sahastra Chandi Yagya at the Baba Dham temple in Shubhnathi village when they were attacked. The motive behind the attack stemmed from an ongoing rivalry. Lallan was shot with a country-made pistol, resulting in his death, while Rakesh Mishra, who was returning home after attending the yagya, sustained serious injuries while attempting to save Lallan.

Speeding car kills food delivery rider

New Delhi: An allegedly speeding car killed a 25-year-old delivery rider who was working on a night shift early Saturday in west Delhi's Tilak Nagar, police said. Hem Shankar was the sole breadwinner who held the household together. The car driver has been taken into custody. Preliminary inquiry and eyewitness accounts indicated that a car allegedly rammed the scooter from behind.

Woman shot dead by hubby

Faridabad: A man allegedly shot his estranged wife dead outside her residence here, police said Saturday. The accused was identified as Dilip Yadav, they said. Dilip had been married to Sangeeta Devi (30) for 13 years and had two daughters aged 11 and 5. Their divorce case was pending in a Delhi court.

Telangana: 12 held after Banswada clash

Hyderabad: As many as twelve people were arrested in connection with the communal disturbance that left a police constable injured at Banswada in Telangana's Kamareddy district, police said Saturday. Police resorted to a lathi-charge to control the situation. The man, who visited the mall in Banswada, objected to religious music being played and began recording a video, which was opposed by a woman staff member, police said.

Rahul appears in court in RSS defamation case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thane, Feb 21: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Saturday appeared before a court at Bhiwandi in the district in a defamation case filed by an RSS activist, and presented his party's Maharashtra unit chief Harshwardhan Sapkal as his new 'surety' or guarantor for bail.

As he travelled to Bhiwandi by road after landing in Mumbai, BJP workers showed him black flags at Mulund toll plaza and shouted slogans, accusing the Congress of maligning India's image through the Youth Congress's protest at the AI summit in Delhi.

Gandhi, accompanied by Sapkal, party MP Varsha Gaikwad and his lawyers Narayan Iyer and Kushal Mor, reached the magistrate's court around 10:30 am.

The court had asked the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha to appear in person and provide a new surety following the death of previous guarantor, former Union Minister Shivraj Patil Chakurkar, in December last year. Chakurkar had stood surety when the court granted bail to the Congress leader in 2016 upon his appearance.

Sapkal Saturday filed an application before the magistrate requesting permission to stand as surety for the accused. After the verification of his affidavits and other documents, the court granted the plea.

Joint Civil Judge and Judicial Magistrate (First Class) P M Kolse then adjourned the case to April 4 when the recording of the testimony of witnesses will continue.



Workers load a chariot onto a towing vehicle near the Red Fort amid heightened security following intelligence inputs about a suspected IED threat in the Chandni Chowk area, in New Delhi

Terror threat: Security heightened in Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: Security was tightened across key religious and heritage sites in Delhi Saturday, including in areas around the Red Fort and parts of Chandni Chowk, following intelligence inputs suggesting a possible terror threat, an official said.

Security agencies issued an alert on a possible explosion near Red Fort, a major tourist destination and high-security zone, after Central intelligence agencies indicated that Pakistan-based terror outfit Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has allegedly kept prominent religious places in India on its target list.

Sources said specific inputs suggested that a temple in the Chandni Chowk area could be among the potential targets. While the intelligence inputs are being verified and assessed, security has been stepped up in and around sensitive religious places and crowded public areas, they added.

Intelligence agencies indicated that LeT could be attempting to carry out an Improvised Explosive Device (IED)-based attack. The alleged plan is reportedly linked to attempts by the terror group to avenge the February 6 blast at a mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan, sources said.

Central agencies and Delhi Police units are maintaining close coordination, and surveillance has been intensified through CCTV monitoring, vehicle checks and deployment of additional personnel at vulnerable points. Bomb disposal squads, dog squads and quick reaction teams have also been placed on standby at strategic locations, they added.

The alert comes in the backdrop of the deadly car explosion near the historic Red Fort on November 10, 2025, which killed at least 13 people and injured more than 20 others. The blast occurred when a car loaded with explosives detonated near Gate No 1 of the Red Fort metro station, igniting multiple vehicles nearby and causing panic in the densely populated area.

88 nations adopt New Delhi Declaration

The Declaration, adopted at the conclusion of the AI Impact Summit 2026, lays out a shared vision for collaborative, trusted, resilient and efficient AI systems, with India leading the call for "AI for All" rooted in equity, access and global cooperation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: In a significant show of global consensus on artificial intelligence, 88 countries and international organisations have adopted the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact, committing to ensure that benefits of AI are "equitably shared across humanity".

The Declaration, adopted at the conclusion of the AI Impact Summit 2026, lays out



a shared vision for collaborative, trusted, resilient and efficient AI systems, with India leading the call for "AI for All" rooted in equity, access and global cooperation.

Guided by the principle of 'Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya' (welfare for all, happiness for all), the document underscores that AI's promise can be realised only when its benefits are shared across humanity. It calls for strengthened international cooperation, multi-stakeholder engagement and respect for national sovereignty while

advancing accessible and trustworthy AI frameworks.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi's human-centric AI vision has been accepted by the world. Democratizing Artificial Intelligence resources so AI facilities, services and technology can reach everyone in society, that has been accepted by all," IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters.

Structured around seven pillars -- termed 'Chakras' -- the Declaration outlines action areas, including democratising AI resources, economic growth and social good, secure

and trusted AI, AI for science, access for social empowerment, human capital development, and resilient, efficient and innovative AI systems.

"The AI Impact Summit 2026... concluded with the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact, marking a significant milestone in global cooperation on artificial intelligence. The declaration has been endorsed by 88 countries and international organisations, reflecting a broad-based global consensus on leveraging AI for economic growth and social good," an official release said.

The list of endorsing countries includes the US, China, the UK, Russia, France, Australia, Belgium, Bhutan, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Japan, Italy, Israel, and Ireland.

Indonesia, Iran, Hungary, Greece, Germany, Finland, Mexico, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, The Philip-

ines, Peru, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, the UAE, Ukraine, the EU, and IFAD are also on the list. In all, about 118 countries participated in the India AI Impact Summit, which was held in New Delhi. Among key outcomes is the Charter for the Democratic Diffusion of AI, a voluntary framework aimed at expanding affordable access to foundational AI resources and strengthening local innovation ecosystems.

The Global AI Impact Commons is positioned as a platform to scale and replicate successful AI use cases across countries.

To advance trust and safety, the declaration highlights Trusted AI Commons -- a collaborative repository of technical tools, benchmarks and best practices -- as well as development of secure and trustworthy AI systems.



US Supreme Court ruling on President Donald Trump's trade tariffs shows that it is good to have counterweights to power and the rule of law in democracies
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

ASHA SHARMA NAMED CEO OF MICROSOFT GAMING

Technology giant Microsoft has named Indian-origin Asha Sharma as Executive Vice President and CEO of Microsoft Gaming, joining a long and growing list of Indian-descent leaders at the helm of global companies



of the day quote

We will not allow these people from the so-called Alternative for Germany to ruin our country
FRIEDRICH MERZ | GERMAN CHANCELLOR

We will not give in to this blackmail. We do not support Ukraine's war, we will not pay for it. As long as Ukraine blocks the resumption of oil supplies to Hungary, Hungary will block European Union decisions that are important and favourable for Ukraine
PETER SZIJARTO | FOREIGN MINISTER, HUNGARY

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister announced the release-force to save his job. Except for the federal government, no one has the right to create any force
KHAWAJA ASIF | DEFENCE MINISTER, PAKISTAN

SC reasserts power to check Trump

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 21: After siding with President Donald Trump in two dozen cases in the past year in ways that boosted his power and let him quickly transform US policies on immigration, military service, federal employment and beyond, the US Supreme Court finally reached its limit.

The court Friday upended one of Trump's top priorities in his second term as president, deciding in a blockbuster ruling, that his imposition of sweeping global tariffs on nearly every US trading partner exceeded his powers under federal law.

The ruling, authored by conservative Chief Justice John Roberts, did not waffle in its scope or effect, or leave questions about the legality of the tariffs to another day. It unswervingly struck them down, making no mention of the consequences for refunds, trade deals or the Republican president himself.

'LEGAL COVER'

In doing so, the court also reasserted its role as a check on the other branches of government including the president, after a year when numerous critics and legal scholars had increasingly voiced doubts. "The court has shown it



Supreme Court rejected Trump's global tariffs

Ruling comes after months of decisions favoring Trump

Some legal experts had questioned court's independence

impose tariffs, something no president had previously tried to do under the statute.

In no uncertain terms, Roberts wrote in the ruling that Trump's argument that a particular phrase in the law's text gave him power to impose tariffs was wrong.

"Our task today is to decide only whether the power to 'regulate ... importation,' as granted to the president in IEEPA, embraces the power to impose tariffs. It does not," Roberts wrote.

EMERGENCY REQUESTS

For most of 2025, the Supreme Court in case after case sided with Trump's emergency requests to lift orders by lower-court judges blocking some of his boldest policies, while litigation challenging

will not necessarily provide legal cover for every plank of Trump's platform," said Peter Shane, an expert in constitutional law and the presidency at New York University School of Law.

The justices in the 6-3 decision upheld a lower court's ruling that Trump's use of a 1977 law called the International Emergency Economic Powers Act - or IEEPA - did not grant him the power he claimed to

Trump pushes US toward war with Iran

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 21: President Donald Trump has pushed the United States to the brink of war with Iran even as aides urge him to focus more on voters' economic worries, highlighting the political risks of military escalation ahead of this year's midterm elections.

Trump has ordered a huge buildup of forces in the Middle East and preparations for a potential multi-week air attack on Iran. But he has not laid out in detail to the American public why he might be leading the US into its most aggressive action against the Islamic Republic since its 1979 revolution.

Trump's fixation on Iran has emerged as the starkest example yet of how foreign policy, including his expanded use of raw military force, has topped his agenda in the first 13 months of his second term, often overshadowing domestic issues like the cost of living that public opinion polls show are much higher priorities for most Americans.

A senior White House official said that despite Trump's bellicose rhetoric there was still no "unified support" within the administration to go ahead with an attack on Iran.

Trump's aides are also



- Trump has ordered military buildup near Iran, threatened strikes
- Trump has not given detailed casus belli for US-Iran war
- With midterms looming, Trump aides want focus on economy

mindful of the need to avoid sending a "distracted message" to undecided voters more concerned about the economy, the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press.

White House advisers and Republican campaign officials want Trump focused on the economy, a point that was stressed as the top campaign issue at a private briefing this week with numerous cabinet secretaries, according to a person who attended. Trump was not present. A second White House official, responding to Reuters questions for this story, said Trump's foreign policy agenda "has directly translated into wins for the American people."

SHORT TAKES

Cuban security forces exit Venezuela

Caracas: Cuban security advisers and doctors have been leaving Venezuela as Interim President Delcy Rodriguez's government faces intense pressure from Washington to unwind Latin America's most consequential leftist alliance, according to 11 sources familiar with the matter. Venezuela's Interim President Delcy Rodriguez has entrusted her protection to Venezuelan bodyguards, according to four of the sources, unlike deposed president Nicolas Maduro and his predecessor, the late president Hugo Chavez, who both relied on elite Cuban forces. Thirty-two Cubans were killed in the US military attack that captured Maduro January 3, according to the Cuban government. These soldiers and bodyguards were part of a deep security agreement between Caracas and Havana that began in the late 2000s in which Cuban intelligence agents embedded throughout the military and Venezuela's formidable DGCIM counterintelligence unit, which was fundamental to weeding out domestic opposition.

US plans to reopen embassy in Syria

Washington: The Trump administration has informed Congress that it intends to proceed with planning for a potential re-opening of the US Embassy in Damascus, Syria, which was shuttered in 2012 during the country's civil war. A notice to congressional committees earlier this month, which was obtained by The Associated Press, informed lawmakers of the State Department's "intent to implement a phased approach to potentially resume embassy operations in Syria." The Feb 10 notification said that spending on the plans would begin in 15 days, or next week, although there was no timeline offered for when they would be complete or when US personnel might return to Damascus on a full-time basis.

Protest in Lyon over death of activist

Lyon(France): Several hundreds joined a march organised by far-right groups Saturday after a nationalist activist died from a beating in Lyon in an incident that highlighted a climate of deep political tensions ahead of next year's presidential vote. French President Emmanuel Macron called for calm ahead of the tribute to Quentin Deranque, a 23-year-old who died of brain injuries in a hospital last week. The demonstrations took place under heavy police scrutiny.

Buddhist monks issue 10-point ultimatum to Sri Lankan govt



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Colombo, Feb 21: A section of the powerful Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka has criticised the government over what they termed an "organised campaign being run by vested interests to sully Buddhism", the majority religion, and monks.

Issuing a 10-point ultimatum, the monks said the stature of Buddhism and monks was being "politically undermined" and called for urgent government attention.

Addressing a gathering, leading monk Muruththettuwa Ananda said President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had called him to persuade him from going ahead with the meeting, attended by monks from all provinces. "He asked me to come to have talks with him and to stop this," Ananda said.

Article 9 of the country's constitution warrants the head of state and the government to foster Buddhism, the religion of 74 per cent of the population, while preserving the rights of

other religions. The monks claimed that "organised social media campaigns are being run by vested interests and the government needs to pay attention to it".

"We urge the government to stop it," Ven Kotapola Rathana-pala, another leading monk, said. Over the last year, some politicians have been openly critical of the monks.

Several monks were arrested in the eastern district of Trincomalee for violating coastal conservation laws in trying to put up makeshift veneration sites. They charged that local ruling party leaders were behind the arrests of the monks.

The gathering highlighted that the government had ignored the Buddhist Order ministry when appointing ministers which was usually held by all previous presidents.

The monks who visit the Buddhist Affairs Department have found that as a result no official directions are being given to solve their issues.



A baby Japanese macaque named Punch sits next to a stuffed orangutan at Ichikawa City Zoo, in Ichikawa, Chiba Prefecture, Japan

PTI PHOTO

Budapest pizzeria serves ancient Rome-inspired pizza twist

At Neverland Pizzeria in central Budapest, founder Josep Zara and his team have created a limited-edition pie using only ingredients that would have been available in ancient Rome, long before what we know today as pizza ever existed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Budapest, Feb 21: In Hungary's capital, a city best known for its goulash, a pizzeria is inviting diners to travel back two millennia to a time before tomatoes, mozzarella or even the word "pizza" were known in Europe.

At Neverland Pizzeria in central Budapest, founder Josep Zara and his team have created a limited-edition pie using only ingredients that would have been available in ancient Rome, long before what we know today as pizza ever existed. "Curiosity drove us to ask what pizza might have been like long ago," Zara said. "We

went all the way back to the Roman Empire and wondered whether they even ate pizza at the time."

Strictly speaking, they did not. Tomatoes arrived in Europe centuries later from the Americas, and mozzarella was as yet unknown. Some histories have it that the discovery of mozzarella led directly to the invention of pizza in Naples in the 1700s.

But Romans did eat oven-baked flatbreads topped with herbs, cheeses and sauces, the direct ancestors of modern pizza, which were often sold in ancient Roman snack bars called thermopolia.

In 2023, archaeologists uncovered a fresco in Pompeii de-



WHEN IN ROME

topped with what appear to be pomegranate seeds, dates, spices and a pesto-like spread. The image made headlines around the world, and sparked Zara's imagination.

"That made me very curious about what kind of flavour this

"That's where we got the idea to create a pizza that people might have eaten in the Roman Empire, using only ingredients that were in wide use at the time."

Zara began researching Roman culinary history, consulting a historian in Germany as

well as the ancient cookbook De re coquinaria, thought to have been authored around the 5th century. Following his research, he compiled a list of historically documented ingredients to present to the pizzeria's head chef.

"We sat down to imagine what we might be able to make using these ingredients, and without using things like tomatoes and mozzarella," Zara said. "We had to exclude all ingredients that originated from America."

Head chef Laszlo Bardossy said the constraints forced the team into months of experimentation, and a few false starts.

"We had to discard a couple ideas," Bardossy said. "The fact that there wasn't infrastructure like a water system at the time of the Romans made things difficult for us, since more than 80 per cent of pizza dough is water. We had to come up with something that would have worked before running water."

The solution: helping the dough rise using fermented spinach juice. Ancient grains such as einkorn and spelt, widely cultivated in Roman times, formed the base, and the dough ended up slightly more dense than that of most modern pizzas.

The finished pie is topped with ingredients associated with Roman aristocratic cuisine, including epityrum, an olive paste, garum, a fermented fish sauce ubiquitous in Roman cooking, confit duck leg, toasted pine nuts, ricotta and a grape reduction.

"Our creation can be called a modern pizza from the perspective that we tried to make it comprehensible for everyone," Bardossy said. "Although we wouldn't use all its ingredients for everyday dishes. There is a narrow niche that thinks this is delicious and is curious about it, while most people want more conventional pizza, so it's not for everyday eating. It's something special."



I want to give a challenge to banks -- can we reduce borrowing costs for small businesses?
M. NAGARAJU | DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

GOLD SURGES 0.23% DURING THE WEEK

Gold prices surged 0.23 per cent during the week, amid renewed buying interest due to global macro-economic factors, safe haven demand and lack of directional cues from the US Federal Reserve. On Friday, MCX gold February futures surged 0.07 per cent while MCX silver March futures added 4.41 per cent. Currently gold futures stand at ₹1,56,993, while silver futures at ₹2,52,042 per kg



of the day quote

With our strong semiconductor design talent, growing fabrication and packaging ecosystem, and large domestic demand, India can serve as the trusted bridge between East and West in this emerging alliance (US Pax Silica)

ASHOK CHANDAK | PRESIDENT, IESA AND SEMI INDIA

India stands at an inflection point that most nations never get. Our digital infrastructure is leapfrogged by what many developed nations have built over decades. Our start-up ecosystem is vibrant and the manufacturing ambitions are real. The world is looking at India in a way it hasn't before

TV NARENDRA | PRESIDENT, AIMA

As more Indians embrace natural language to interact with digital services, PhonePe's new AI-powered experience is a strong step toward more intuitive and accessible digital payments

PUNEET CHANDOK | PRESIDENT, MICROSOFT INDIA

India-US trade gap widens

The United States recorded a deficit of \$58.2bn with India in 2025 driven by goods and services

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Washington, Feb 21: The US trade deficit widened sharply in December, capping a year in which America's goods gap with India reached \$58.2 billion.

The goods and services deficit rose to \$70.3 billion in December, up from \$53.0 billion in November, revised, the US Census Bureau and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis said this week.

Exports fell 1.7 per cent to \$287.3 billion. Imports climbed 3.6 per cent to \$357.6 billion.

The widening gap was driven by goods. The goods deficit increased \$15.7 billion to \$99.3 billion. The services surplus narrowed \$1.6 billion to \$29.0 billion.

In December alone, the US goods deficit with India was \$5.2 billion.

For the full year 2025, the overall goods and services deficit stood at \$901.5 billion, down slightly from \$903.5 billion in 2024. Exports rose \$199.8 billion to \$3,432.3 billion. Imports increased \$197.8 billion to \$4,333.8 billion. The goods deficit widened \$25.5 billion to \$1,240.9 billion in 2025. The services surplus increased \$27.6 billion to \$339.5 billion.

The United States recorded a goods deficit of \$58.2 billion with India in 2025. That placed India among Washington's larger bilateral trade gaps.



| MAJOR US DEFICITS (2025) | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| EUROPEAN UNION | -\$218.8bn |
| CHINA | -\$202.1bn |
| MEXICO | -\$196.9bn |
| VIETNAM | -\$178.2bn |
| TAIWAN | -\$146.8bn |
| INDIA | -\$58.2bn |

KEY STRUCTURAL SIGNALS

- Goods imbalance widening structurally
- Services surplus partially offsetting goods gap
- India rising as significant deficit partner
- Import-led expansion driving December spike
- Annual deficit stabilising, but composition shifting

By comparison, the US goods deficit stood at \$218.8 billion with the European Union and \$202.1 billion with China. It was \$196.9 billion with Mexico, \$178.2 billion with Vietnam and \$146.8 billion with Taiwan.

Exports of goods fell \$5.5 billion in December to \$180.8 billion. Industrial supplies and materials imports rose \$7.0 billion. Copper increased \$1.5 billion. Crude oil imports rose \$1.0 billion. Consumer goods imports fell \$3.5 billion.

Imports of goods rose \$10.2 billion to \$280.2 billion in December. Capital goods imports increased \$5.6 billion. Computer accessories rose \$3.4 billion.

Telecommunications equipment increased \$1.3 billion.

Industrial supplies and materials imports rose \$7.0 billion. Copper increased \$1.5 billion. Crude oil imports rose \$1.0 billion. Consumer goods imports fell \$3.5 billion.

In real terms, the goods deficit increased \$12.5 billion, or 14.8 per cent, to \$97.1 billion in December. For India, the figures reflect expanding trade ties with the United States. India has emerged as a key supplier of goods to the US market, even as Washington seeks to diversify supply chains across Asia.

Trade data are closely watched in both capitals. They shape debates over tariffs, manufacturing and strategic economic ties between the world's two largest democracies.

Central Bank of India holds mega Retail Credit Outreach Campaign



Bhubaneswar: With an objective to reach out and empower every customer with easy, affordable, hassle free and tailor made retail loan solutions, Central Bank of India launched a mega 'Retail Credit Outreach Campaign' February 21 across the nation. Simultaneously its Bhubaneswar Region also organised a 'Retail Credit Outreach Campaign' at Hotel Excellency, Bhubaneswar. The programme was held in presence of Vivek Kumar, General Manager; Pankaj Kumar, Regional Head and Suresh Chandra, Deputy Regional Head along with other senior bank officials. The programme witnessed an active participation of more than 150 prospective customers. Vivek Kumar emphasised upon the market competitive interest rate and zero processing charges levied on retail loan products offered by the bank viz. Cent Gold Loan, Cent Home Loan, Cent Grih Lakshmi Home loan (exclusively for women), Cent Mortgage Loan and Cent Vehicle loan. On this occasion, sanction letters were distributed to the customers from different branches, aggregating to an amount of ₹25 crore.

Oil import shift signals energy security pivot

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: India's recalibration of crude oil imports marks a structural shift from opportunistic discount buying to disciplined geopolitical risk management, according to analysts firm GlobalData.

With oil accounting for roughly a quarter of India's primary energy consumption and import dependence at about 87 per cent, the country is prioritising compliance resilience, supply diversification and stronger US energy linkages as part of a more strategic energy security doctrine, the firm said.

India, the world's third-largest oil consumer, is projected by the International Energy Agency to see demand rise from 5.5 million barrels per day (mbpd) in 2024 to 8 mbpd by

2035. Import dependence could increase to 92 per cent by 2035 despite ongoing domestic exploration, widening exposure to external supply shocks.

Arnab Nath, Associate Project Manager of Economic Research at GlobalData, said the growing gap between demand and domestic output is driving efforts to broaden the supplier base and reduce reliance on concentrated or politically constrained supply corridors.

India's crude sourcing has shifted significantly since 2022. Russia's share of India's oil imports rose from 2.7 per cent before the Ukraine conflict to 25.9 per cent in 2024 on the back of discounted cargoes. However, imports from Russia fell more than 40 per cent year-on-year in January 2026 amid tightening trade and sanctions dynamics.



India's crude strategy is evolving from opportunistic discount capture to a more structured approach to managing geopolitical risk

ARNAB NATH | ASSOCIATE PROJECT MANAGER OF ECONOMIC RESEARCH, GLOBALDATA

At the same time, the United States and Venezuela have re-emerged in India's crude mix. While Venezuelan volumes are expected to remain limited due to heavy grades and production constraints, they are seen as a tactical alternative as India

THIRD IN THE WORLD

Pharma exports up 9.4% in FY25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: The commerce ministry Saturday said the country's pharma exports grew 9.4 per cent in 2024-25 to \$30.47 billion and the industry is aiming for a double-digit expansion in 2026-27.

Issues pertaining to pharmaceuticals exports were discussed between the government officials and industry during Chintan Shivir in Ahmedabad.

The sector, currently valued around \$60 billion, is projected to reach \$130 billion by 2030.

India ranks third globally by volume, with medicines exported to over 200 markets, and more than 60 per cent of exports destined for stringent regulatory markets.

The US accounts for 34 per cent and Europe for 19 per cent of India's pharmaceutical exports.

"The interaction underlined the government's focus on enabling conditions for sustained export acceleration, with industry indicating readiness to target double-digit growth in 2026-27," it said. It added that exporters were also apprised of opportunities arising from recent trade engagements with key partners, including the European Union and the United States.

"Engagement with the European Union was discussed in the context of a \$572.3 billion pharmaceuticals and medical devices market, while a bilateral trade arrangement with the United States can further improve market access and price competitiveness for Indian pharmaceutical companies," it added.

India to counter Trump's IPEF pullback with FTAs, currency diversification

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 21: India is pursuing currency diversification alongside efforts to strengthen supply chains and expand exports through free trade agreements to counter US administration's pullback from Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), a new report has said.

The report from Think China said, "currency diversification is a key determinant for national economic security at a time when reducing external dependence and increasing self-reliance are non-negotiable goals." India's sovereign digital currency, the e-rupee, "is being used in retail transactions and is picking up traction among customers," the report said.

It noted that greater acceptability of e-rupee and interoperability between digital currencies of the BRICS could lead to its greater use in trade. This could happen between countries piloting their own sovereign digital currencies, including China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Indonesia and the UAE, most of which are members of BRICS, it suggested.

"Apart from safeguarding supply chains and entering multiple FTAs, India's efforts to reduce economic dependence has motivated it to settle more trade in its local currency," it said.

Apart from the economic benefits India is pursuing FTAs



for geopolitical gains due to "political confidence-building mechanisms between countries."

FTAs help enlarging strategic influence by cultivating a bigger group of global allies, "at a time when the global order is fragmenting fast," the report said.

The US President Trump's second term in office was marked by a noticeable lack of interest in the IPEF and as a result the China plus one diversification strategy has lost some momentum, it noted.

The report said that unilateral trade restrictive measures from the US in 2025 made India and other major economies realise the importance of diversifying away from the US.

India has accelerated FTA negotiations to diversify markets and concluded deals with the UK, New Zealand, Oman and the EU. In recent years the country signed trade agreements with Australia, the UAE and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) group, while FTAs with Israel, Chile and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries are under negotiation.

India updates base yr for merchandise trade indices to 2022-23

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 21: The commerce ministry on Friday said the base year of India's merchandise trade indices has been revised from 2012-13 to 2022-23 to reflect structural changes in the economy, shifts in commodity composition, evolving trade patterns and better alignment with current macroeconomic indicators.

These trade indices are compiled and published by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), an arm of the ministry. These indices serve as important indicators of external sector price movements and are widely used for economic analysis, including national accounts compilation and assessment of terms of trade.

Over the years, the base year of the indices has been periodically revised to reflect structural changes in India's trade composition and evolving global trade patterns.

The exercise will ensure that the indices accurately represent the current structure of India's merchandise trade.

"The DGCI&S has revised the base year of India's Merchandise Trade Indices from FY 2012-13 to FY 2022-23, in view of the structural changes in the economy, shifts in commodity composition, evolving trade patterns, and the need for improved alignment with contemporary macroeconomic indicators," the ministry said.

It said that the coverage and classification of commodities have been reviewed at the Principal Commodity level to better capture emerging and declining trade items.

Over the past decade, India's trade basket has undergone substantial changes due to emergence of new commodities, technological advancements, global supply chain restructuring and changes in relative price structures.

The earlier base year (2012-13) no longer adequately reflected the prevailing trade structure. "The revision ensures improved relevance, reliability, and analytical usefulness of the Merchandise Trade Indices for policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders," it said.



Steady domestic inflows and an active dealmaking market support higher multiples, and continue to drive growth and M&A activity

RAHUL SARAF | HEAD OF INVESTMENT BANKING, CITI INDIA

- Domestic demand, policy support growth story, fund managers say
- Valuations justified but could pose risk if growth slows
- Foreign investors return in February after 3-month exodus

flected in market indexes, he said. But the shifting mood is captured in this month's flow of about \$1.5 billion in net foreign purchases of stock.

At the same time, the rupee currency is off record lows after India struck a long-awaited trade agreement with the Trump administration.

India's Nifty 50 has fallen less than 1% over the period from October 29, when the Nasdaq, owned for its high-growth, tech-heavy potential, hit a peak before losing more than 5%.

The optimism is fuelled by

India's near \$4-trillion-dollar economy, projected to grow 7.4% in the fiscal year that ends in March 2026, according to the latest annual economic survey, and at 6.7% next year and 7% the year after, according to S&P.

That may have made sense when the economy was rebuilding, but growth is running hot, and credit stress is increasing.

The driver of that growth is consumption, which could be all the more attractive as it is insulated from AI and not really dependent on foreign trade, or the global economy, either.

Price is another a perennial stumbling block. The Nifty 50 trades at roughly 22 times its 12-month forward earnings, slightly above a long-term average of 20.8 times, against a forward P/E ratio of 13.6 for the MSCI emerging markets index.

energy a recurring element in bilateral trade discussions, the report said.

Following the India-US trade agreement announced on February 2, India faces stronger incentives to reduce sanctions exposure and tariff risks while preserving access to competitively priced crude. The US had imposed an additional 25 per cent tariff in August 2025 linked to Russian oil purchases and signalled the possibility of further increases.

GlobalData said refiners are now optimising for compliance resilience and supply continuity. While Russian crude may remain part of the mix when commercially viable, India's overall direction points to a broader supplier base anchored by stronger US energy ties and selective engagement with alternative sources.



T20 WC SUPER 8S

MEN IN BLUE FACE PROTEAS CHALLENGE

Tilak and Surya's guarded batting approach to face its first real test against South Africa



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 21: Skipper Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma's rejigged philosophy of dropping anchor rather than going for big strokes will be tested by a quality South African side that seems ready to find chinks in the Indian armour during their opening Super Eight match of the T20 World Cup here Sunday.

The Proteas team boasts of a formidable bowling line-up comprising Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj and Aiden Markram and the defending champions will be mindful of the challenge.

The two teams would be playing for the sixth time in the last two months and it remains to be seen for which side the familiarity works better Sunday night.

India have not exactly been asked probing questions at the group league stage but the home favourites are well aware that their batting has left a lot to be desired.

Save for opener Ishan Kishan (two fifties and Strike Rate of 202), the other three batters in the top four haven't exactly set the stage on fire till now.

Abhishek Sharma is literally out of runs with three ducks and as much as Suryakumar and Tilak justify playing an anchor role, the Mumbai Indians colleagues have looked far from smooth on tracks where the ball is gripping. India's run-scoring has needed brute power that Hardik Pandya (Strike Rate of 155) and Shivam Dube (Strike Rate of 178) are providing at the back-end.

With Abhishek falling to off-spinners twice in a row, it will be interesting to see whether skipper Markram decides to bowl off-breaks in the Powerplay.

While Abhishek's form remains a concern, Tilak's

| HEAD-TO-HEAD | |
|---|---------------|
| Total Matches Played: | 35 |
| India won: | 21 |
| SA won: | 13 |
| No Result: | 1 |
| PERFORMANCE OF BOTH TEAMS IN THEIR LAST 5 MATCHES | |
| India: | W, W, W, W, W |
| South Africa: | L, W, W, W, W |

scratchy batting throughout the first leg cannot be brushed under the carpet. Against Pakistan, he scored 25 off 24 balls while against Namibia it was 25 off 21 and versus Netherlands, it was a painstaking 31 off 27 balls. His strike rate in the tournament is just above 120, which is significantly less than his career average of 141.

Save his match-winning 84 not out off 49 balls against a US attack, which lost two of its bowlers to hamstring strain, Suryakumar hasn't displayed a lot of smoothness in his batting either against Pakistan or Netherlands. His tournament strike rate of 136 plus is way below his career strike rate of 163 plus.

An Indian team that plays with eight batters and believes in going all out irrespective of opposition and surface, cannot

Squads

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

South Africa: Aiden Markram (captain), Quinton de Kock (wk), Ryan Rickleton, Dewald Brevis, Tristan Stubbs, David Miller, Marco Jansen, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi, Keshav Maharaj, Corbin Bosch, Anrich Nortje, Kwenza Maphaka, George Linde, Jason Smith.

afford to have two batters who are not able to score freely on tacky surfaces.

In tournaments like the T20 World Cup, discretion isn't always the better part of valour.

The overall quality of this team is undeniable which is the reason that good teams score 200 on their good days and this Indian team conjures near 200 on its average days. But what makes India a scary proposition and still a runaway favourite is the bowling attack with Jasprit Bumrah and Varun Chakravarthy bowling those eight out of 20 overs. The South Africa match will be an indicator of how this Indian team's campaign at the business end of the tournament will pan out.

TODAY'S CLASHES

Sri Lanka vs England
Time- 3:00 pm

India vs South Africa
Time- 7:00 pm

NZ vs Pak: Rain plays spoilsport, points split

Pallekele: New Zealand and Pakistan shared a point after incessant rain forced the abandonment of the opening T20 World Cup Group 2 Super Eights match here Saturday. Amid a slight drizzle, Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat first. But the steady droplets soon transformed into relentless pouring, forcing the officials to call off the match without a ball being bowled. But all those calculations and combinations will have to wait for another day, as Pakistan will now face England here February 24. New Zealand will make a light travel to Colombo to face home side Sri Lanka February 25. The washout has also placed both the Kiwis and Pakistan in a relatively tighter place ahead of their remaining two Super Eights matches. A similar result in any of the following matches, a possibility considering Sri Lanka's weather pattern, or a defeat can put their semifinal ambitions in serious jeopardy.



Eves script history against Aussies

Women in Blue seal their first bilateral T20I series triumph against the formidable rivals in a decade



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Adelaide, Feb 21: An entertaining century partnership between Smriti Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues powered India to a 17-run win over Australia in the third and final Women's T20I here Saturday, sealing their first bilateral T20I series triumph against the formidable rivals in a decade.

Mandhana smashed 82 off 55 balls (8x4, 3x6), while Jemimah Rodrigues struck 59 off 46 deliveries as the two senior batters stitched a commanding 121-run stand to propel India to 176 for six after electing to bat.

India's bowlers then seized control as young spinner Shreyanka Patil (3/22) and pace spearhead Renuka Singh (1/29) ripped through the top order to leave

Australia reeling at 32 for 3. The early strikes set the tone for a dominant display as India eventually restricted hosts to 159 for 9 to seal a memorable T20I series 2-1, registering their first T20I series win in Australia since 2016.

Young left-arm spinner Shree Charani (3/32) underlined her credentials, claiming three crucial wickets to play a pivotal role in cementing India's historic victory.

Brief Scores:
India: 176 for 6 in 20 overs (Smriti Mandhana 82, Jemimah Rodrigues 59; Annabel Sutherland 2/34) beat **Australia:** 159 for 9 in 20 overs (Ashleigh Gardner 57; Shree Charani 3/32, Shreyanka Patil 3/22, Arundhati Reddy 2/35) by 17 runs

ISL: Jamshedpur FC, East Bengal win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jamshedpur, Feb 21: Jamshedpur FC and East Bengal registered contrasting wins over Punjab FC and Sporting Club Delhi respectively in the Indian Super League Saturday. A late strike from super-sub Vincy Barretto helped Jamshedpur edge past Punjab FC 1-0, while East Bengal rode on Youssef Ezzejari's brace to defeat Sporting Club Delhi 4-1 in Kolkata.

East Bengal overturned an early deficit to secure their second consecutive win and move to the top of the table with six points.

SC Delhi took the early lead against the run of play in the fourth minute, but Edmund Lalrindika equalised three minutes later. Ezzejari converted a



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

12th minute penalty to put the Red and Golds ahead, before adding his second in the 40th minute.

Miguel Figueira capped his performance with a stoppage-time goal. Ezzejari was named the Player of the Match.

The contest began at a frantic pace. Miguel tested Vishal Yadav inside the opening minute, and Jay Gupta fired over soon after. However, it was SC Delhi, who struck first. Mohammed Aimen led a swift break and

found Lalrochana, who finished clinically from inside the box.

East Bengal responded immediately. Edmund levelled the proceedings with a powerful volley from outside the box, as SC Delhi were attempting to clear an East Bengal set-piece.

Moments later, Clarence Fernandes conceded a penalty and Ezzejari stepped up and calmly converted and put the hosts ahead 2-1.

Five minutes before the half-time, Miguel threaded a precise through ball for Ezzejari, who slipped it through the goalkeeper's legs to make it 3-1.

SC Delhi attempted a response after the break. Both Matija Babovic and Joseph went close for the visitors, and the latter's header was saved by East Bengal goalkeeper Prabhukhan Gill.

Neymar hints at final chapter, may skip WC

The Brazil legend who recently underwent successful knee surgery, has scored 79 goals for his country, the highest by any player, but he has not featured for the national side since Oct 2023

REUTERS

Brazil, Feb 21: Brazil striker Neymar, who extended his contract with his childhood club Santos last month, said that he may retire by the end of the year.

The 34-year-old forward returned to his boyhood club Santos in January 2025 and played a key role in their survival in the Brazilian top flight,

ing year to year now."

"This year is a very important year, not only for Santos, but also for the Brazilian national team, as it's a World Cup year, and for me too," Neymar said.

Neymar, who recently underwent successful knee surgery, has scored 79 goals for Brazil, the highest by any player, but he has not featured for the national side since October 2023.

Brazil manager Carlo Ancelotti has made it clear over the past year that he will only include players who are fully fit for the World Cup, scheduled to take place from June 11 to July

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Spain sink revival hopes

India suffer 0-2 loss to Spain in opening match of Australian leg



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hobart, Feb 21: India's hopes of a revival in the FIH Men's Pro League were dashed as they suffered a 0-2 loss to Spain, continuing their unabated slump in form here Saturday. Goals from Ignacio Abajo (6th minute) and Ignacio Cobos (36th) proved decisive as Spain combined clinical finishing with disciplined defending to secure the win.

The Spaniards capitalised on their chances while India were unable to convert promising opportunities despite sustained attacking intent.

Outplayed by the opposition teams in the home leg in Rourkela with two losses each against Belgium and Argentina, the Indian team was hoping to bounce back and make a fresh start under new skipper Hardik Singh during the overseas leg.

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

India began the match with sharp, quick passing, looking to control possession early, but Spain's counter-attacking

approach proved effective. Abajo capitalised on one such move, neatly deflecting the ball into the net to hand Spain an early lead.

Unfazed by the setback, India stayed committed to their structure, circulating the ball swiftly through midfield and probing Spain's defence with intent.

The Indian team created multiple promising openings and nearly found the equaliser towards the end of the quarter when Abhishek fired a powerful strike, only to be denied by an excellent save from Spanish

goalkeeper Luis Calzado. The second quarter produced end-to-end action, with both teams showing attacking intent and creating chances but failing to convert. Spain earned their second penalty corner of the match in the 24th minute. However, Indian goalkeeper Suraj Karkera stood tall to make a crucial save and prevent Spain from extending their lead.

In the closing minutes of the first half, Spain applied sustained pressure on India's defence, but the Indian side absorbed it well before launching quick counter-attacks of their own, including a promising circle entry that put Spain under pressure.

Despite both teams pushing for a goal, neither could find the net, and Spain carried a slender 1-0 advantage into half-time.

Soon after the restart, Suraj Karkera produced a brilliant save as Spain came out aggressively. Their pressure eventually paid off when Cobos struck from close range after finding himself unmarked inside the circle to double Spain's lead.

Buoyed by the goal, Spain

continued to press high and earned five penalty corners towards the latter stages of the third quarter, but India's defence held firm with disciplined defending to deny any further damage.

Eager to stage a comeback, India began the fourth and final quarter on the front foot, spending sustained periods inside Spain's circle and eventually earning their first penalty corner of the match, though they were unable to convert the opportunity.

At the other end, Indian goalkeeper Honnenahalli Shashikumar Mohith produced an impressive save in a one-on-one situation to prevent Spain from extending their lead. With four minutes remaining, India withdrew their goalkeeper to add an extra outfield player in search of a breakthrough, increasing the pressure on Spain's defence.

However, despite their late push, India could not find the back of the net.

India will next take on hosts Australia in their second game of the Hobart leg of the Pro League Sunday.

ASIAN CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

India team wins four medals in Japan

POST NEWS NETWORK

Fukuoka, Feb 21: The Indian athletics team won four medals, including an individual silver in men's 10km at the Asian Cross-Country Championships held Saturday (February 21) in Fukuoka, Japan.

Harmanjot Singh gave a good account of his speed endurance but had to settle for silver in the men's individual 10km. His silver-medal winning time was 29:21. The eventual winner—Ryuji Miura of Japan clocked 29:20 to win gold in the men's 10km cross country event.

In the senior women's 10km, India's Soniya finished fifth with a time of 35:24.

Indian athletes also won three bronze medals in the team event. In the U20 women's team championships (6km), India finished third with 22 points, behind Japan (9 points) and China (20 points).

India's U20 men's team also won bronze securing 25 points. Host Japan claimed gold (6 points), China with 19 points took home silver. Japan won gold (6 points) followed by China (17 points) and India (22 points).



POST NEWS NETWORK

I don't know what will happen from now on, I don't know about next year. It may be that when December comes, I'll want to retire. I'm living year to year now

NEYMAR

19 in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.