



Shruti's perception

Actor, singer Shruti Haasan says she has come to see the idea of home very differently

LEISURE | P2



Trump vows other tariffs

Prez Donald Trump renews his condemnation of the US Supreme Court, vowing to turn to other tariff powers and licences

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Bullions skyrocket

Precious metal prices climb 3 per cent, with silver surging to ₹2.7L per kg and gold advancing to ₹1.6L per 10 gram

BUSINESS | P11



India eye revival

Indian men's hockey team, after a prolonged slump in the FIH Pro League, will look to turn the tide on Spain in the reverse fixture

SPORTS | P12

Youth lynched over suspected child-lifting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Morada, Feb 23: In a horrific incident of mob lynching, a youth was beaten to death on suspicion of being a child lifter at Dengashola village under this police limits in Mayurbhanj district, Monday.

The victim, whose identity could not be established immediately, is suspected to be mentally unstable, Morada police station inspector in-charge (IIC) Sumit Kumar Soren said.

According to police, the incident took place Monday noon near Dengashola when four youths were allegedly attempting to abduct a child. They were chased and caught by a group of locals. Three of the suspects managed to flee, while one was caught by the mob and severely assaulted.

Police rescued the injured man and admitted him to Kisanandi CHC at Baramile. However, he succumbed to his injuries there.

The body has been sent to PRM Medical College and Hospital in Baripada for post-mortem, and an investigation is underway, police said.

Notably, panic has spread over alleged child-lifting incidents in Morada area in recent days. Residents are reportedly afraid of letting their children play outside.



CARETAKER'S DELIGHT: A mahout sits atop an elephant near a newly constructed road on the outskirts of Agartala in Tripura, Monday

PTI PHOTO

DAILY WAGER GANGRAPED; 4 ARRESTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhuban, Feb 23: A 21-year-old woman, a daily wager, was allegedly gangraped by four persons in Dhenkanal district, police said Monday, adding that all the tormentors have been taken into custody.

The matter came to the fore after she filed a complaint at Bhuban police station in the district Sunday. The victim alleged that Tima Dehury, 38, and Jadumani Dehury, 23, of her village; Sibaram Dehury, 35, from a neighbouring village, and Ranjan Diani, 26, of Kendudhipi village in Jajpur district sexually assaulted her repeatedly by threatening her.

The victim visited Bhuban hospital with the help of an ASHA as she felt unwell. However, doctors there referred her to Dhenkanal DHH where she was found to be five-month pregnant. She is currently staying at Sakhi One-Stop Centre.

According to police, the survivor has already lost her mother. Though her father is alive, she had to work as a daily wager to support her four younger sisters. Taking advantage of her vulnerability, the four sexually abused her on multiple occasions. Police registered a case (109/26) and arrested the four accused Monday.

Muslim lady loses BJP blanket for religion

Jaipur: Former BJP MP Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria was at the centre of a raging controversy with a purported video showing him taking back a blanket from a Muslim woman during an event in Tonk after asking her to identify her religion. The incident took place on a temple premises in Kareda village of Niwai tehsil Sunday afternoon, when Jaunpuria had gone to invite people for PM Modi's proposed visit to Ajmer February 28. Blankets were initially distributed to women present at the event, but it was later taken back from a Muslim woman. P8

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We are protesting against their shameless protest

CM: 2,994 rapes, 7,382 molestations last year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday informed the Assembly that 2,994 rape and 7,382 molestation cases were reported in the state last year.

A total of 33,021 cases of crimes against women were registered in different police stations across the state in 2025, Majhi said in reply to a written question from Biju Janata Dal (BJD) legislator Prasanna Acharya.

The Chief Minister said 1,183 cases of sexual harassment, 115 attempt to rape cases, 1,448 public disrobing of women, 7,378 abduction of women, 127 voyeurism, 4,361 dowry torture and 5,419 non-dowry torture cases were reported in the state last year.

Similarly, 757 eve-teasing cases, 702 cases under Section 69 of BNS (sexual relationship with false promise of mar-



riage), two under Section 68 of BNS (sexual relationship by a person in authority), 485 stalking, one attempt to acid attack case, 111 trafficking of women, 145 dowry homicide and 77 dowry-related suicide cases were also registered in 2025, Majhi said.

The CM said several steps have been taken to prevent crimes against women, including rapes, in the state.

Bhubaneswar-based Crime Against Women & Children Wing (CAW&CW) has been monitoring the investigation

VITAL STATS

- 1,183 sexual harassment cases
- 115 attempt to rape cases
- 1,448 public disrobing of women cases
- 7,378 abduction of women
- 127 voyeurism cases
- 4,361 dowry torture cases
- 5,419 non-dowry torture cases
- 111 trafficking of women
- 145 dowry homicides
- 77 dowry-related suicides
- 757 eve-teasing cases

of important and sensitive cases of crimes against women, classifying those as 'red-flag' cases. The wing appoints an investigating officer (IO) for regular monitoring of the sensitive cases and developments in the court of law, he stated. The IOs have been asked to

expedite the probes in such cases, he said.

Investigative Units on Crimes Against Women (IUCAW) are functioning in different districts. These units take up investigation of important and sensitive cases.

Replying to a question by Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam, Majhi said rape cases declined by 3.5 per cent and molestation cases by 2.2 per cent during the period under review.

Cases of public disrobing of women decreased by 26.8 per cent, while acid attacks fell by 73.3 per cent, he said.

Similarly, dowry-related murder cases declined by 26.8 per cent, dowry torture cases by 8.3 per cent, non-dowry torture cases by 1.6 per cent, and murder of women cases dipped by 7.4 per cent during July 2024 to December 2025 in comparison to the previous 18 months, he said.

19 killed as bus falls into river in Nepal

AGENCIES

Kathmandu, Feb 23: At least 19 people, including a British national, were killed and 25 others injured after a bus travelling from Pokhara to Kathmandu plunged into Trishuli River in Dhading early Monday.

The bus fell into the river near Charaundi in Rorang Rural Municipality at around 1:15am. The bus (Ga 2 Kha 1421) reportedly spun out of control and plunged about 200 metre off the road to the bank of the river.

Chief of the District Traffic Police Office, Dhading Shishir Thapa said the death toll has reached 19.

Nine of the 19 dead have been identified when the last report came in. These include one 24-year-old British national and eight Nepalese.

According to the police, a total of 25 injured people are undergoing treatment, including 14 at the Trauma Center, 10 at National Hospital Kalanki, and one at Tribhuvan University



Teaching Hospital, Maharajgunj. According to reports, the bus was carrying 44 people at the time of accident.

Personnel from the Nepali Army, Armed Police Force, Nepal Police and local residents are involved in the rescue operation.

Authorities said the night time incident has made rescue efforts difficult.

One injured passenger, a New Zealand national, is undergoing treatment at Malekhu Teaching Hospital in Dhading. He has sustained non-life-threatening injuries, and has chosen to continue treatment there instead of travelling to Kathmandu.

The bodies have been sent to Gajuri Community Hospital for post-mortem.

Cop-turned-cartel boss 'El Mencho' leaves bloody legacy

REUTERS

Mexico City, Feb 23: Mexican drug lord Nemesio Oseguera, commonly known as 'El Mencho', infamous for the bloody trail of bodies he left behind in battles with government forces and rival gangs, died in a military raid Sunday.

An ex-police officer, El Mencho, 60, was the shadowy leader of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), an international criminal enterprise widely viewed as one of Mexico's most powerful.

Over a relatively short period of time, El Mencho masterminded the CJNG's emergence as a criminal empire rivaling his former allies in the Sinaloa Cartel. He managed to evade arrest for years despite a \$15

- El Mencho built criminal empire to rival mighty Sinaloa cartel
- His CJNG gang was blamed for smuggling fentanyl across US border
- Oseguera evaded arrest for years despite \$15 million US bounty



File photo of El Mencho and a charred vehicle, Monday

million bounty from the US for information leading to his arrest or capture.

CJNG was blamed for smuggling vast quantities of drugs into the US, including the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which has been linked to hundreds of thousands of overdose deaths in recent years.

"Apart from the heads of the

Sinaloa cartel, 'El Mencho' has been the biggest prize for many, many years," said Vanda Felbab-Brown, a security expert and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "And it's really stunning, just like the heads of the Sinaloa cartel, how long he managed to evade US and Mexican law enforcement gunning for him," he said.

Arguably Mexico's most influential crime boss after captured kingpin Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman, now in a US prison, El Mencho diversified into rackets such as stolen fuel, forced labour and human trafficking.

But unlike Guzman, who became a media celebrity, El Mencho preferred to remain in relative obscurity. He achieved

notoriety for expletive-laden recordings leaked on social media in which he threatened enemies and officials.

He was also known for evading capture in spectacular fashion. In May 2015, as Mexican forces closed in on him, his tipped-off henchmen shot down a military helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade to give their boss time to escape.

Targets of his hit men were rarely so lucky. His gang routinely employed beatings and other gory means of intimidation. In one six-week period in 2015, the gang killed two dozen police in western Mexico as a warning to authorities.

In 2020, Mexico City's then chief of police Omar Garcia Harfuch survived an assassination attempt that killed two

of his bodyguards in an attack authorities blamed on the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. Harfuch is now the country's security chief and helped oversee the operation against Mencho.

Born in 1966 in a poor village in the mountains of the rugged and notoriously lawless western state of Michoacan, he worked the fields, and later went to seek his fortune in the US, where prosecutors said he got into the heroin trade.

After a few years, he was arrested and served time in a US prison.

He was deported back to Mexico, where he joined the police before entering the Milenio Cartel, a satellite of the Sinaloa Cartel. Eventually, he became a top enforcer after stints as a sicario, or cartel assassin. P10

Ex-rly minister Mukul Roy dies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 23: Former railway minister Mukul Roy, once regarded as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's most trusted lieutenant and the TMC's principal strategist, died of cardiac arrest at a private hospital here early Monday.

He was 71, and is survived by his son, Subhranshu Roy.

He breathed his last around 1:30am at the hospital in Salt Lake, Subhranshu said. A former Union minister and two-time Rajya Sabha member, Roy's four-decade-long political journey saw his stints in the Congress, TMC and the BJP.



leisure



DAVID BECKHAM IN ACTION TO HELP INJURED SKIER

Sir David Beckham has been hailed a "true gentleman" after rushing to help a woman who fell and hit her head in a skiing accident. The 50-year-old star was on a family holiday in the French Alps when he rushed to the aid.

HEMSWORTH'S KIDS 'DON'T CARE' ABOUT HIS FAME

Crime 101 actor Chris Hemsworth reveals that his three children are not interested in his illustrious film career. The 42-year-old actor thinks daughter India, 13, and 11-year-old twin sons Sasha and Tristan - whom he has with his 49-year-old wife, model-and-actress Elsa Pataky - loved his films when they were younger, but have grown less interested.



FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshaSpeaks.com
accuracy • reliability • trust
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181*

ARIES
Today you will land up in a tricky or hazardous situation. You will feel compelled to wade against the tide, which may not be such a productive thing, says Ganesha. Nothing seems to be going your way. Take some time off for yourself to relieve the stress.

TAURUS
A short trip could be in the offing today, says Ganesha. Before proceeding, you may, however, be compelled to make changes in your itinerary. If you are not too happy with the new schedules and decide to stick to your original plans, you are likely to feel disturbed, uneasy at the end of the day.

GEMINI
You will feel out of sorts today. This could result in distances between you and your loved ones. You may fall into the wrong sorts of debates on account of your ill-temper. You need to keep a curb on your emotions to perform better, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You are likely to be at your inventive best today, feels Ganesha. You are likely to taste success, much to the delight of your colleagues at work and loved ones back home. However, experience counts, and if you are a beginner at something, you may face problems in your new venture.

LEO
You will pay more attention to matters at home. You may take up home renovation projects. You may end up replacing the entire furniture at your place even. You will spend the day enjoying with your family members and friends, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Open the mind gates and let your imagination flow, says Ganesha. At your creative best, you will pursue innovation and creativity today. Luck will be on your side and even those things that you took a risk on may lean your way. You energy levels will be unusually high and you will feel passionate about all that you undertake.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that your social status will increase now. Today is an auspicious day for venturing in new business or changing your profession. For those involved in the fields of interior designing, or running beauty parlours, now is an especially bountiful time for making progress in your business.

SCORPIO
A cheerful day lies ahead of you especially for the business community. It's a clincher, as good deals not only come to your door step, but yield good business. Feel, that you are the king of the world; bring out the best in you and you are bound to succeed.

SAGITTARIUS
Be ready to receive advice - unasked and unwarranted. Don't overlook it either, as these suggestions can be worthy of consideration. But let the last word rest in your hands and look deep inside for the right verdict.

CAPRICORN
You will start the day with verve and vigour, and will appear a completely different person at work. There will be a discernible change in your way of working, especially in terms of the level of energy and concentration you will put in. The switch to the new strategy will better your performance considerably and will make you feel that it was a good change after all.

AQUARIUS
Ganesha advises you to make a simple change in your routine and things will work out superbly. You also get recognition and rewards for past achievements. But that does not mean you become complacent, says Ganesha. Get going, as hard work is still the surest way to salvation!

PISCES
Ferdinand the Bull would be the cartoon character that would most aptly describe you today. Calmness will be second nature to you, and wisdom will ooze from your pores. Communal harmony is something dear to your heart, and your amenability will see you achieve it, says Ganesha.

One Battle After Another dominates BAFTA-2026

London: Paul Thomas Anderson's political thriller *One Battle After Another* (OBAA) won six honors at the BAFTA Film Awards Sunday, with Ryan Coogler's vampire horror drama *Sinners* earning three, setting a record for the most honors for a movie from a Black filmmaker. And Kirk Jones' Tourette Syndrome advocate dramedy *I Swear* stunned the crowd at the ceremony, hosted by Alan Cumming, the presenter and producer of *The Traitors US*, at London's Royal Festival Hall, winning two honors voted on by the industry and a third one voted on by the public.

The film's star, Robert Aramayo, in fact, left the event with two statuettes, one for Rising Star, the other for best actor, a star-studded category, in which his win was met with audible gasps by the audience. The other award for *I Swear* came in the best casting category.

The BAFTA nominations had set up a thrill ride for the British Academy honors, with *One Battle After Another* earning 14 nods, narrowly edging out *Sinners* with 13, and Chloé Zhao's Shakespearean heartbreaker *Hamnet*



best cinematography, editing, as well as best supporting actor Sean Penn.

- ### MAJOR HONOURS
- Best Film** : One Battle After Another
 - Best Director** : Paul Thomas Anderson (OBAA)
 - Best Actor** : Robert Aramayo (Swear)
 - Best Actress** : Wunmi Mosaku (Sinners)
 - Best Supporting Actor** : Sean Penn (OBAA)
 - Best Supporting Actress** : Odessa A'zion (Marty Supreme)

Alia makes debut with Hindi speech

Bollywood star Alia Bhatt made her debut at the 79th edition of the BAFTA iconic as she added a splash of "desi tadka" while giving her speech to present the honour for Best Film Not in the English Language. Held at the London's Royal Festival Hall, Alia first greeted the audience with a "Namaskar". She then added: "Agla award ek aisi film ke liye hai, jo angrezi mein nahi hai." The actress requested, "Don't reach for the subtitles just yet. I was only saying in Hindi that the next award is for a film not in the English language. Because while film speaks in countless voices, what we always celebrate is the language of cinema. And that one we all speak fluently. And the incredible nominees are..."



Win for Indian movie Boong

India celebrated a proud moment at the BAFTA 2026 as the Manipuri-language film *Boong* won the prestigious Best Children's & Family Film award. The emotional drama, backed by Farhan Akhtar, beat strong international nominees including *Arco*, *Lilo & Stitch*, and *Zootropolis 2*. The win is a big achievement for Indian cinema, especially for films from the Northeast. It shows that simple and honest stories from regional India can connect with audiences around the world. Directed by Lakshmi Priya Devi, *Boong* tells the story of a young boy living in Manipur during a time of social and political tension. The title means "little boy" in Manipuri.

and Josh Safdie's ping-pong caper *Marty Supreme* with 11 nods each. At the end of the night, *One Battle After Another* could celebrate half a dozen BAFTAs, namely for best film, best director, best adapted screenplay,



28th Kalinga National Natya Mahotsav - Day IV

A scene from Hindi play *Sandhyataara*, presented by Masoom Art Group of Jharkhand at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Monday. Written and directed by Saikat Chattopadhyay, *Sandhyataara* was the second play of the evening. Earlier, West Bengal's Dum Dum Sabdomugda Natya Kendra staged Bengali play *Maya Mridung* which was written and directed by Rakesh Ghose. The plays were part of Satabdika Kalakar's 5-day theatre festival.

PIC: BIKASH NAYAK



Shruti's idea of home

Chennai: Actress, singer and musician Shruti Haasan who has lived and worked across industries and languages, says that she has come to see the idea of home very differently. For her, home is not a pin on the map. It is a deeply personal space she carries within herself. Reflecting on what belonging means to her, Shruti shares, "Home is not geography at all for me, is what I've realized. When I go back to Chennai I feel an ease and I feel a love that is so infinite. In Mumbai, I feel a different kind of love. In Hyderabad, because I work in these industries, I feel a different kind of love." Having built a career that spans multiple film industries, she says each city has offered her its own warmth. But over time, she has discovered something more profound. "What I've realized is you could probably throw me in the middle of anywhere and if I have to find my comfort, I will. That's my joy in life, it's getting to know people and a place and its culture and finding the thing that I love about it and making it then mine. Home is really where I am," she says.

PEANUTS



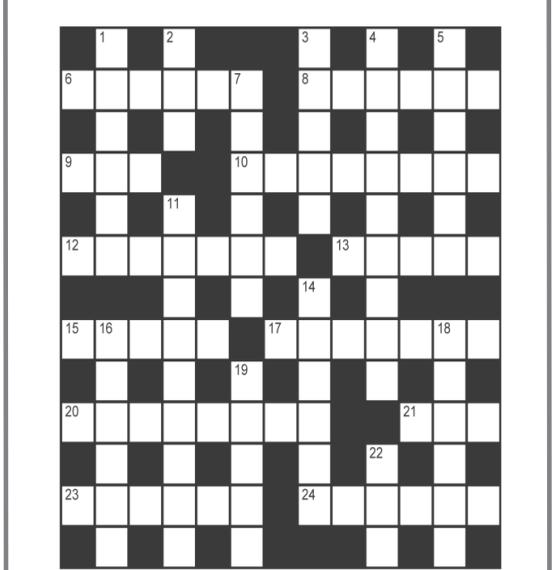
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



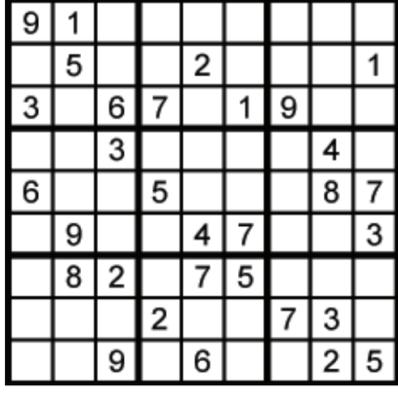
FUN POST CROSSWORD



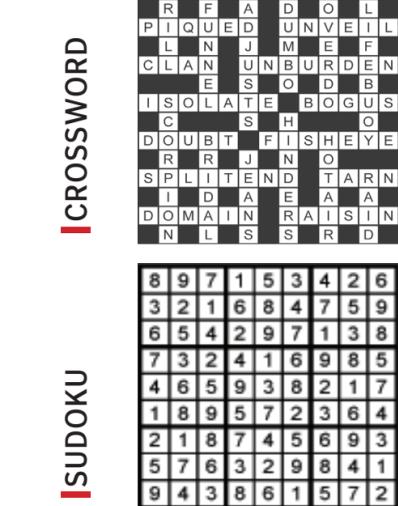
- Across: 6 Chinese temple, 8 Relative, 9 Diminish, 10 Real, 12 Retaliate (3,4), 13 Tableau, 15 Hard to pin down, 17 Andean animals, 20 Money holder, 21 Gullible one, 23 Imp, 24 Mull over
- Down: 5 Cereal grass, 7 Song of devotion, 11 Irritability, 14 Clean house (4,2), 16 Overseas, 18 Proverbs, 19 Cunning, 22 Octopus's defense

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Discrimination against women prevalent: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: The Supreme Court Monday said discrimination against women, more particularly against the girl child, is widely prevalent across several parts of the country and female foeticide is a crude manifestation of this social malady.

A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Ujjal Bhuyan refused to quash a case lodged against a Gurugram-based radiologist for offences under the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, and said it cannot nip the trial against him in the bud.

"Discrimination against the girl child and women is still prevalent in several parts of the country. Crude and ugly manifestation of such social malady is in the form of female foeticide. The first step towards the commission of such an offence is in the sex determination of the foetus," the bench said.

It added that Parliament has stepped in to not only outlaw sex determination and selection but also to prohibit all related pre-conception and pre-natal techniques and procedures, making it mandatory to maintain the relevant record in the prescribed format.

"Non-maintenance of the record in the prescribed form would be an offence under the PCPNDT Act and Rules. In so far as the present case is concerned, prima facie, it has come on record that the appellant had conducted ultrasonography on the pregnant woman," the bench said.

"Whether or not he has maintained the record as re-

quired under the law, in addition to non-disclosure of the sex of the foetus, is a matter for trial. Therefore, it is not a case where the trial should be nipped in the bud," it said.

Refusing to interfere with an order of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, it said the case pending before the Gurugram judicial magistrate cannot be quashed.

"Therefore, no interference is called for in the impugned judgment and order of the high court. However, we make it clear that we have not expressed any opinion on the merit of the allegations and all contentions qua reliability and admissibility of evidence are kept open," the SC said.

It, however, found fault with the procedure adopted in the raid conducted against the radiologist and said the civil surgeon is the chairperson

of the District Appropriate Authority under the PCPNDT Act but the communication issued by him does not indicate any decision being taken collectively by the authority to conduct a raid on the premises of appellant Naresh Kumar Garg.

"Nothing has been placed on record by the respondents to show that there was any meeting of mind of the members of the District Appropriate Authority on the basis of which the chairperson had issued the communication/order dated September 17, 2015. If that be the position, then the ratio in Ravindra Kumar (an earlier verdict) would be applicable to this case as well, on the basis of which the search carried out by the District Appropriate Authority, Gurugram, at Vatika Medicare i.e. the premises where the appellant worked, would be illegal..." it said.



SALVAGE ACT: A Fire Services personnel douses a blaze that engulfed at least five oil tankers at Karanda under Rasol police limits in Dhenkanal district Monday (Story P5)

OP PHOTO

Exam stress: Class X girl dies by suicide

Berhampur: A Class X girl student allegedly died by suicide after appearing for the English paper of the HSC examinations, police said Monday. The deceased was identified as Shreeya Sahu, a student of Berhampur Govt Girls' High School and a resident of Sriram Nagar area under Bada Bazaar police limits. Shreeya's body was found hanging from the ceiling fan in her room. Her father lodged a complaint with police, alleging Shreeya took the extreme step after she was caught copying during the test. However, the examination centre officials denied the allegations. A probe is on.

Paddy, Epstein issues rock House

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Assembly witnessed noisy scenes for the fifth consecutive day Monday as Opposition BJD and Congress members created a ruckus over the alleged mismanagement in paddy procurement and the alleged links between Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and convicted American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, forcing Speaker Surama Padhy to adjourn the proceedings multiple times.

As soon as the House assembled for Question Hour at 10:30am, BJD and Congress MLAs trooped into the Well, raising slogans and holding placards. Despite repeated appeals by the Speaker to restore order, the agitating members continued their protest, following which the House was first adjourned till 11:30am. As the ruckus persisted after reassembly, proceedings were again adjourned till noon.

When the House reassembled at noon, Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam raised the issue relating to Puri's alleged links with Jeffrey Epstein and demanded his resignation. BJP members Irasish Acharya, Sanatan Bijuli and Ashok Mohanty objected to Kadam's remarks and demanded that his comments against the PM and Puri be expunged from the records, as they are not members of the Assembly.

Amid the uproar, the Speaker adjourned the House again at 12:13pm for 30 minutes and convened an all-party meeting to break the stalemate that has continued since Wednesday especially over farmers' issue.

When the all-party meeting was underway, the Speaker adjourned the House till 4pm.

Both the BJD and Congress members alleged gross mismanagement in paddy procurement in state-run mandis, accusing the government of failing to give justice to farmers.

Congress members, through their placards, also alleged that the BJP government had ignored farmers' interests in a deal with the US and reiterated their demand for Puri's resignation. Replying to a question outside the House over the on-going stalemate, senior BJD member Arun Kumar Sahoo said, "The government has no intention to run the House. They are not replying to questions raised by the Opposition. Is it wrong to raise the issues affecting farmers? Let the government take measures to stop harassment of farmers."

BJP MLA Babu Singh blamed the Opposition for the disruption.

OVER 7K CYBER ATTACKS FOILED

The State Data Centre (SDC), under the government-run Odisha Computer Application Centre, has neutralised over 7,000 cyber attacks in government web portals over the past two years, E&T Minister Mukesh Mahaling informed the Assembly Monday. Responding to a query of BJP MLA Tankadhar Tripathy, Mahaling said, "A total of 7,005 cyber attacks were orchestrated to hack the government web portals over the last two years. However, IT and cyber security experts of the SDC managed to thwart the hacking attempts by cybercriminals." These attacks targeting the government portals originated from Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Iran, Nigeria and Romania.

6 robbers loot ₹70L cash, gold from house

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Feb 23: Six armed men allegedly broke into a house in Nabarangpur district in the early hours of Sunday and decamped with ₹70 lakh in cash and gold ornaments worth several lakhs, police said.

The incident took place at Kachaniamba village under Umakote block in Nabarangpur district. The house belongs to Amulya Jena, who had reportedly kept the cash at home after selling a piece of land about three months ago.

According to police, Jena was alone in the house at the time of the robbery. His mother, with whom he lives, had recently gone to stay with her daughter.

At around 1am, four miscreants allegedly forced open the main door and entered the house. They reportedly threatened Jena with a sharp-edged



weapon, held it to his neck, verbally abused him and tied his hands and legs.

When Jena raised an alarm, two more men entered the house. The robbers demanded the keys to the almirah. When he refused, they broke open the Godrej almirah and took away ₹70 lakh in cash. They also looted 14 gold rings, three gold lockets and a pair of gold earrings belonging to his mother, police said.

After the robbery, the accused allegedly left Jena tied up inside the house and smashed his mobile phone before fleeing. Jena later managed to free himself with difficulty and informed his family members, who alerted the police.

Police reached the spot in the morning and began an investigation. The robbers left behind a sharp-edged weapon believed to have been used during the crime.

On the direction of the district superintendent of police Madkar Sandeep Sampad, three teams have been formed to trace the accused. CCTV footage from cameras installed along nearby roads is being examined. A case (57/26) has been registered at Umakote police station and further investigation is underway.

J'khand: Air ambulance with 7 onboard crashes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, Feb 23: An air ambulance with seven people onboard to Delhi from Ranchi crashed in a forest near Simaria in Jharkhand's Chatra district Monday, Ranchi airport Director Vinod Kumar said.

Search and rescue teams have been dispatched, but there was no immediate confirmation about casualties, officials said.

The crash occurred after the air ambulance took off from Ranchi airport at about 7:10pm.

"An air ambulance from Ranchi with seven people onboard crashed near Simaria in Chatra district. The report of the crash was received from the state ad-



(Air Ambulance) flight on sector Ranchi-Delhi crashed in Kasaria Panchayat of Chatra district, in Jharkhand."

There were seven people on board, including a 41-year-old patient and two crew members.

"The aircraft was airborne from Ranchi at 19:11 IST. After establishing contact with Kolkata at 19:34 IST, aircraft lost communication and RADAR contact with Kolkata at approximately 100 NM South-East of Varanasi," it added.

The district administration's search and rescue team has been sent, and an Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) team is being dispatched for investigation.

ministration," Kumar told PTL.

The ambulance had lost contact with air traffic control around 20 minutes after takeoff. Inclement weather could be a reason behind the crash, but the actual reason will be ascertained only after a probe, he added. The DGCA in a statement said, "On 23.02.2026 Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd Beechcraft C90 aircraft VT-AJV operating medical evacuation

ministration," Kumar told PTL.

The ambulance had lost contact with air traffic control around 20 minutes after takeoff. Inclement weather could be a reason behind the crash, but the actual reason will be ascertained only after a probe, he added. The DGCA in a statement said, "On 23.02.2026 Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd Beechcraft C90 aircraft VT-AJV operating medical evacuation

India replaces Lutyens' bust with Rajagopalachari

AGENCIES

New Delhi, Feb 23: In a symbolic break from its colonial past, India Monday unveiled a bust of Independence-era nationalist icon Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, also known as Rajaji, at the grand open staircase near Ashok Mandap in Rashtrapati Bhavan, replacing the one of British architect Edwin Lutyens.

Lutyens was the chief architect of New Delhi, the area that houses India's power centre, and still often referred to as Lutyens' Delhi.

Rajagopalachari was a towering statesman, jurist and writer who served as Governor General from 1948 to 1950, bridging

the transition from British rule to the modern Indian republic.

"This initiative is part of series of steps being taken towards shedding the vestiges of colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness of India's culture, heritage, timeless traditions and honouring those who served Bharat Mata with their extraordinary contributions," the President's Secretariat said on X after Murmu unveiled the bust.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has long sought to eliminate remnants of India's colonial past by reshaping several key British-era relics with his own mega projects.

In 2023, he inaugurated a grand new hexagonal Parlia-



ment, replacing a colonial-era building, also designed by Lutyens along with his British colleague, Herbert Baker.

Modi said the move to replace Lutyens' bust was part of initiatives to achieve "freedom from the mindset of slavery".

"Statues of British administrators were allowed to remain... but those of the nation's greatest sons were denied space," he said in a radio broadcast Saturday. "Today, the country is leaving that colonial mindset behind."

In 2022, Modi's government erected a statue of an Independence hero venerated for taking up arms against colonial rule.

The statue of Subhas Chandra Bose was placed in a canopy near the India Gate war memorial in New Delhi on a long empty plinth that had once housed a statue of British monarch King George V.

The canopy, too, had been designed by Lutyens. Earlier, Lutyens'

great-grandson, British biologist Matt Ridley, said he was "sad to read that the bust of Lutyens (my great grandfather) is to be removed from the presidential palace he designed in Delhi".

Apart from President Murmu, dignitaries present on the occasion were Vice President C P Radhakrishnan, Union Health and Family Welfare Minister JP Nadda, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L Murugan and family members of Rajagopalachari.

Liver Transplant, Robotic Surgery units inaugurated at City AIIMS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: In a landmark development transforming the healthcare landscape of Odisha and Eastern India, AIIMS-Bhubaneswar established a comprehensive Liver Transplant Programme and commissioned a state-of-the-art Surgical Robotic System.

Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Jagat Prakash Nadda, virtually inaugurated the Liver Transplant Unit and formally launched the Advanced Robotic Surgery System at the Institute, Monday. Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava and others were also present at the occasion.

Inaugurating the facilities, Nadda said, "It is a momentous and historic occasion, marking a proud milestone in the journey of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, which has rapidly developed into a centre of excellence in tertiary healthcare, pioneering medical research and delivering high-quality academic programmes." He further stated that "these additions would significantly strengthen the healthcare infrastructure and elevate the quality of healthcare delivery, enabling access to advanced, world-class, life-saving treatments for patients across Odisha and neighbouring states."

Congratulating the entire team of AIIMS-Bhubaneswar, the minister noted that while the Institute has already been successfully performing kidney and bone marrow transplants, the commencement of the Liver Transplant Programme marks an important new chapter and a major



milestone in strengthening advanced tertiary healthcare services in the region.

Highlighting the national priority attached to organ donation, Nadda stated that the launch of the liver transplant facility immediately after this national appeal reflects the Institute's commitment to aligning its efforts with the vision and direction of PM Modi, and represents a significant step forward in advancing the noble cause of organ donation.

Underlining the significance of the initiative, Nadda said, "The liver transplant facility will bring advanced treatment for end-stage liver disease within the reach of patients in Odisha and Eastern India, including those from West Bengal, Assam, and other neighbouring states, while enabling economically weaker and disadvantaged patients to undergo transplantation and comprehensive follow-up care without financial hardship, thereby sparing them the burden of long-distance travel and representing a major milestone in strengthening public healthcare delivery."

The minister further noted that the Institute has established a state-of-the-art Liver

Transplant Operation Theatre and a highly advanced Intensive Care Unit equipped with modern medical technology, along with a dedicated Liver Transplant Specialty Clinic for structured post-transplant follow-up and continuity of care.

Referring to the commissioning of the Surgical Robotic System, the minister said that AIIMS-Bhubaneswar has become the first Government Medical Institution in Odisha to operationalise a comprehensive robotic surgery programme, marking a significant leap in public sector healthcare innovation. He stated that the robotic platform will enable delivery of affordable, technology-driven, and minimally invasive surgical care, setting a new benchmark for public healthcare systems.

Nadda further added that the robotic surgery programme will initially cover Urology, Gynaecology, Paediatric Surgery, and other specialties, and will improve surgical precision, reduce blood loss, shorten hospital stays, promote faster recovery, and minimise the need for patients to travel outside the state for advanced procedures.

42 IAS, 67 IPS posts lying vacant in state

Steps underway to fill OAS, OPS and OFS vacancies: CM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The Odisha government has reported significant vacancies across key administrative and police services in the state, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS) Odisha Administrative Service and other state cadre posts.

Replying to a question by Lanjigarh MLA Pradip Kumar Dishari in the Assembly, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the House about the sanctioned strength and existing vacancies in various services.

Odisha Budget 2026-27: ₹421cr for urban mobility

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: In a decisive push towards sustainable urban transformation, the Odisha Budget 2026-27 has earmarked ₹421 crore for urban mobility, paving the way for a significant expansion of electric bus services and technology-driven public transport systems across the state.

Anchored by Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT), Odisha's flagship public transport service, AMA Bus has emerged as a national benchmark in electric mobility adoption. Currently serving nearly 3.3 lakh commuters daily, CRUT operates 290 electric buses, with close to 40 per cent of ticketing transactions conducted digitally, reflecting strong commuter confidence in smart and seamless services.

Building on this momentum, the Budget allocation will facilitate the induction of 600 additional electric buses under various urban mobility initiatives. Further strengthening the State's green transport ecosystem, 400 new electric buses will be deployed across five cities under the PM e-Bus Sewa initiative.

The government is also scaling up Ama E-Ride services to strengthen first- and last-mile connectivity, seamlessly integrated through the Odisha Yatri platform. This integrated digital ecosystem will promote route optimization, cashless transactions and enhanced commuter convenience, further modernizing Odisha's urban mobility landscape.

Hailing the Budget as transformative and forward-looking, Housing & Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra said, "The ₹421 crore allocation for urban mobility reflects our government's unwavering commitment to people-centric development. AMA Bus has already redefined public transport in Odisha, and this expansion will take it to the next level."



ious services.

According to the Chief Minister, Odisha has a sanctioned strength of 248 IAS officers, out of which 42 posts are currently vacant. In the IPS cadre, 195 posts have been sanctioned, with 67 lying vacant. Similarly, in the Indian Forest Service (IFS), out of 141 sanctioned

posts, 66 are vacant.

The Chief Minister clarified that appointments to the IAS, IPS and IFS cadres are made by the Central Government.

In addition, the state government is taking appropriate steps to fill vacancies in state services, including the Odisha Administrative Service (OAS),

Odisha Police Service (OPS) and Odisha Forest Service (OFS). As per the data placed before the House, 2248 posts have been sanctioned in OAS, with 330 vacancies reported. In the OPS cadre, 852 posts are sanctioned, with 147 vacancies reported.

The Chief Minister also revealed that 27 IAS officers, 29 IPS officers and 7 IFS officers from Odisha are currently on central deputation outside the state. The government assured that necessary steps are being taken, particularly for state cadre services, to address the gaps and strengthen administrative functioning across districts.

GST team arrives; investigation intensifies

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The probe into the alleged rape of a young woman by an Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer has intensified, with a Central GST team arriving in the City Monday to collect evidence and carry forward the investigation.

According to sources, around 11am Monday, a team of three to four officers from the Central GST unit reached the Saheed Nagar police station and held discussions with police officials regarding the allegation. Meanwhile, Additional Deputy

Commissioner of Police (DCP) Aarti Giri has been appointed to lead the investigation into the matter.

"We have begun an investigation into the allegations and will share details once the facts

are established," said DCP Giri. When approached about their visit, the Central GST officers declined to comment.

As part of the investigation, the victim's statement has been recorded and evidence related

to the case has been collected from the complainant.

Sources said the victim has also filed a complaint at the Infocity police station against the sister of the IRS officer, who had introduced her to him, suspecting her involvement in the matter.

The incident came to light after the young woman lodged a complaint at the Saheed Nagar police station, alleging that she was raped by the IRS officer at his government quarters in the City. The victim is a resident of Kujang in Jagatsinghpur district and is a friend of the accused officer's sister.

RAPE SLUR ON IRS OFFICER

Property statement submission deadline extended till March 31

Bhubaneswar: The General Administration & Public Grievances department has extended the deadline for submission of annual property statements for the year 2025 by state government employees till March 31. In an official notification dated February 23, 2026, Special Secretary to the government Ghasiram Murmu informed all government departments, Revenue Divisional Commissioners (RDCs), and Collectors and District Magistrates about the extension. As per the Odisha Government Servants' Conduct (Amendment) Rule, 2021, every government servant from Group A to Group D is required to submit a true and complete declaration of all movable and immovable assets, along with their value as January 1 each year. The declaration must be filed online through the HRMS portal by January 31 of the respective year. Accordingly, employees were required to submit their property statements for the period from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2025 by January 31, 2026. The department had earlier issued sensitisation letters December 29, 2025 and January 20, 2026, urging timely compliance. However, it has come to the notice of the department that a large number of employees have yet to file their annual property returns within the stipulated deadline. After careful consideration, the government has decided to grant a final extension till March 31, 2026, as a last opportunity for defaulting employees to comply. The department has directed all authorities to bring the matter to the notice of employees under their administrative control and ensure strict compliance.

Berhampur varsity hosts nat'l conference



Bhubaneswar: Berhampur University, through its PG department of English, recently organised a two-day Golden Jubilee National Conference on "Indian Knowledge Systems: Literary Mapping of Ethics, Ecology and Education", drawing over 172 academicians, researchers, and scholars from across the country. The conference served as a rigorous academic platform to examine the ethical, ecological, and pedagogical dimensions of Indian Knowledge Systems, with a special focus on their literary representations and contemporary relevance. The inaugural session, held at the New Conference Hall of the university, featured the formal release of the conference souvenir and proceedings by VC Geetanjali Dash in presence of distinguished guests. The souvenir also carried messages from the Governor, the Union Minister for Education and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, state Higher Education Minister and chairman of the PG Council. Convener T Eswar Rao introduced the dignitaries and presented the concept note outlining the conference's thematic framework and objectives. Former Professor of English, E Raja Rao, delivered the keynote address as chief guest. The inaugural dais was also graced by eminent academicians, including Prasanna Kumar Dixit, Kalidas Mishra, Prasant Kumar Panda of IIT (BHU), Varanasi, Asima Ranjan Parhi of Utkal University, Ram Narayan Panda, and Balabhadra Tripathy. The valedictory function was chaired by E Raja Rao and addressed by Kalidas Mishra, Asima Ranjan Parhi, and Prasant Kumar Panda. The programme concluded with a formal vote of thanks by Eswar Rao, followed by a photo session, marking the successful culmination of two days of enriching academic deliberations.

State surpasses nat'l labour participation rate

POST NEWS NETWORK

ODISHA ECONOMIC SURVEY 2025-26

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: Odisha has outperformed the national average, recording significantly higher labour force participation and notable improvement in key employment indicators, particularly the labour force participation rate and worker population ratio, the Odisha Economic Survey (OES) 2025-26 noted.

According to OES, between 2022 and 2024, the state recorded a sharp rise in its labour force participation rate (LFPR), increasing from 58.1 per cent to 64.5 per cent—an improvement of about 6.5 percentage points. During the same period, the national LFPR rose from 56.1 per cent to 59.6 per cent, marking an increase of 3.5 percentage points. As mechanisation and enterprise-focused AI tools continue to reshape industries, it is crucial to assess how employment patterns are evolving. Odisha is currently reaping its demographic dividend and is projected to have nearly 70 per cent of its population in the working-age group over the next decade.

Understanding the current employment landscape will help shape policies that en-



able the workforce to build skills, adapt, and benefit from emerging economic and technological opportunities, the survey noted.

In 2024, Odisha had 3.56 crore individuals aged 15 and above, of whom 2.29 crore were part of the labour force, either employed or actively seeking work. Of these, 2.22 crore were employed.

A closer look at the employment composition shows that self-employment dominates the labour market, with 1.37 crore individuals engaged in such

activities. The rest of the workforce comprises 0.32 crore regular salaried workers and 0.53 crore casual labourers. The improvement is visible across gender categories as well.

The female labour force participation rate (FLFPR) in Odisha rose sharply from 37.6 per cent in 2022 to 48.7 per cent in 2024, surpassing the national average of 40.3 per cent. The state also recorded one of the highest FLFPRs in the country at 48.7 per cent. This surge has helped narrow the gender gap in the labour market from

41 per cent to 32.9 per cent in 2024, strengthening women's participation in the workforce.

The Workforce Population Ratio (WPR) in Odisha has improved significantly, rising from 55.1 per cent to 62.5 per cent, and now exceeds the national average of 57.7 per cent. As the state continues to reap its demographic dividend, with a large share of its population in the working-age group, the trend marks an encouraging development.

In addition, the unemployment rate declined to 3.1 per cent in 2024 from 5.1 per cent in 2022, bringing the state broadly in line with national levels. However, the size of the labour force alone does not drive economic growth; the quality of employment and the level of social and income security it provides are equally important.

Nearly half of the workforce is engaged in agriculture (48.6 per cent), followed by industry (23.9 per cent) and services (27.5 per cent). Self-employment accounts for the largest share of the workforce at 62.7 per cent, followed by casual employment at 24.1 per cent, while regular salaried jobs constitute about 13.2 per cent, the survey further noted.

Woman killed in City road accident

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: In a tragic incident, a woman died Monday after a car hit her from behind while she was travelling on a motorcycle with her husband near the Bhubaneswar Court under Badagada police limits here.

The deceased has been identified as Babita Mohanty (30), a resident of the Badagada area.

According to sources, Babita had come to the City court along with her husband for a case. While they were returning, a speeding Innova car hit her and fled the scene.

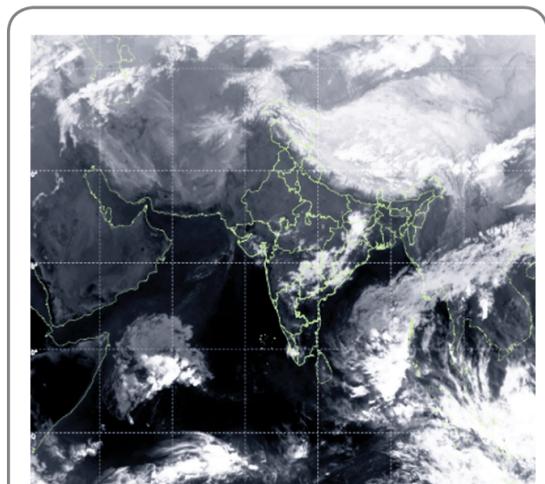
She sustained critical injuries in the impact and began bleeding from the nose and head.

Locals rushed her to a nearby private hospital. As her condition worsened, she was shifted to Capital Hospital, where doctors declared her brought dead.

Police reached the spot and launched an investigation to trace the driver. After examining CCTV footage, they located and seized the vehicle, and detained the driver.

"Further investigation into the matter is underway," police said.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	90.91 ↓ 0.05	SENSEX	25713.00 ▲ 141.75	GOLD	₹160,814 ▲ ₹3938
EURO	107.26 ▲ 0.18	NIFTY	83294.66 ▲ 479.95	SILVER	₹266,378 ▲ ₹13,434



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	35.8°	32.4°	Light rain or thunderstorm very likely to occur
Min Temp	20.6°	18.8°	
Humidity	80%	91%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Over 700 miss HSC exam in migration-hit Bolangir

On the first day of the board exam, 717 students were absent, triggering concern within the district admin and the S&ME department

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, Feb 23: More than 700 students in migration-affected Bolangir district have failed to appear for the ongoing High School Certificate (HSC) examinations, raising serious concerns about the impact of seasonal labour migration on secondary education.

According to district officials, 701 candidates have remained absent so far from the matriculation examination, which began Thursday across 168 centres in the district. A total of 24,091 students from 371 high schools had been declared eligible to sit the examination this year.

Bolangir is widely regarded as one of Odisha's most migration-prone districts, with thousands of families travelling outside the state annually in search of seasonal work. Educationists and local residents suspect that many of the absent students may have accompanied their parents as migrant labourers, commonly known as "dadan" workers, resulting in their failure to appear in the crucial board examination.

The highest levels of seasonal migration are reported from blocks including Belpada, Khaprakhol, Patnagarh, Turekela, Muribahal, Bangomunda and Titilagarh. In many cases, children travel with their parents, leading to prolonged dis-



REPRESENTATIONAL PICTURE

Notably, nearly 700 students in the district had also missed the matric examination in 2025

ruption of schooling.

On the first day of the examination alone, 717 students were absent, triggering concern within the district administration and the School and Mass Education department. Observers say the large-scale absenteeism could jeopardise the academic future of the affected students.

District Education Officer Pradeep Kumar Nag said headmasters have been directed to conduct door-to-door visits to ascertain the reasons behind the absences. "Schools have been asked to collect informa-

tion about each absent student and submit detailed reports. The exact reasons will be clear once the verification process is complete," he said, adding that there is no official confirmation yet linking the absences directly to migration.

Notably, nearly 700 students in the district had also missed the matric examination in 2025. Critics argue that the recurrence of similar figures this year suggests that adequate preventive measures were not put in place despite last year's warning signs.

Educationists have urged the administration to take immediate steps to address migration-linked disruptions and ensure that students from vulnerable families are not deprived of the opportunity to complete their secondary education.

Drunken assault by hubby claims woman's life

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharpokharia, Feb 23: A 35-year-old woman died allegedly after being assaulted by her drunken husband in Mayurbhanj district, police said Monday.

The deceased, identified as Bini Munda of Katishol village under Jharpokharia police limits, had been married for about 15 years to Tapan Munda of Ladhanbani village under Jagannathpur police station in neighbouring Jharkhand.

According to reports, the couple had initially led a peaceful married life. However, later on Tapan allegedly started picking quarrels with his wife after consuming liquor.

He reportedly returned home Saturday night in an inebriated state and picked a fight with Bini. During the altercation, he allegedly assaulted her brutally.

The following day, Bini left for her parental home in Katishol village along with her two children. After alighting from a vehicle at Jharpokharia, she reportedly vomited blood prompting her minor son to inform the police.

Police rushed to the spot and shifted her to the Shirsia community health centre for treatment, where doctors declared her dead.

Jharpokharia police registered an unnatural death case (7/2026) and sent the body to PRM Medical College and Hospital for post-mortem.

Sub-Inspector Chandrakant Mohanty, the investigating officer, said further facts would be known after the post-mortem report is received.

Woman's body found near 4-storey building; 8 detained for inquiry



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Paradip, Feb 23: Mystery shrouds the death of a woman whose naked body was found near a four-storey building in the port town of Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district, police said Monday.

Eight people were detained in this connection. Police said the body was recovered Monday morning, and the woman might have died at night.

The police suspect that the woman, who was not identified, died after falling from the roof of the building at Farinogoda in the port town.

Her clothes were found hanging on a gas pipeline along the exterior wall midway down the building, police said.

Additional Superintendent of Police Smruti Ranjan Kar said the police have detained eight people, including the owner of the building, for questioning. She was not a local woman, and no one has so far made a missing persons complaint, he added.

The body has been sent for post-mortem examination,

7 staffers of a private company live in one of the flats, where some incriminating items, including the woman's underwear, were found, police said

he said.

The police found a pair of slippers, a mosquito coil, half-burnt cigarettes and empty gutka sachets on the terrace of the building. "We have launched an investigation from all angles, including accidental slip, death by suicide or murder. Seven young men, who reside in one of the flats in the building, are being questioned," Kar said.

Police said that while one flat of the building is occupied by its owner, the other seven units were rented out. Seven staff members of a private company live in one of the flats, police said, adding that some incriminating items, including the woman's underwear, were seized from the flat.

Man hacks brother to death; arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mohana, Feb 23: A man was allegedly hacked to death by his elder brother with an axe following a quarrel in Karajankua village under Badakhani panchayat in Mohana police limits of Gajapati district late Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Lubi Mallick, 34. Police reached the spot after receiving information and arrested the accused elder brother, Govinda Mallick.

According to police, Lubi returned home late Sunday night in an inebriated condition and had an argument with his wife. Hearing the commotion, Govinda, who lives nearby, intervened to pacify them. However, Lubi stopped arguing with his wife and began quarrelling with Govinda. The dispute soon escalated into a physical altercation.

Though both their wives tried to calm them down, the brothers did not relent. During the scuffle, Lubi reportedly fell onto a pile of stones. In a fit of rage, Govinda allegedly brought an axe and attacked Lubi, killing him on the spot.

Following a complaint lodged by Lubi's wife, police registered a case (41/26), detained Govinda for questioning and later arrested him after he allegedly confessed to the crime. The weapon used in the crime was seized from the spot. Further investigation is underway, police said.

5 oil tankers gutted in fire at crusher unit

POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, Feb 23: Five tankers loaded with petrol and diesel were gutted in a major fire Monday evening in Dhenkanal district, officials said.

The incident occurred in Karanda area under Rasol police limits, where the tankers had been parked inside the premises of a stone crusher unit. The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

Firefighting teams from Khajuriakata, Hindol Road and Rasol rushed to the spot after receiving information and launched efforts to bring the blaze under control. A robotic monitor team from the Angul fire station was also pressed into service.

The intensity of the flames from the five tankers triggered panic among local residents, who gathered at a distance as firefighters battled the blaze.

District Fire Officer Prashant Kumar Dhal, who was present at the site, said the exact cause of the fire was yet to be ascertained. "All five tankers were loaded with petrol and diesel. An investigation is underway to determine how the fire broke out," he said.

Additional firefighting units from Tata Steel, Rungta Mines and GMR Kamalanga later joined the operation, following which the fire was brought under control. Hindol Sub-Collector and the Sub-Divisional Police Officer were also present at the scene to supervise the situation.

No casualties were reported in the incident.

Inter-university sports meet begins at FMU

Balasure: The Odisha Inter-University Sports and Games Competition 2025-26 began Monday at Fakir Mohan University, organised with support from the state Higher Education department. The six-day meet, concluding February 28, has drawn over 2,300 athletes, coaches and officials from 15 universities, competing in 11 indoor and outdoor disciplines. Balasure MP Pratap Chandra Sarangi inaugurated the event, hoisting the flag with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Santosh Kumar Tripathy. A march past marked the opening ceremony. Speakers highlighted discipline, dedication and sportsmanship, stressing the role of physical activity in holistic development and encouraging participants to compete in true sporting spirit.

ODIA WORKERS HELD 'CAPTIVE' IN THAILAND

NHRC takes cognisance, seeks response from MEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought comments from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) regarding six workers from Odisha who were held captive by their employer in Thailand, according to a statement released here Monday.

The NHRC took suo motu cognisance of a media report that six people from Kendrapara and Bhadrak districts were harassed by the employer for the last six months in an area near Bangkok in Thailand, the statement said.

The incident came to light February 17 when the victims recorded a video describing their plight. According to the



allegation, they were confined inside a factory and subjected to physical, as well as, mental torture by their employer.

"The Commission has observed that the contents of the news report, if true, raise a serious issue of human rights violations of the victims. Therefore, it has sought the comments of the Ministry of External Affairs on whether they could render any assistance to the families of the victims. The response is expected within a week," the statement said.

According to the report, the victims had gone to Thailand in August 2025 through a labour contractor, who had promised them a good job with a decent salary. However, they were forced to work 12 hours a day in a plywood factory without a salary or proper food. Apart from this, the employer has also allegedly confiscated their passports.

The state government's Odia Language, Literature & Culture department said that four of the six workers had returned to their homes late last week due to coordinated efforts of the state government, the MEA and others.

Two others were still in Thailand due to some visa-related issues, an official said.

Vedanta Aluminium's Gyan Jyoti powers smart classrooms in Rayagada, Kalahandi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, Feb 23: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest aluminium producer, is strengthening learning ecosystems through its Gyan Jyoti digital education programme, benefiting 600 students across six government primary schools in Rayagada and Kalahandi districts.



The initiative equips schools with Android-based smart classrooms, projectors, curated STEM kits, models, libraries and interactive displays. Solar-powered inverter systems ensure uninterrupted digital access despite rural power constraints. The intervention has enhanced classroom environments, boosted student engagement through hands-on STEM learning and provided teachers with structured digital tools for more interactive instruction.

Beyond digital learning, the company has extended infrastructure support to 12 government schools in the region, improving classroom functionality and comfort for more than 1,300 students. Support includes essential classroom furniture and strengthened educational facilities.

Rajiv Kumar, CEO of Vedanta Aluminium, said digital education is a powerful equaliser and the company is committed to ensuring rural students are not left behind.

Gouramani Harijan, headmaster of Kantamal Upper Primary School, said digital tools and STEM resources have improved participation and supported teachers with new instructional methods. Vedanta Aluminium continues social initiatives across education, healthcare, livelihoods and rural development in Odisha.



ZONAL OFFICE : SAMBALPUR
1st Floor, Shyam Arcade, Khetrajpur, Sambalpur-768003, E-mail : z746@indianbank.co.in

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
(See proviso to rule 6(2) & 9(1) Sale Notice for sale of property/ies under SARFAESI Act 2002)

Sale of immovable property/ies mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso the Rule 6(2) & 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Whereas, the Authorized Officer of Indian Bank had taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 in the following loan accounts with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS", "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies. **The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the website https://www.ebkray.in.**

BRANCH / Contact No./ Name & Address of Borrowers/ Co-Borrowers / Guarantors /Mortgagors	Description of the Immovable Properties/ Property ID No.	Date of Demand Notice/ Date of Possession/ Outstanding dues	Reserve Price/ EMD/ Bid Increment Amount
PADAMPUR BRANCH / Mob. 8249105007 Borrower : M/s. Mohinee Motors, At : Plot No.: 717, MS Khata No.: 246/1229, Near PHD Office, Padampur, Basna Road, Dist : Bargarh, Pin : 768036/ Road, Dist : Bargarh, Pin : 768036/ Partners : (1) Sri Pradeep Pattanaik, S/o : Rohita Pattanaik / (2) Sri Pramod Kumar Mishra, S/o : Rajanikant Mishra both are At : Ward No.: 4, Hanuman Para, PO : Rajbarasambar, Padampur, Dist : Bargarh, Pin : 768036 / Mortgagor / Guarantor : Smt. Mohini Pattanaik, W/o: Rohita Pattanaik, At : Ward No.: 4 Hanuman Para, PO : Rajbarasambar, Padampur, Dist : Bargarh, Pin : 768036	All that piece and parcel Land and Building recorded in the name of Smt. Mohini Pattanaik, W/o : Mr. Rohita Pattanaik under Plot No.: 1863, Area : Ac. 0.04 dec. and under Plot No.: 1865, Area : Ac. 0.03 dec., Total Area : Ac. 0.07 dec., both the Plot Under Khata No.: 1309/2770 at Mouza : Padampur, PS No.: 17, PS/Tahasil : Padampur, Dist : Bargarh, Bounded by : North : Nabaghana Bariha, South : Rahasa Gouda and Dash Gouda, East : Road, West : Road / Property ID No. IDIB7333185641M	12.11.2025 / 02.02.2026 / ₹33,97,212.00 as on 11.11.2025 + further interest costs, other charges and expenses thereon from 12.11.2025	₹55,50,000/- / ₹5,55,000/- / ₹10,000/-

DATE AND TIME OF E-AUCTION : 31.03.2026 (Tuesday) from 11.00 AM to 05.00 PM with unlimited extension of 10 minutes duration

LAST DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION OF EMD & DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE : 30.03.2026 by 11.00 PM (by Online)
DATE AND TIME OF INSPECTION OF PROPERTIES : 05.03.2026 to 30.03.2026 between 10.00 AM to 04.00 PM (with prior appointment from bank) at their own expenses

For Registration & login and Bidding Rules Visit : <https://www.ebkray.in>, our detailed terms and conditions of the Sale, Please refer to the link Provided in <https://www.ebkray.in>, for further details please contact Mob : 8291220220
Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with <https://www.ebkray.in>

STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002
Borrowers/Guarantors are hereby notified to pay the total dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of E-Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest & cost.

Date: 23.02.2026, Place: Sambalpur
Sd/- Authorized Officer, Indian Bank

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Notice No. CAO/C/BBS/Works/Peer Review of DPRs/01, Dt.: 16.02.2026
DESCRIPTION : CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (CONSTRUCTION), EAST COAST RAILWAY, BHUBANESWAR INVITES APPLICATIONS FROM ELIGIBLE IRSE OFFICERS RETIRED FROM THE SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE GRADE (SAG) OR HIGHER POST FOR EMPANELMENT AS SECTOR EXPERTS FOR PEER REVIEW OF DPRs (RAILWAY PROJECTS).
Last date for submission of application : 10.03.2026.
Complete information including application is available in East Coast Railway's official website www.eastcoastrailway.indianrailways.gov.in.
Chief Administrative Officer (Construction)/ Bhubaneswar
PR-276/CI/25-26

Government of Odisha e-Procurement Notice

E-Mail : rw_boudh@yahoo.co.in
Bid Identification No. Online tender/20/S.E.RW BOUDH/2025-26
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement
Name of the work : Road works - 1 No
1. Estimated cost : Rs. 79.75 lakh (approximately)
2. Period of completion : 25 Days
3. Date & Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal : From 21.02.2026, 10.00 A.M. to 26.02.2026, 5.00 P.M.
4. Last date / Time for receipt of bids in the portal : 26.02.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.
5. Last date / Time for seeking of Tender clarification : 25.02.2026 up to 5.00 P.M.
6. Date & Time of opening of Tender / Bid : 27.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
7. Name & Address of the officer inviting Bid : Executive Engineer, R.W Division, Boudh
Further details, corrigendum (s) etc can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://www.tendersorissa.gov.in"
Sd./- Executive Engineer R.W. Division, Boudh
OIPR-25001/125061/11/25-26/0034

Adv. R.N.Kamble District Court, Nashik Exh.No. 22

SUMMONS NOTICE
M.A.C.P.M.A.No.35/2012 IN THE COURT OF HON'BLE MOTOR ACCIDENT CLAIM TRIBUNAL, NASHIK, AT NASHIK (MAHARASHTRA) (2nd Hon'ble P.M.Badar Saheb) Sudhakar Mahadeorao Pohekar R/o.Ram Mandir, Begampura, Achalpur, Tal-Achalpur, Dist.-Amravati, Maharashtra

- Applicant
Bhupendrasingh Mahendrasingh and others
- Respondent
To, Respondent No.1 Bhupendrasingh Mahendrasingh R/o.Bhatidiya, Orissa, State Orissa,
Whereas the Respondent No.1 Bhupendrasingh Mahendrasingh is hereby informed that above name applicant have filed the above restoration of M.A.C.P. No.824/2000 before this Hon'ble Motor Accident Claim Tribunal on 11.05.2012.

You are required to appear in person or by pleader/advocate duly on 10.04.2026 instructed at the aforesaid time and filed your reply in any. Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day mentioned herein before the proceeding will be heard and determine in your absence.
GIVE UNDER MY HAND AND THE SEAL OF THIS TRIBUNAL ON THIS 18DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026 AT NASHIK.
Sd./- Superintendent M.A.C.P.Tribunal No.2, Nashik Court, Nashik

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Chakradharpur acting for & on behalf of The President of India invites e-Tender as mentioned below. The Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Sl. No., Tender Notice No. & Name of the work are as follows : 1. CKP-D-639-BNDM-CTR. Elect (TRD-OHE) works in connection with Through Sleeper Renewal (Primary) TSR(P), Complete Track Renewal Secondary CTR(S), Through Rail Renewal Primary TRR(P), Through Rail Renewal Secondary TRR(S), Complete Track Renewal Primary CTR (P) in different sections under the ADEE/TRD/BNDM jurisdiction in Chakradharpur Division. Tender Value : ₹ 23,28,968.40. EMD : ₹ 46,600/- 2. CKP-D-639-BOND-DPS. Elect (TRD-OHE) works in connection with Through sleeper Renewal (Primary) TSR(P), Complete Track Renewal Secondary CTR(S), Through Rail Renewal Primary TRR(P), Through Rail Renewal Secondary TRR(S), Complete Track Renewal Primary CTR (P) in different sections under the ADEE/TRD/DPS jurisdiction in Chakradharpur Division. Tender Value : ₹ 69,92,412.65. EMD : ₹ 1,39,900/- 3. CKP-D-683-BOND-CTR-TTR. Elect (TRD-OHE) works in connection with TTR(P), TRR(P), CTR(S), TSR(P), TRR(S), CTR(P) in different sections in Chakradharpur Division. Tender Value : ₹ 1,55,30,533.64. EMD : ₹ 2,27,700/- 4. CKP-D-800-BAL-LEAN. Balance work for improvement of leaning mast locations over Chakradharpur Division. Tender Value : ₹ 51,58,267.25/- EMD : ₹ 1,03,200/- Completion Period: 12 months for Sl. No. 1 to 3 each, 18 months for Sl. No. 4. Place of opening of e-tender : Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD/South Eastern Railway. Date & Time of closing of tender: 15.00 hrs. of 18.03.2026 for each. Date & Time of opening tender: 15.30 hrs. of 18.03.2026 for each. E-tender can be viewed at website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> The tenderer/ bidder must have Class-III digital signature certificate & must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidders can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. (PR-1224)

FOCUS SOCIETY

REORIENTING HIGHER EDUCATION



The goals of NEP are less likely to be reached without public investment and some reorientation towards a balanced view that makes education thrive as a public good and is accessible to all

The celebrated variety, has willy-nilly become an end in itself, as witnessed by the pressures, the cramming and the hard labour that young adults are put through in training camps and IIT prep schools of Kota and elsewhere. In the celebrations after the twin brothers from Odisha came up with identical scores in the JEE last week, we saw pictures of what was won but also what was lost – the children were put through a lot to fetch the scores that it is believed will change their lives. But engineers in particular have to reorient in the age of AI. As AI does all the tech work that was once the domain of engineers, it is only the vision of the NEP that can come to the rescue. We need to build holistically rounded students who can adapt and shine in the new world.

The philosopher Martha Nussbaum explains it rather well: "The educational culture of India used to contain progressive voices, such as that of the great Tagore, who emphasised that all the skills in the world were useless, even baneful, if not wielded by a cultivated imagination and refined critical faculties. Such voices have now been silenced by the sheer demand for profitability in the global market. Parents want their children to learn marketable skills, and their great pride is the admission of a child to the Indian Institutes of Technology or the India Institutes of Management ... I fear for democracy down the road, when it is run, as it increasingly will be, by docile engineers ... unable to criticise the propaganda of politicians and unable to imagine the pain of another human being."

The writer is a journalist and faculty member at SPJIMR.
©THE BILLION PRESS

While the nation was attracted to the AI summit in New Delhi and distracted by the horrendous claims of a university on developing a robot that was in fact imported from China, a different kind of attention was focused on twins from Odisha who passed out with flying colours in the entrance exams that serve as the admissions gateway to the much-vaunted IITs. One is the story of plain lies presented in plain sight. The other is the story of achievement and success that comes after much effort and sacrifice, most of it in what has come to be called the exam coaching factories of Kota – which is troubling in its own way. One is seen as everything that is wrong with India; the other as a highwater mark of Indian technical excellence claimed by and accorded to institutions like the IITs. The twin candidates will hopefully go on to do well and make their parents and nation proud. Yet the two stories – failure of one kind and achievement of another – are equally problematic for an India that has an ever-increasing number of STEM graduates but a very poor showing in terms of creativity, innovation or world class solutions that can justify the investments the nation and the students make in passing through an Indian university.



Jagdish Rattanani

WE NEED TO BUILD HOLISTICALLY ROUNDED STUDENTS WHO CAN ADAPT AND SHINE IN THE NEW WORLD

We have pilloried the private university that claimed a Rs 350 crore investment in AI related infrastructure, but some troubling issues ride alongside. How do our regulators allow a university to function with almost every leadership position, academic and administrative, occupied by a member of the promoter family? How does patent filing become a game, as alleged in this case, or how does a paper authored under the university on banging vessels to

kill the coronavirus get written? The incident brought to sharp light how India has slipped into an education system run on high fees by private institutions with questionable credentials. Apart from a few exemplars in the private sector which have higher standards, or the public sector institutions that have held up despite immense strain on resources and academic freedom, much cannot be said about the rest of the higher education sector. This is worrying because an increasing number of students study in private institutions rather than in public institutions. The skew plays out in complex ways by adding glamour and compromising rigour while the falling investments in public education take opportunities away from those who cannot afford to pay the demanding private sector fees.

Official data from 2021-22, the latest available, shows that government universities are 58.6% of total universities, with 73.7% of total enrolment. Private universities (41.4%), autonomous, degree-granting and typically with fees at far higher levels, account for 26.3% of total enrolment, and are growing. But this

is not the complete picture. Private aided and unaided colleges are 78.5%; government colleges are 21.5% of total. This leads to the case that a majority of higher education enrollment in India is in some form of private sector institution. The trend towards privatising higher education is well recognised, clear, and often the subject of study. What this incident with its shock value highlights is simple: in the absence of strict norms and good regulation, education will become (like hospitals already have) money spinners for a few while the bulk of India will remain not educated.

Watching the education sector is particularly significant as the nation prepares to implement the New Education Policy (NEP) with its expansive vision of education that is equitable, multi-disciplinary, holistic and rooted in the Indian ethos. The goals of NEP are less likely to be reached without public investment and some reorientation towards a balanced view that makes education thrive as a public good and is accessible to all.

Yet it is unmissable that STEM education, particularly of

SPECTRUM INEQUALITY

When wealth rules democracy

The latest annual report of Oxfam, released alongside the World Economic Forum at Davos, presents a disturbing portrait of the contemporary global order. It documents not merely an extraordinary concentration of wealth at the top, but a growing fusion of economic might with political influence and control over public discourse. The message is unmistakable: inequality today is no longer only an economic imbalance; it has become a profound democratic crisis.

According to Oxfam, global billionaire wealth soared to \$18.3 trillion in 2025, marking a 16% increase in just one year and an 81% rise since 2020. For the first time in history, the number of billionaires worldwide has crossed 3,000. Oxfam describes this as "a good decade for billionaires." Yet, in stark contrast, global poverty levels remain broadly where they stood in 2019 before the pandemic. The immense wealth generated at the top has not translated into meaningful gains for the majority.

The divergence is staggering. While billionaire fortunes expanded by \$2.5 trillion in a single year—an amount nearly equal to the total wealth owned by the poorest 4.1 billion people, or half of humanity—one in four people globally struggles to se-

crete regular meals. More alarming than the scale of wealth inequality is its conversion into political and social power. Billionaires are estimated to be 4,000 times more likely than ordinary citizens to hold political office. Even when they do not directly occupy elected positions, their policy influence is substantial—exerted through lobbying, campaign financing, media ownership and the revolving door between corporate leadership and government.

Policy trends across countries reinforce this pattern. Governments have frequently enacted tax cuts for high earners, diluted corporate taxation, weakened anti-monopoly regulations and curtailed public spending on essential services. The United States offers a prominent example, where recent tax measures have disproportionately benefited the wealthiest segments, even as a significant portion of citizens struggle to maintain a basic standard of living.

The rise of AI and digital platforms has accelerated wealth concentration further. Skyrocketing valuations of technology and AI-driven firms have disproportionately enriched those already at the summit of the economic hierarchy. Simultaneously, these technologies are reshaping labour markets in

ways that often produce wage stagnation, informalisation and job insecurity. Once again, rewards are privatised, while risks are borne collectively.

The social consequences of inequality are visible. Oxfam notes that 142 major anti-government protests occurred across 68 countries in the past year alone, many triggered by rising living costs, shrinking access to public services and deepening economic insecurity. Rather than addressing structural inequities, governments have often responded with repression—restricting civil liberties, limiting the right to protest and criminalising dissent. Economic deprivation breeds hardship; political exclusion breeds anger.

Highly unequal societies are inherently more vulnerable to democratic backsliding. Concentrated wealth bends institutions, laws and norms to serve its interests. Electoral politics becomes increasingly expensive, policymaking opaque and accountability diluted. Inequality is the result of deliberate policy choices—choices concerning taxation, labour protections, public investment and regulation. Governments possess the tools to reverse course, provided the political will exists.

The report calls for national inequality-reduction strategies,

progressive taxation of extreme wealth, strict firewalls between money and politics, and robust regulation of lobbying and campaign finance. It also stresses the protection of free expression and civil liberties as essential to democratic renewal. Oxfam further warns that reductions in international aid by wealthy nations could result in millions of preventable deaths by 2030, deepening global injustice.

The central conclusion is clear. Unchecked billionaire power poses a grave threat to democracy, social cohesion and human dignity. Inequality on this scale is not merely inefficient or unjust—it is fundamentally incompatible with genuine democracy.

If democracy is to endure, power must be reclaimed from concentrated wealth and restored to the people. This is not only an economic necessity but a moral and political imperative. The choice before societies is stark: continue along a path of intensifying inequality and democratic decay, or act decisively to build an economy and polity that serve the many rather than the few. The future of democracy itself may depend on that choice.

The writer is an Odisha-based economist and columnist.



The flame of the aspiration must be so straight and so ardent that no obstacle can dissolve it.

THE MOTHER

How Prepared

In the just concluded AI Summit at New Delhi, the government of India has majorly played up the issue of this country being "prepared" for Artificial Intelligence. The claim was reinforced weeks earlier in the Union Budget for the financial year 2026-27, which rolled out fiscal incentives and policy support aimed at making India a global hub for AI infrastructure, particularly large-scale data centres. But what does being "prepared" truly mean?

If preparedness means indigenous breakthrough in cutting edge AI research, globally competitive foundational models, semiconductor dominance, or deep public investment in AI laboratories, the claim appears rather ambitious at best. For, India does not yet possess the scale of capital, advanced chip ecosystems, or concentrated research clusters seen in the United States or China to even be considered a major player in AI. Nor has it demonstrated a sustained public funding that buttresses ground-breaking technological leaps. Instead, India appears to be settling for a modest ambition of hosting the physical infrastructure of AI by building data centres.

No doubt, there is an economic logic behind this strategy. For, data centres bring investment, construction activity and ancillary services. Long term tax holidays, lasting about 21 years, and land allocations, as outlined in the Budget, are designed to attract precisely this capital. Yet building data centres is not the same as dominating the AI ecosystem.

The global experience, when it comes to investing in data centres, offers a sobering reality. Several technologically advanced nations have slowed or restricted data centre expansion for the simple reason that these facilities take a heavy toll on power grids, land, and water resources.

The Netherlands imposed a nine-month moratorium in 2022 on hyperscale data centres larger than 10 hectares or consuming over 70 MW, and local authorities continue to restrict expansion due to grid congestion and land-use conflicts. Likewise, Ireland maintained a de facto halt on new grid connections in the Dublin region for years. Under its 2026 framework, new facilities must now provide on-site generation or storage and source at least 80 per cent of their energy from additional renewables. Singapore, after a moratorium between 2019 and 2022, shifted to a tightly controlled "managed growth" model, permitting only best-in-class projects with strict energy efficiency benchmarks. Even China has moved to assert control, directing state-funded data centres to avoid foreign AI chips and rely on domestic hardware.

These technologically advanced economies have confronted one basic truth: data centres are enormous consumers of electricity and water, and their growth can destabilise local infrastructure if left unfettered.

India, a country that faces chronic power distribution bottlenecks, uneven renewable integration, and water stress across major urban clusters, ideally should not be investing heavily in data centres. To invite an unrestrained expansion of energy-guzzling data centres without corresponding upgrades in grid resilience, storage capacity, and water management could compound existing vulnerabilities.

Building large AI data centres can also impose serious ecological costs on India. These facilities consume colossal amounts of electricity, often sourced from coal-based power, increasing carbon emissions. Land acquisition for hyperscale campuses can disrupt local ecosystems and agriculture. In the absence of stringent renewable energy mandates, water-recycling norms, and efficiency standards, expanding data centres risk deepening India's energy insecurity, urban water crisis, and environmental degradation.

If India aspires to be central to the global AI ecosystem, it must go for sustainable power planning, upskill its workforce, and invest heavily in research. Otherwise, it may end up as a host to AI servers and bear heavy environmental cost, while the real intellectual and economic value of AI is created elsewhere. This leaves policymakers with two choices – build merely the infrastructure of AI, or build the capability to shape its future. Being "prepared" means doing the latter.

WISDOM CORNER

As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being.

CARL JUNG

The doctor sees all the weakness of mankind; the lawyer all the wickedness, the theologian all the stupidity.

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

Most people do not really want freedom, because freedom involves responsibility, and most people are frightened of responsibility.

SIGMUND FREUD

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1582: Pope Gregory XIII introduces a new calendar. He issued a papal bull that would erase ten days of the year—Thursday, October 4, would be followed by Friday, October 15. This change overrode the Julian calendar, which had been the standard since 46 bce. Pope Gregory's change accounted for the fact that a solar year is slightly shorter than 365.25 days (the year length used by the Julian calendar) and created a new system to address leap years. Roman Catholic countries began using the new calendar immediately, while others were more reluctant. Today, just four countries have not adopted the Gregorian calendar.

1848: The anti-monarchical Revolutions of 1848 reached France, the one nation where the insurgency was somewhat successful—and which led to the abdication of King Louis-Philippe.

1868: The U.S. House of Representatives voted 126-47 to impeach President Andrew Johnson, whose Reconstruction policies regarding the South after the Civil War angered Radical Republicans. The move led to his political downfall, though he was acquitted by the Senate.

1976: The regime of Fidel Castro adopted the constitution of Cuba, which mandated the operation of only one political party—the Communist Party of Cuba.

LOL

THE GOLF BALL

A golfer, playing a round by himself, is about to tee off, and a greasy little salesman runs up to him, and yells, "Wait! Before you tee off, I have something really amazing to show you!" The golfer, annoyed, says, "What is it?" It's a special golf ball," says the salesman. "You can never lose it!" "Whattaya mean," scoffs the golfer, "you can never lose it? What if you hit it into the water?" "No problem," says the salesman. "It floats, and it detects where the shore is, and spins towards it."



"Well, what if you hit it into the woods?" "Easy," says the salesman. "It emits a beeping sound, and you can find it with your eyes closed." "Okay," says the golfer, impressed. "But what if your round goes late and it gets dark?" "No problem, sir, this golf ball glows in the dark! I'm telling you, you can never lose this golf ball!" The golfer buys it at once. "Just one question," he says to the salesman. "Where did you get it?" "I found it."

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Global peace

Sir, Goodwill and harmony are two critical pillars for world peace. Additionally, poverty and hunger need to be tackled expeditiously to promote global peace. When world leaders prioritise dialogue over conflict, peace may yet be within reach. At the same time, if promotion of peace and absence of conflict cannot go together, the ability to handle conflict peacefully is an alternative because an eye for an eye can make the whole world blind. Although the "World Day of Peace and Understanding" on 23 February was not an official UN day, the day carried great significance because it coincided with the inception of the Rotary International in 1905. **Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA**

Trade diplomacy

Sir, The report on India delaying trade talks with the US deserves reflection. Trade diplomacy is not a sprint but a marathon requiring patience, clarity and national consensus. Haste often mortgages long term interests for transient applause. India must negotiate from strength, not anxiety, aligning tariffs, market access and data rules with domestic capacity. Strategic pauses can sharpen leverage, test counterparts' intent and protect vulnerable sectors. Yet delay should not drift into indecision. Transparent communication with stakeholders is essential to retain credibility. **Sidhartha Kar Mohapatra, BARIPADA**

Pilot safety

Sir, India's fighter jet modernisation journey first saw it examine the Sukhoi Su-57, but doubts over engine reliability, stealth capability, cost-sharing, and technology transfer led to caution. The American Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II was also considered, yet its high price, restrictive operational clauses, and data-sharing requirements posed concerns for India's strategic autonomy. Facing dwindling squadron strength, India opted for the battle-proven Dassault Rafale, ensuring quicker induction and operational readiness. Simultaneously, the indigenous HAL Tejas advanced as a pillar of self-reliance. However, three crashes since 2016 have triggered scrutiny. While investigations are ongoing and pilots survived in most instances, safety must override all other considerations. Ultimately, economic prudence cannot outweigh pilot safety. **RS Narula, PATIALA**

Karnataka's BioEconomy reaches \$39.2bn: Report



The report that was released by IT Minister Priyank Kharge stated that the state contributes around 21 per cent of India's BioEconomy and accounts for over 10 per cent of Karnataka's GSDP

"BioIndustrial biotechnology has emerged as the fastest-growing segment (about \$11.46 billion, around 29 per cent share), led by fermentation-based industries, biofuels, enzymes and sustainable materials," the report stated.

BioServices accounts for about 25.8 per cent share, while BioAgri contributes to sustainable agriculture and input innovation, it added.

The report said BioEconomy growth is becoming increasingly multi-regional. While Bangalore Urban accounts for about 54 per cent of the state's BioEconomy, Mysuru contributes around 8.7 per cent, while Belagavi and Dakshina Kannada together account for over 9 per cent. Northern districts remain the Agri-biotechnology belt.

As many as 218 new biotech startups were added in 2025, taking the cumulative total to 1,451 startups, with over 75 per cent focused on life sciences and health-tech. Bangalore accounts for about 54 per cent of startups, it stated.

Between January 2024 and October 2025, the report stated that Karnataka attracted \$1.14 billion across around 40 deals spanning BioPharma, Med-Tech, precision fermentation, digital health and AgriBio.

Minister Kharge said, "With our BioEconomy crossing \$39 billion and contributing over 10 per cent to our GSDP, biotechnology is no longer confined to laboratories - it is now a central driver of economic growth, industrial innovation and societal impact."

Bangalore, Feb 23: Karnataka's BioEconomy has reached \$39.2 billion in 2025, marking strong growth from previous years and reaffirming the state's leadership position nationally, according to an official report released Monday.

The Karnataka Innovation and Technology Society (KITS), under the Department of Electronics, IT, Biotechnology and Science & Technology, unveiled the Karnataka BioEconomy Report 2025 in collaboration with the Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises.

The report that was released by IT Minister Priyank Kharge stated that the state contributes around 21 per cent of India's BioEconomy and accounts for over 10 per cent of Karnataka's GSDP.

According to the report, the BioEconomy has expanded from \$31.0 billion in 2023, reflecting 26.5 per cent cumulative growth, and is now adding nearly \$10 billion every quarter to the state's GDP.

BioPharma remains the anchor with over 40 per cent share (about \$16.44 billion), driven by biologics, biosimilars, vaccines and diagnostics, it said.

Adityanath meets Wong

Adityanath secured three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 6,650 crore with Universal Success Group for investments in group housing, a logistics park and a data centre in the state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore/Lucknow, Feb 23: Singaporean companies will scale up their presence in Uttar Pradesh, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong emphasised after he met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Monday and the Indian leader secured investment pledges amounting to Rs 6,650 crore on the first day of his visit to the Southeast Asian nation.

Companies from his country were investing in Uttar Pradesh in various sectors, particularly logistics, connectivity, and infrastructure development, and there was potential for deeper business and investment linkages, Wong said in a social media post, praising UP as the



"third largest state economy and one of the fastest growing regions in India".

"We had a good exchange on opportunities for Singapore and Uttar Pradesh to strengthen economic ties and support business partnerships. I wish Chief Minister Adityanath a productive visit to Singapore," he said.

Adityanath, on a two-day visit to Singapore, said in a social media post that he had a "constructive exchange of views" with Prime Minister Wong.

With a GSDP (gross state domestic product) of Rs 29.7 lakh crore, UP emerged as the

country's third largest state economy in FY 2025, overtaking Karnataka (Rs 28.8 lakh crore) and only behind leaders Maharashtra (Rs 45.31 lakh crore) and Tamil Nadu (Rs 31.1 lakh crore), according to Reserve Bank of India data.

"India-Singapore relations have been elevated to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, opening new avenues for investment, infrastructure collaboration and deeper economic engagement. Uttar Pradesh remains committed to further strengthening our economic ties and advancing shared growth priorities," Adityanath said.

Adityanath secured three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth Rs 6,650 crore with Universal Success Group for investments in group housing, a logistics park and a data centre in the state, officials said.

The proposed projects are expected to generate more than 20,000 jobs and strengthen the state's industrial and urban infrastructure, the state government said in a statement.

The Chief Minister briefed investors on policy stability, improving connectivity and the rapidly expanding industrial ecosystem in Uttar Pradesh. He invited the group to visit Lucknow to explore opportunities for setting up data centre facilities and assured investors of full support at all levels.

Under the first MoU, an international theme-based township will be developed on 100 acres near the Jewar International Airport in the area of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority. The project entails an investment of Rs 3,500 crore and is expected to create around 12,000 jobs. It is proposed to be launched in 2027 and is aimed at expanding the urban landscape around the airport.

The second MoU relates to the development of a logistics park on 50 acres along the Kanpur-Lucknow Highway with an investment of Rs 650 crore. The project is projected to generate about 7,500 jobs and is also planned for launch in 2027. Officials said the facility would play a key role in strengthening industrial and export activities in the state.

The third MoU provides for the establishment of a 40 MW IT power capacity hyperscale data centre park on 10 acres in the Noida/Greater Noida region with an investment of Rs 2,500 crore.

The project is expected to create around 1,500 jobs and is targeted for launch in 2028. Officials said the investment would help position the state among leading data centre hubs in India.

The Chief Minister also had a "meaningful discussion" with Singapore foreign minister Vivian Balakrishnan.

The two leaders discussed strengthening Uttar Pradesh-Singapore cooperation under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with focus on investment facilitation, infrastructure collaboration, skill development and digital economy partnerships.

Villagers stage 'jal satyagraha' flagging water crisis in UP

Sonbhadra (UP): The residents of Sinduriya village in this Uttar Pradesh district staged a protest alleging delay and irregularities in the Centre's tap water scheme and worsening drinking water scarcity. A large number of residents held a 'jal satyagraha' on the banks of the Son River Sunday, accusing officials of negligence and corruption. Surendra Yadav, a villager, said the water crisis has intensified with the onset of summer, with handpumps and borewells running dry, forcing people to fetch water from distant sources. The residents expected piped water supply to every household under the government scheme this summer, but shortages had already surfaced, he alleged. The protesters claimed that roads were dug and pipelines were laid two-three years ago after surveys, but household taps are yet to be installed, forcing villagers to consume contaminated river water. Ajay Kumar Pathak, a villager, alleged that officials were sending "misleading reports" to the authorities even as the water supply remained non-functional. He also warned that the villagers would march to Lucknow if their demands were not met soon. Arun Singh, executive engineer at the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam, said water connections had been installed in about 90 per cent of the villages, while testing of some projects was underway, adding that normal supply would begin shortly.

ALERT LOCALS IMMEDIATELY ABOUT WILDLIFE MOVEMENT: FOREST MIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 23: Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre Monday directed officials to ensure that information regarding the movement of wild animals in areas adjoining forests is immediately shared with plantation growers' associations, labour unions and local leaders as soon as it is received at the command centre.

The directive was issued during an emergency meeting held by the minister with senior officials through video conference following the death of two plantation workers within a span of seven days at an estate near Hunasehalli in Chikkamagaluru district.

Khandre instructed officials to create WhatsApp groups for local leaders and landowners in villages located in human-wildlife conflict zones to facilitate quick dissemination of information.

42-year-old agricultural worker Boramma was killed in a wild elephant attack at an estate in Chikkamagaluru district Sunday, triggering protests, following which police even had to resort to lathi-charge as they staged a protest with her body on the streets demanding justice.

Emphasizing that human life is precious, the Minister expressed grief over the recurring deaths and asked officials and staff to maintain a round-the-clock vigil to prevent recur-



rence of such incidents.

He directed the mandatory imposition of prohibitory orders under section 144 during wildlife capture operations and insisted on using advanced equipment, such as thermal drones.

Officials informed that after a person was killed in an elephant attack in Chikkamagaluru last week, steps had been taken to capture the elephant and locals were warned against venturing into plantations.

However, the latest death occurred as the victim (Boramma) went to the estate despite the warning.

According to a statement issued by the minister's office, Khandre said that if plantation owners send workers to the fields despite prior warnings from the Forest department,

they must be cautioned and held accountable. In case of negligence, cases should be registered against them.

"As per information, 35 elephants are currently moving in three groups outside forest areas in Chikkamagaluru district. While it is common for elephants to venture out of forests during summer, officials and staff must ensure that human-wildlife conflicts do not occur. The number of deaths due to wildlife-human conflict must decrease each year and not increase," he said, urging sincere efforts from all concerned.

With the next two-three months expected to be highly challenging due to summer, the minister has instructed senior officials to visit areas prone to human-wildlife conflict and guide field officers and staff.



Amazon employees during the inauguration of the company's new office campus, in Bangalore, Karnataka, Monday

Mosques covered with tarpaulin sheets in Shahjahanpur

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shahjahanpur (UP), Feb 23: The authorities have covered mosques and mazars along the routes of the traditional 'Juta Maar Holi' procession in Shahjahanpur with tarpaulin sheets and announced enhanced security for the annual event, officials said Monday.

'Juta Mar Holi' is a unique, centuries-old tradition celebrated in Shahjahanpur on the day of Holi, when people hurl shoes and sandals at a person dressed as a British-era 'Laat Sahab' and riding on a buffalo cart as the centrepiece, while playing with colours. Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi said, along with the deployment of over 200 magistrates, this year's procession will see around one-and-a-half times more security personnel than last year.

Four Additional Superintendents of Police, 13 Circle Officers, 310 sub-inspectors, 1,200 constables and 500 home guards will be deployed, the SSP said. In addition, four companies, each of the Provincial Armed Constabulary and Rapid Action

'JUTA MAAR HOLI'



Force, along with a team of the National Disaster Response Force, will be stationed during the procession, he added.

Over 100 solar-powered CCTV cameras have been installed along the eight-kilometre route of the 'Bade Lat Sahab' and 'Chhote Lat Sahab' processions to ensure uninterrupted surveillance even during power outages. As the procession last year reported minor incidents, an additional zone has been created this time, he said, adding that for the past month, peace committee

meetings involving members of all communities have been held at police stations and outposts. While urging people to celebrate Holi peacefully, Dwivedi ensured strict action against those disrupting the procession. Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Rajneesh Kumar Mishra said, 48 mosques and mazars along the route have been completely covered with thick plastic sheets.

As many as 148 lanes opening onto the procession route will be barricaded to prevent sudden

crowd surges. The administration has divided the procession into seven zones with sector and sub-sector arrangements. A total of 136 zonal, sector and static magistrates will supervise proceedings in their respective areas, he said.

Mishra added that 103 magistrates will also be deployed at Holika Dahan sites to oversee rituals from lighting the pyre to the conclusion of ceremonies. Preventive action, including externment of identified individuals and the opening of history sheets, has also been undertaken in view of the event.

According to historian Dr Vikas Khurana of Swami Sukdevanand College, the procession traces its origins to the 18th century when Nawab Abdullaha Khan, after becoming angry with the family, went to Farukhabad.

And when he returned to Shahjahanpur in 1728, it coincided with Holi celebrations, when Hindus and Muslims jointly marked the festival with a city-wide procession.

According to Khurana, the British administration later

institutionalised the procession after regaining control of Shahjahanpur in 1859. The event continued peacefully for decades after Independence, and in 1988, it was renamed from "Nawab Sahab" to "Lat Sahab" by the then district magistrate Kapil Dev.

The procession begins with prayers at the Phoolmati Devi temple and then proceeds through the city.

He added that a petition filed in the High Court in 1990 seeking a ban on the procession was dismissed, with the court treating it as a long-standing tradition.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER MINOR IRRIGATION DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR
No.32001/127/2526 (e-Mail ID : midbhanjanagar@gmail.com)
Letter No. 242 (WE)/MIDBNJ. Dtd.17.02.2026
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA e-Procurement Notice Online Tender
BID Identification No. SEMIDBNJ-07/2025-26

Name of work : Civil Construction Works.
No. of works : 01 No.
Estimated Cost : Rs.38.40 Lakh
Period of Completion : 06 (Six) Calendar Months
Date & time of availability of : From 25.02.2026 to 07.03.2026 up to 17.30 Hours
Bid documents in the portal : 09.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
Date for opening of Bid : 13.03.2026 at 11.30 A.M.
Lottery Date if required :
Name and address of the : Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Bhanjanagar
OIT :
Further details & Corrigendum if any can be seen from the website : www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
M.I. Division, Bhanjanagar

OIPR-32001/3287/1/25-26/0002

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
ଅଧୀକ୍ଷକ ଯନ୍ତ୍ର, ଗୁଣ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟାବୃତ୍ତି ବିଭାଗ, ସୁନ୍ଦରଗଡ଼
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, QUALITY ASSURANCE DIVISION, SUNDARGARH - 770020
DETAIL TENDER CALL NOTICE
e-mail ID - seqadsundargarh@gmail.com
BID IDENTIFICATION NO. : 06/2025-26 (E-Procurement Notice No.01/2025-26)

ANNEXURE

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Value of works Rs. in Lakhs (Approx.)	Bid security EMD. (In Rs.)	Cost of Tender Paper (In Rs.)	Period of Completion	Class of Contractor
1	'Supplying, Transporting, Installing of Universal Testing Machine (UTM) of 1000 KN capacity and imparting hand holding training with all ancillary work in Quality Assurance Division, Sundargarh for the fy.2025-26'	15.24	1% of Tendered Amount	6000.00	20 (Twenty) Days	Manufacturer / Authorized Distributor / Dealers

OIPR-32001/3248/1/25-26/0001

Sd./- Superintending Engineer
Quality Assurance Division, Sundargarh



A healthy democracy functions when the legislature, executive and judiciary discharge their duties with integrity and maintain institutional balance. Advocates work alongside the judiciary to uphold constitutional values and protect fundamental rights

BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

EC TO DISCUSS SHARING EVMs, ELECTORAL ROLLS WITH STATES

The Election Commission will discuss sharing technology with state poll panels, mandated to hold municipal and panchayat elections in states, at a conference Tuesday



of the day uote

A historic milestone has been reached! Post the signing of the Namsai Declaration, the first border pillar between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has been installed in Pakke Kesang district

The Arunachal Pradesh Administrative Reforms Commission under the leadership of Shri Pramod Jain, IAS (Retd), Chairman (ARC), presented its preliminary report today, a significant step towards strengthening governance and improving administrative efficiency in our state

In the 21 years of NDA rule, Bihar has become the poorest state with the lowest per capita income, houses the greatest number of unemployed people, and lags in sports and other sectors

India releases first anti-terror policy 'Prahaar'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: The government Monday unveiled the country's first counter-terrorism policy, "Prahaar", setting out a multi-layered strategy based on "zero tolerance", intelligence-led prevention and disruption of extremist violence that aims to deny terrorists, their financiers and supporters access to funds, weapons and safe havens.

The policy unveiled by the home ministry is based on seven key pillars to counter the terror threats emanating from India or abroad - prevention, responses, aggregating internal capacities, human rights and "Rule of Law"-based processes, attenuating the conditions enabling ter-

rorism including radicalisation, aligning and shaping the international efforts to counter terrorism and recovery and resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

"There has been a history of sporadic instability in the immediate neighbourhood of India, which has often given rise to ungoverned spaces. Besides, a few countries in the region have sometimes used terrorism as an instrument of State policy," the document said, without naming Pakistan.

"Notwithstanding this, India does not link terrorism to any specific religion, ethnicity, nationality or civilisation. India has always denounced terrorism and its use by any actor for achieving any stated or unstated ends unambiguously and



unequivocally," it added.

Stating that India has consistently stood by the victims of terrorism and has been steadfast in its belief that there can be no justification whatsoever for violence in the world, the document said it is this principled approach that informs New Delhi's policy of "zero tolerance" against terrorism.

"India has since long been af-

The policy lists out technological evolution, which offers terrorists a cloak of invisibility, making it difficult to penetrate their nefarious scheming or track their funds

ected by sponsored terrorism from across the border, with Jihadi terror outfits as well as their frontal organisations continuing to plan, coordinate, facilitate and execute terror attacks in India. India has been on the target of global terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and

Syria (ISIS), which have been trying to incite violence in the country through sleeper cells," it said.

Operating from foreign soil, terrorists have hatched conspiracies to promote violence in India, with handlers using latest technologies, including drones, to facilitate terror-related activities and attacks in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, the policy said.

"Increasingly, terrorist groups are engaging organised criminal networks for logistics and recruitment to execute and facilitate terror strikes in India. For propaganda, communication, funding and guiding terror attacks, these terror groups use social media platforms as well as 'instant messaging applications'," it added.

Delhi Secretariat, Assembly, Red Fort receive bomb threats



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Multiple institutions, including the Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Assembly, Red Fort and two schools in the national capital, received bomb threats via email Monday, which were later declared hoax, officials said.

An official of the Delhi Fire Services confirmed that Delhi Secretariat, Delhi Army Public School in Dhaula Kuan and Air Force Bal Bharti School on Lodhi Road received bomb threats.

The threat emails were also received on the official ID of the Delhi Assembly and its Speaker at 8 am, reportedly from the Khalistan National Army, sources said. Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta asked the Delhi Police for immediate appropriate action on the bomb threat received on his personal email id.

"The Speaker, Delhi Legislative Assembly has desired that immediate necessary appropriate action be taken in the matter and an investigation be carried out to trace the source of these emails keeping in view the serious warnings about the bomb blast threats to Delhi Legislative Assembly Secretariat and Speaker in person," the Speaker office in a letter to Delhi Police Commissioner said.

The threatening emails mention "Delhi banega Khalistan" (Delhi will become Khalistan) and read that there will be blasts in Delhi Army School, Red Fort and Metros in the next three days.

The emails claimed a blast at the Delhi Army school at 1.11 pm, Vidhan Sabha at 3.11 pm and Red Fort at 9.11 am today, they said. After receiving the threatening emails, the administrations of both schools informed authorities in the morning, a senior police officer said. As a precautionary measure, the premises were evacuated, and thorough search operations were carried out, the officer said.

SC expunges HC remarks against POCSO court judge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: The Supreme Court Monday expunged critical observations of the Madhya Pradesh High Court against a special trial court judge, saying the "hasty conclusion" accusing the judge of "intellectual dishonesty" was "totally unwarranted".

The special court, dealing with Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act cases, had convicted an accused in a sexual assault case.

The Madhya Pradesh High Court had reversed the decision and made critical observations against the special judge that he exhibited a "sign of intellectual dishonesty".

The high court had said that the special judge and the public prosecutor committed a "major lapse" in doing injustice to the accused and putting him behind bars for over three years by overlooking the fact that the victim was a consenting adult.

On Monday, a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi was hearing an appeal by the special judge of the trial court against the December 17, 2025, order of the high court which made the adverse remarks against him.

A separate appeal was also filed by the public prosecutor,



as a show cause notice seeking an explanation was issued against him as well as the special judge.

"We are satisfied that observations of the high court are totally uncalled for, out of context, being contrary to section 94 (method of determining age) of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015...Impugned judgment so far as it pertains to the appellants (judge and prosecutor) is set aside," the CJI said in the order."

The bench said the "hasty conclusion" accusing the judge of "intellectual dishonesty" was "totally unwarranted".

While acquitting the accused, the high court had said, "We propose to issue a show cause notice to the concerned special judge as well as the public prosecutor for such a major lapse in doing injustice to the accused and putting him behind bars for over three years, overlooking the fact that victim was a consenting adult, therefore, conviction could not have been made."

Rajasthan: Ex-BJP MP refuses blankets to Muslim woman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 23: Former BJP MP Sukhbir Singh Jaunpuria was at the centre of a raging controversy with a purported video showing him taking back a blanket from a Muslim woman during an event in Tonk after asking her to identify her religion.

As various Congress leaders criticised the action, some workers of its youth wing went back to Khareda village Sunday night and gave blankets to a few women. Some villagers and Congress workers also held a protest against the BJP leader Monday. Several Congress leaders shared a video of the incident on X in which Jaunpuria is seen purportedly saying that those who abuse Prime Minister Narendra Modi have no right to take the blanket.

BJP MLA from Jaipur's Hawamahal constituency, Balmukund Acharya, defended Jaunpuria, saying that the women might have said something wrong about the prime minister, which the former MP objected to. The incident took place at a temple premises in Kareda village of Niwai tehsil Sunday afternoon, when Jaun-



puria had gone to invite people for Modi's proposed visit to Ajmer February 28.

According to locals, blankets were initially distributed to women present at the event, but it was later taken back from a Muslim woman. A video clip of the event, now making rounds on social media, shows Jaunpuria purportedly saying that those who abuse the prime minister have no right to take the blanket. He also said that the programme was his personal initiative and not linked to any government scheme. Leader of Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly, Tikaram Jully, alleged discrimination and condemned the act. "A former MP asking a poor woman her religion and then taking back the blanket is highly condemnable," Jully said.

Congress MP from Tonk-Sawai Madhopur Harish Chandra Meena said that the

The leader of Opposition, Tikaram Jully, cited a video showing Jaunpuria allegedly taking back a blanket after learning the woman's religion

Jaunpuria reportedly stated that those who criticize Prime Minister Narendra Modi are not entitled to receive blankets at the event

The incident occurred during a blanket distribution event in Kareda village, Niwai tehsil, Rajasthan

The former MP was in the area to invite people to PM Modi's planned visit to Ajmer

treatment meted out to Muslim women by the former MP was the result of a "disruptive" mindset that destroys the social fabric of this country.

Meena asked whether the prime minister told the former MP that no one should help those who do not vote for Prime Minister Modi or his party. "If so, then the government should also stop the various schemes for the welfare of minorities. I strongly condemn this incident and want to make it clear that the politics of hatred and discrimination will never be tolerated on the land of Tonk-Sawai Madhopur," he said.

SHORT TAKES

Police nab 3 IYC workers in Gwalior

New Delhi: Delhi Police has made seven arrests, including three from Gwalior, in connection with the "shirtless" protest by the Indian Youth Congress workers at the AI Impact Summit here last week, an official said Monday. Charges of promoting enmity between groups and assertions harmful to national integration were added to the FIR against them. Jitendra Yadav, Raj Gujjar and Ajay Kumar were apprehended from Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh, taking the total number of arrests in the case to seven.

Five killed as bus overturns

Lucknow: Five people were killed and at least 14 injured when a double-decker bus overturned near the toll on the Purvanchal Expressway here Monday evening after the driver lost control of the vehicle, police said. According to officials, 80-85 passengers were onboard the bus, which was going from Ludhiana in Punjab to Motihari in Bihar, when the accident took place. Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), Lucknow, Nipun Agarwal, said after information about the accident was received at Gosainganj police station, police and administration officials, and ambulances reached the spot.

Drug trafficking module busted

Chandigarh: The Counter Intelligence wing of Punjab Police claimed to have busted a drug trafficking module in Amritsar Monday with the arrest of three persons and recovery of 6 kg each of heroin and ICE (Crystal Methamphetamine) from their possession. Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said the arrested have been identified as Partap Singh, a resident of Ferozepur, Ajaypal Singh, and Jobandeep Singh, both residents of Amritsar.

JU forms probe panel after campus clash

Kolkata: Jadavpur University Monday expressed concern over a violent clash between two student groups that left two students, who had tried to intervene, and a few pupils injured. Vice-Chancellor Chiranjib Bhattacharya said an inquiry committee is being constituted to probe the incident and assured that strict disciplinary action will be taken against those found responsible.

SNIPPETS

Air pollution: SC seeks coal units shift plan

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday sought responses of the union ministries on a proposal for shifting all coal-based industries out of Delhi-NCR to ensure better air quality. In a bid to deal with the persistent air quality crisis in the National Capital Region (NCR), a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi Vipul M Pancholi said it will examine the issue of vehicular air pollution on March 12 based on the suggestions made by the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM). It also sought responses of all the stakeholders on the measures suggested by the CAQM to deal with dust due to construction and demolition activities. The top court sought responses of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), MoPNG (Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas) and the Ministry of Power on the suggestions that no new coal-based thermal power plant be set up within 300 km of Delhi.

Indian Embassy in Iran urges citizens to leave

New Delhi: India Monday advised all its nationals residing in Iran to leave the country by all available means of transport, including commercial flights, in view of the evolving security situation. The Indian Embassy in Iran issued a fresh advisory to the Indian nationals amid fresh protests in Tehran and increasing fears of US military strikes on the Gulf nation. Students at several universities in Iran held anti-government demonstrations in a first such agitation since Tehran's brutal crackdown on the protesters last month. According to official estimates in January, little over 10,000 Indians, including students, were living in Iran. "In continuation of the advisory issued by the government of India January 5 and in view of the evolving situation in Iran, Indian nationals who are currently in Iran (students, pilgrims, business persons and tourists) are advised to leave Iran by available means of transport, including commercial flights," it said.

NEET PG SC to examine impact of cut-off reduction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: The Supreme Court Monday said it would examine whether the sharp reduction in the qualifying marks for NEET-PG 2025-26 affects the standard of postgraduate medical education.

A bench of Justice PS Narasimha and Justice Alok Aradhe made the remarks while hearing a batch of petitions challenging the reduction in the percentile cut-off for the current academic year.

"Adversely affecting the quality of education is what we are concerned about more than anything. It is about the quality. You will have to satisfy us that the reduction of the cutoff so drastically...will have little impact on the quality of education. Though you are justified

in saying that this is not like entry into MBBS, this is like a post-graduation. It stands on a different footing because those who apply are already doctors. We will have to reflect on this issue," the top court said.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, referred to the reasoning set out in the government's affidavit and submitted that the decision was taken in view of vacancies.

She submitted that the examination does not certify minimum clinical competence since candidates have already obtained MBBS degrees, and NEET-PG is meant to compare and filter out candidates in view of limited seats.

Justice Narasimha said that although the Union was justified in stating that NEET-PG



was not an entry into MBBS and that candidates are already doctors, the court would still like to consider the effect of reducing the cut-off.

It posted the matter for further hearing March 24. The petitioners have challenged the January 13 notice issued by the National Board of Examination

in Medical Sciences (NBEMS), by which the minimum qualifying percentile cut-off for counselling of the third round of NEET PG 2025-2026 was reduced.

The director general of health services of the Union health ministry, in its affidavit filed in the matter, said

The Centre submitted that the eligibility criterion to appear in NEET-PG requires a candidate to possess a recognised MBBS degree and to have completed the compulsory rotating internship

Earlier, the NBEMS told the top court that 95,913 additional candidates had become eligible for NEET-PG 2025 counselling after the qualifying cut-off percentile was reduced

According to the notice published by NBEMS, the NEET PG cut-off for the general category has been reduced to the seventh percentile from 50

that the challenge by petitioners pertains to an academic and policy determination taken by competent statutory authorities under the National Medical

Commission Act 2019, in public interest and within the domain of expert regulation.

"It is respectfully submitted that the reduction of qualifying percentile NEET-PG is not unprecedented. Since the inception of NEET-PG in 2017 percentile reductions have been affected in appropriate circumstances to prevent seat wastage. In the academic year 2023 as well, the qualifying percentile was reduced to zero across categories. The present decision is thus consistent with the established policy and administrative practice," it said.

The Centre said scores in NEET-PG examination are a function of relative performance and examination design, which cannot be construed as determinative of clinical incompetence.



Artistes dressed as Lord Hanuman take part in a religious procession organised by the 'Hanuman Chalisa Parivar', in Amritsar, Punjab



A commendable milestone in India's clean energy journey! Compliments to all those who have benefited from this scheme and embraced rooftop solar power thereby boosting savings, sustainability and self-reliance. This scheme is a part of our efforts to build an energy-secure, green and future-ready India
NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

8 CHEETAHS TO ARRIVE AT KUNO

Eight more cheetahs from Africa will be airlifted to Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh February 28, taking the number of these big cats in India to 46, officials said on Monday. The batch from Botswana, comprising six females and two males, will reach Gwalior on an Indian Air Force (IAF) plane and then be ferried by helicopters to KNP at around 9:30 am February 28, MP Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) Subharanjan Sen told PTI



of the day quote

It is a huge thing that Gulmarg is hosting the winter games for the sixth time. It tells you that there is no better place for the winter games in the country. However, the reality is that weather patterns are changing. We could never think it would be so warm in Gulmarg in February. This is a reality and we have to accept it. We will take whatever steps need to be taken accordingly



OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

Had a fruitful meeting with Lim Chow Kiat, Chief Executive Officer, GIC, along with his delegation, in Singapore today



YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

Today, across the entire country, the 'Save MGNREGA' campaign has been launched. It has begun in Karnataka as well



SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

POST OF THE DAY

China : Let's feed Children Eggs, chicken, fish and everything that they need to grow and become strong.

India : Let's ban meat, it makes children violent. We will never be able to compete with China with BJP pulling India backwards.

@RoshanKrRaii

SHORT TAKES

Punjab Budget session from March 6 to 16

Chandigarh: The Punjab Cabinet Monday gave its nod to holding the Budget session of the state Assembly from March 6 to 16. The Budget will be presented March 8. The Bhagwant Mann government is also likely to announce ₹1,000 per month to every woman, one of its poll promises, in the budget. Addressing the media here, Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema said the session will start with the Governor's address and later the Obituary references March 6.

10 peacocks found dead

Ghaziabad (UP): Ten peacocks were found dead, and one was recovered in an unconscious state near a radish field in a village here Monday, forest department officials said. The incident came to light when a farmer in Pachayara village, checking his wheat crops, spotted the fallen birds and immediately alerted the police. Police informed the Forest Department, who, accompanied by veterinary doctors, rushed to the scene.

Two bodies found hanging from tree

Gumla (Jharkhand): The bodies of two persons, including a girl, were found hanging from a tree in Jharkhand's Gumla district Monday, police said. The bodies were recovered from a place near Akara Gabri village under the Kamdara Police Station limits, an officer said. Prima facie, it appears to be a case of suicide, he said. "The bodies have been handed over to their families after the post-mortem examinations at Gumla Sadar Hospital," said Mukesh Kumar, officer in charge of Kamdara PS. According to villagers, the two deceased were allegedly in a love affair for some time, the OC added.



Indian Naval Ship Anjadip, the third vessel of the eight-ship Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) project, before its commissioning ceremony

Vijay challenges Stalin

TN ASSEMBLY POLLS

Vijay alleged Stalin's 'real friends are bribe, corruption, and eyeing political gains' and accused him of making false promises to the people



The assembly election is 'a war between Vijay and Stalin,' he said

Dubbing the DMK regime as 'good-for-nothing ultra model government,' he alleged Tamil Nadu has been transformed into a super-standup comedian-run state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

the Karur stampede?... Why refuse the venue and permission for TVK (rallies and events), if we are friends?... You did everything and then blamed us for the Karur tragedy."

At least 41 people died, and many were injured during a stampede at Vijay's rally in Karur 27 September 2025.

He reiterated that TVK is a "pure force" and accused the DMK of being an "evil force."

Describing the polls, expected to be held in next two months, as a "surprising elections" because all the parties have teamed up against him, he said, despite such a scenario, the contest was only between the DMK and TVK.

He said that these parties oppose him because he was against graft and bribes. He added that people supported him, which infuriated these parties.

He also dared his political opponents to declare their assets. "At this juncture, I would like to ask the big politicians a serious question. What were your assets before you came to politics? What are your assets after you joined politics? Can it be declared openly?"

Further, he asked them to "reveal their source of wealth: Whether it came from business/work or was swindled after assuming power". He said all corrupt elements would gang up on anyone questioning the source of their wealth, adding that they would "throw mud on us, but we are not concerned about it."

He alleged Stalin's "real friends are bribery and corruption". He also accused the Chief Minister of making false promises to the people and sought to debunk the ruling party's claim of developing Tamil Nadu into a "superstar state," saying it was "such a superb" one during the times of iconic leaders K Kamaraj, CN Annadurai and M G Ramachandran.

Vijay, the chief of the fledgling Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), also played the DMK's narrative that the upcoming polls were a fight between "Tamil Nadu and Delhi-the NDA."

Dubbing the DMK regime as "good-for-nothing ultra (a popular colloquial phrase with origins in Hindi) model government," he alleged that Tamil Nadu has been transformed into a "super-standup comedian-run state".

Praising people for superb clarity, he said he would visit every village and personally meet the people once the TVK formed the government following a huge win in the 2026 Assembly election.

He also took a swipe at the DMK forming alliances, claiming Stalin was accommodating anybody and everybody in the party-led bloc. Vijay arrived to a rousing reception by party workers at Agaramcheri village near the Pallikonda toll plaza on the Chennai-Bengaluru Highway in this district and administered the pledge to the TVK members.

Seven of JeM module eliminated by forces



Army personnel address a press briefing on the counter-insurgency operation, in Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, Feb 23: Inspector General of Police (Jammu Zone) Bhim Sen Tuti said Monday that in a joint operation, security forces have neutralised a seven-member Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror module, dubbed the "Israel Group", bringing an end to a year-and-a-half-long operation in the Kishtwar belt of Jammu and Kashmir.

Three members of the module, including its self-styled commander, Saifullah, were killed in an encounter with the security forces in Kishtwar district Sunday.

"The group of seven JeM terrorists had infiltrated into Indian territory in April 2024. Since then, this group was engaged on 17 different occasions. Over the last year and a half, we have successfully neutralised all of them. Sunday marked the culmination of this year-and-a-half-long operation," the IGP told reporters at Kishtwar.

Describing the module as a "hardcore terrorist group", he said, "The group was known as the Israel Group. It was a hardcore terrorist module that inflicted significant damage on security forces and also caused harm to civilians." Tuti said acting on precise intelligence, the last three members of the group, including Saifullah, were neutralised in the Chatroo area of Kishtwar. The IGP asserted

Protest against VC turns violent in JNU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Several students were injured in a late-night clash between two student groups at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, with the Left groups and the ABVP accusing each other of unleashing the violence, and authorities vowing to crack down on any unruly behaviour on campus.

Tensions flared on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) after a protest against the vice-chancellor turned violent around 1.30 am Monday.

The Left-backed Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) had called for an equality march "Samta Julos" "towards the East Gate Sunday night, demanding the resignation of Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit and the revocation of a rustication order.

While the protesters alleged that the administration did not

engage with them and instead allowed the ABVP members to confront them, the Right-wing student body blamed the Left groups for instigating the violence. Pandit recently triggered a row after she said in an interview that communities "cannot progress by being permanently a victim or playing the victim card", with the JNUSU terming the remarks "casteist" and "insensitive" to marginalised communities.

Videos shared by the rival student bodies purportedly showed masked people hurling stones and roaming with sticks on the campus.

Sharing a video showing a few people hurling stones on the campus, Left-affiliated student groups alleged that ABVP members started stone pelting when they gathered for a protest.

The ABVP also shared videos showing masked people walking inside the campus before the violence broke out.

Concrete slab collapse kills four head-load workers in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kozhikode (Kerala), Feb 23: Four people died after a 50-metre-long concrete slab at a Kozhikode Corporation-owned building collapsed on head-load workers at Valiyangadi here Monday, police officials said.

The deceased have been identified as Jabbar, Ashraf, Basheer and Vinod who were engaged in loading work at the two-storied building owned by the Kozhikode Corporation in Valiyangadi.

According to police, Jabbar Ashraf and Basheer died soon after they were rushed to the hospital. Vinod died at the hospital later in the day. The police said another person, identified as Abdul Jaleel, sustained serious injuries and was admitted to the hospital.

Police said the incident occurred at noon, when a 50-metre-long concrete slab of the sunshade collapsed on the workers while they were resting in front of a closed shop after loading work.

Police and the Kozhikode Corporation have launched a probe into the incident.

Kozhikode Town police registered a case for unnatural death in the incident. Soon after the incident, the BJP councillors staged a protest at the Kozhikode Corporation office and the Mayor's office. Opposition parties alleged that the building, owned by the LDF-ruled Kozhikode Corporation, was unfit for operation because it had been constructed over 70 years ago.

"The last council had declared the building unfit and decided to dismantle it. But there were shops and godowns still operating in the building," the BJP councillors said, alleging that the deaths occurred due to the negligence of the Corporation.

They demanded that a case of culpable homicide be registered against Mayor O Sadasivan.

K'taka weighs mobile phone ban in schools, colleges

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, Feb 23: A discussion has begun in Karnataka over ban on mobile phones in schools and college campuses, with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah mooting the idea.

Addressing vice-chancellors and senior education administrators at the Vice Chancellors' conference in the presence of Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot Saturday, the chief minister said the government was seriously examining the proposal in the backdrop of growing concerns over social media addiction and its impact on children.

He sought the considered opinion of academic heads before taking a final call. "For children below 16 years, if we make restrictions on mobile usage compulsory at least in

classrooms and schools, it will be very good," Siddaramaiah said.

Stating that many countries had already taken similar steps, he noted that Australia and several European nations had imposed restrictions on mobile phone use by school-children.

"We are seeing that many children are getting trapped and spoiled by social media. What is your opinion on banning mobile phones for those below 16 years," he asked the VCs. Some vice-chancellors supported the proposal, terming it a "very good decision", while others pointed out practical challenges, including the increasing use of mobile platforms for homework, communication and safety.

One of them said mobile phones and emails had be-



come compulsory in several English-medium schools and that instructions and assignments were frequently shared digitally. Siddaramaiah, however, stressed that at least within classrooms, mobile phone use should be avoided.

He observed that in some countries, even in higher ed-

For children below 16 years, if we make restrictions on mobile usage compulsory at least in classrooms and schools, it will be very good

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

ing a healthy environment in educational institutions was extremely necessary and cautioned against overt political activity on campuses.

He noted that while political parties had their own roles, openly proclaiming the ideology of any single party within campuses was "not the right approach".

On drug abuse, Siddaramaiah called for campuses to be made drug-free.

He urged university authorities to identify those involved in drug networks or students consuming narcotics and to

work towards reform and prevention.

The conference also saw discussion on student elections in universities.

While some vice-chancellors argued that elections could become party-based and disrupt academic schedules under the semester system, the CM defended their role in nurturing leadership.

The Karnataka government would examine the pros and cons before taking a final decision, he added.

Stating that there was pressure from parents to ban mobile use for students, deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar Monday said that the ban is still under discussion. He said mobiles in schools are banned in many other countries too. Hence, a similar ban is being discussed here too.



The rule of law is being outmuscled by the rule of force. Around the world, human rights are being pushed back deliberately, strategically, and sometimes proudly

ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY GENERAL

6 PLANETS TO PARADE ACROSS NIGHT SKY

Six planets are linking up in the sky at the end of February, and most will be visible to the naked eye. It's what's known as a planetary parade, which happens when multiple planets appear to line up in the sky at once



of the day quote

As I think of those who lost their loved ones and had to cope with complete change of their living environment, I feel their scars have not healed yet ... they stay despite the passage of time

The European Commission should never have attended the Board of Peace meeting in Washington. Beyond the legitimate political questions raised by the Board of Peace, the Commission must scrupulously respect European law and institutional balance in all circumstances

Iraq was in talks with other countries on the repatriation of their nationals, and had reached an agreement with Turkey

Trump renews attack on SC

Washington, Feb 23: President Donald Trump renewed his condemnation of the US Supreme Court Monday after it ruled against his sweeping tariff program last week, vowing to turn to other tariff powers and licenses but giving no details.

"The court has also approved all other Tariffs, of which there are many, and they can all be used in a much more powerful and obnoxious way, with legal certainty, than the Tariffs as initially used," he wrote in a social media post.

Trump said Saturday he would raise a temporary tariff from 10% to 15% on US imports from all countries, the maximum level allowed under the law, a day after the court ruled that Trump had exceeded his presidential authority when he imposed an array of higher tariff rates under an economic emergency law.

In his post Monday, Trump also pointed to the potential use of licenses to pressure countries, writing that "incomprehensibly, according to the ruling, (I) can't charge them a License fee - BUT ALL LICENSES CHARGE FEES, why can't the United States do so? You do a license to get a fee! The opinion doesn't explain that, but I know the answer!"

Wall Street futures and the dollar dropped early Monday



amid confusion over the US trade policy, while oil prices initially fell over uncertainty for global growth and fuel demand over the latest tariff hike before being steadied by news of planned US-Iran talks.

The decision and Trump's subsequent actions are already impacting his trade deals struck over the past year, with China urging Washington to scrap tariff measures, the European Union set to freeze its agreement and India delaying planned talks.

Trump used his social media post to again lash out against the justices who ruled against him, which included two who he had appointed during his first term in the White House. In its ruling, authored by conservative Chief Justice John

Roberts, the court reasserted its power to check the power of the president.

The president also expressed concern that the top court could rule against his administration's bid to restrict birthright citizenship in its forthcoming decision in that case.

US to stop collecting tariffs deemed illegal by Supreme Court Tuesday

The US Customs and Border Protection agency said it will halt collections of tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act at 12:01 am EST Tuesday, more than three days after the US Supreme Court declared the duties illegal.

The agency said in a message to shippers on its Cargo

Systems Messaging Service (CSMS) that it will deactivate all tariff codes associated with President Donald Trump's prior IEEPA-related orders as of Tuesday.

EU lawmakers again postpone vote on US trade deal

The European Parliament decided Monday to postpone for a second time a vote on the European Union's trade deal with the United States after US President Donald Trump's imposition of a new blanket 15% import tariff.

The EU assembly has been debating legislative proposals to remove many EU import duties on US goods, a key part of the deal struck in Turnberry, Scotland, last July, as well as to continue zero duties for US lobsters, initially agreed with Trump in 2020. The proposals require approval by the parliament and EU governments.

Parliament's trade committee has now postponed a vote planned for Tuesday. Bernd Lange, the committee chair, said the new temporary US tariff could mean increased levies for some EU exports and no one knew what would happen after they expire in 150 days. EU lawmakers will reconvene on March 4 to assess if the United States had clarified the situation and confirmed its commitment to last year's deal.

Mexican military kills cartel boss 'El Mencho'



REUTERS

Mexico City, Feb 23: A visit from a romantic partner of infamous cartel boss Nemesio Oseguera, known as "El Mencho," led to his capture and death, Mexican authorities said in an assessment of Sunday's operation, after which 25 members of the National Guard military police were killed in retaliatory violence.

Oseguera, Mexico's most-wanted cartel leader, was the mastermind of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG). The US had offered a \$15 million reward for information leading to his arrest.

He died in a helicopter after being injured in a military operation by Mexican special forces in a wooded area outside the town of Tapalpa in the western state of Jalisco, according to Mexico's defense ministry.

Defense Minister Ricardo Trevilla said information from a confidante of one of Oseguera's romantic partners helped officials quickly plan the raid for the following day at the crime boss' compound.

During the raid, Oseguera's gunmen opened fire on security forces and the conflict moved to a cabin complex in a wooded area, where he was injured along with two of his bodyguards. The three were transported by helicopter to Mexico City but did not survive.

RETIALIATORY VIOLENCE SURGES ACROSS MEXICO

Oseguera's death triggered violence across Mexico, as

- US intelligence aided in locating Oseguera's compound
Oseguera's death led to retaliatory violence across Mexico
Trump urges Mexico to intensify efforts against cartels

cartel loyalists blocked roads and burned cars in retaliation against the government.

Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch told reporters at the press conference that 30 cartel members were killed in these attacks, as well as one bystander. At least 70 people were arrested in seven states.

"There was no participation in this operation of US forces. What there was, was an exchange of information," President Claudia Sheinbaum said.

TRUMP CALLS FOR MORE EFFORTS

Trevilla was moved to tears as he offered condolences to the relatives of Mexican security officers who died in the aftermath Sunday, in which officials registered at least 85 roadblocks across Mexico. The flare-ups caused airlines to cancel flights on Sunday, and Monday morning shares in Mexican airline Volaris and airport operators GAP and ASUR were down more than 4%.

Sheinbaum said the situation was normalizing and that her government's priority was ensuring peace and security.

US President Donald Trump Monday called on Mexico to boost its efforts targeting drug cartels. "Mexico must step up their effort on Cartels and Drugs!" he wrote in a social media post.

SHORT TAKES

Carney to visit India Feb 26

Ottawa: Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is scheduled to travel to India February 26, with the aim of "expanding" ties with India and building new partnerships in defence, energy and AI. Carney will first visit Mumbai, then New Delhi, India, where he will meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a press release issued by the office of the Prime Minister of Canada said.

Chad closes border with Sudan

Cairo: Chad said Monday it has closed its border with Sudan "until further notice," calling it an attempt to limit the spread of conflict into its territory after multiple crossings by fighters with the warring Sudanese factions. "It aims to prevent any risk of the conflict spreading to our soil, to protect our citizens and refugee populations, and to guarantee the stability and territorial integrity of our country," government spokesperson Gassim Cherif Mahamat said in a statement.

Ex-UK ambassador Mandelson held

London: Former British ambassador to the US Peter Mandelson has been arrested by London police on suspicion of misconduct in public office, following revelations over his ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. Mandelson, 72, was fired from the most prestigious posting in Britain's diplomatic service in September, when the depth of his friendship with Epstein started to become clear.

US military starts withdrawal from Syria

Damascus: US forces began pulling out of their largest base in northeastern Syria Monday, three Syrian military and security sources said, part of a wider departure as the US-allied government in Damascus consolidates control. Dozens of trucks, some carrying armoured vehicles, departed the base at Qasrak in Hasakah province Monday morning, witnesses said. Reuters footage later showed the trucks moving along a highway on the outskirts of the city of Qamishli.

BBC apologises for airing BAFTA racial slur made by guest

London, Feb 23: The BBC apologised Monday for failing to edit out a racial slur from its broadcast of Britain's top movie awards, after a guest with Tourette syndrome shouted out while two Black actors from the film "Sinners" were presenting an award.

Michael B Jordan and Delroy Lindo were on stage at the BAFTAs when John Davidson shouted a racial slur. The BBC broadcast the show around two hours later and the offensive language remained in the programme, and on its catch-up platform until Monday morning.

Later, director Akinola Davies Jr said "Free Palestine" in an acceptance speech, which was edited out of the broadcast.

The racial slur by Davidson sparked anger from several Black actors and a production designer who said there should have been a more comprehensive apology at the time. Davidson attended the BAFTA awards in London Sunday after his life inspired the film "I Swear", which picked up several awards.

Tourette syndrome is an involuntary condition that causes people to make sudden, repetitive sounds or movements known as tics, which can sometimes include swearing.

A BBC spokesperson said Monday that some viewers may have heard "strong and offensive language" during the awards.



Children watch through the window above the graffiti reading, 'Blessed month to you' during the holy month of Ramadan in southern Gaza Strip

Ex-lawmakers to fill oppn benches for Modi address: Israeli Speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, Feb 23: Under-terred by threats from the opposition to boycott Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the Knesset (Israeli parliament), speaker Amir Ohana has said that he would fill those seats with former lawmakers, local media reported.

Modi's visit to Israel has gotten entangled in domestic politics, with the opposition threatening to boycott the Indian leader's parliamentary address unless the Supreme

Court chief is invited for it as per protocol.

National broadcaster Kan reported Monday that opposition party Yesh Atid's lawmaker Meirav Ben-Ari challenged Ohana during a meeting on the issue.

"Don't worry, I promise you that Prime Minister Modi will not speak to a half-empty plenum," Ohana is said to have told the lawmaker.

Ohana, as per the report, said that "of course", Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit had not been invited to attend the speech.



Modi is expected to arrive in Israel February 25 for a two-day visit, during which he is likely to address the Knesset

and meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Isaac Herzog.

Leader of Opposition Yair Lapid has insisted that Supreme Court President Amit be invited to the Knesset when Modi addresses the house.

Sources in the opposition maintain that it is not a call for the boycott; the government is "intentionally trying to force us into a bad situation."

"If the coalition boycotts the President of the high court during the special session with the Prime Minister of India, we will not be able to

attend the debate," Lapid told the lawmakers, stressing that another public boycott of Amit by the coalition would cause "enormous embarrassment" to the legislature.

"We do not want India to be embarrassed by us, with the Prime Minister of a nation of a billion people standing here in front of a half-empty Knesset," Lapid emphasised.

Israel's domestic politics is embroiled in a heated debate over judicial overhaul, a divisive issue that has also sharply split the population for over two years.

'Welcome to CHINA' sign greet Philippine officials in South China Sea

REUTERS

Thitu Island, South China Sea, Feb 23: As the Philippine Coast Guard plane descended toward the country's most strategically important outpost in the disputed South China Sea, passengers' phones lit up with a roaming alert: "Welcome to CHINA."

Among those on board were Senator Risa Hontiveros and Coast Guard spokesperson Jay Tarriela, both outspoken critics of Beijing's actions in the South China Sea.

After landing Saturday, they spoke to island residents to reaffirm that Thitu Island "is ours", even as Chinese Coast Guard vessels, a People's Liberation Army Navy ship, and some Chinese fishing boats lingered within sight of the shore.

China's persistent presence has pushed islanders, who rely on those waters for their liveli-

hood, farther from the sea they once freely navigated.

At just 37 hectares (0.37 sq km), the coral-fringed Thitu, known to Filipinos as Pag-asa, or "Hope", is the largest and most prized of the nine Philippines-held features in the Spratly archipelago, located 450 km (280 miles) from the mainland.

Its 400-odd residents live modestly, far from the trappings of city life. Yet their quiet presence reinforces the Philippines' claim of sovereignty at a time of mounting Chinese pressure.

The visit by Hontiveros and Tarriela, coming as rhetoric on both sides has sharpened, is likely to draw scrutiny from Beijing and add strain to an already tense territorial dispute.

"We will never give up the Kalayaan Island Group, including Pag-asa," Hontiveros told residents, referring to the portion of the Spratly Islands



that Manila claims and administrators, including Thitu.

Both officials have been repeatedly singled out in Chinese Embassy statements and online messaging campaigns, part of a broader effort to

shape narratives about the South China Sea.

Manila's appointment of a dedicated foreign ministry spokesperson on maritime affairs reflects a growing sensitivity within government ranks

- GHippine officials visit Thitu amid Chinese presence
Roaming message says "Welcome to CHINA"
Filipino fishermen say China stops them fishing best waters
China says its actions lawful, professional
China claims most of South China Sea despite 2016 Hague ruling

South China Sea, despite the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague invalidating the claims in a 2016 ruling.

Just 14 nautical miles from Thitu, Subi Reef is one of seven artificial islands China has built in the Spratlys to support its sovereignty claims. Some artificial islands are equipped with surface-to-air missiles, aircraft hangars and runways.

Approaches by the Chinese Coast Guard have become so routine that Filipino fishermen now cast their nets in less productive waters to avoid confrontation.

China's actions in the South China Sea, which have included water-cannoning and close-quarter manoeuvring of ships, have resulted in collisions and injury to Philippine crews.

China has maintained its actions are lawful and professional, accusing Manila's vessels of intruding into its territory.

as China's physical and informational pressure intensifies.

'WE ARE NOT AFRAID'

On Pag-asa, China's pressure is not abstract.

Among those listening to Hontiveros was 45-year-old fisherman Rando Asiado, who said the long-standing presence of Chinese vessels has kept him from venturing to rich fishing grounds near Subi Reef and the nearby Sandy Cays.

China claims most of the



DIGITAL LENDING: AIRTEL TO INVEST \$2.2BN
Bharti Airtel will invest Rs 200 billion (\$2.2 billion) in its financial arm over the next few years, India's second-largest mobile carrier by number of users said Monday, as it steps up its push into digital lending. The capital will be infused into its subsidiary, Airtel Money, which received a non-banking financial company (NBFC) license from the Reserve Bank of India February 13



of the day **QUOTE**

With the increasing use of Artificial Intelligence and big data analytics in the sector, the capacity to tackle inherent complexities in the sector is getting strengthened

K SANJAY MURTHY | COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL

As global supply chains are redesigned, India must anchor them, not only with scale, but with quality, reliability and innovation. Trust will define leadership in the coming decades

JP NADDA | UNION MINISTER

We propose to carry out a comprehensive review of the SEBI (Portfolio Managers) Regulations, 2020, so that the framework remains effective, adaptable, and aligned with evolving market dynamics

TUHIN KANTA PANDEY | CHAIRMAN, SEBI

SHORT TAKES

Government extends deadline for CBM

New Delhi: The government has extended the deadline for submission of bids under the special coal-bed methane (CBM) and small discovered fields bid rounds, giving investors additional time to factor in recent changes to oil and gas regulations. Bids for 13 blocks or areas offered for prospecting gas from below coal seams (CBM) in the Special CBM Bid Round will now close March 3, according to the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). The blocks offered for bidding are in Jharkhand, West Bengal (one block each), Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha (two blocks each), and Telangana (three blocks). Alongside, nine contract areas, made up of smaller oil and gas discoveries that were previously considered economically unviable to produce, are on offer for bidding in the fourth round of Discovered Small Fields (DSF), deadline for which now is March 18, according to the DGH.

Apparel exports ignore headwinds

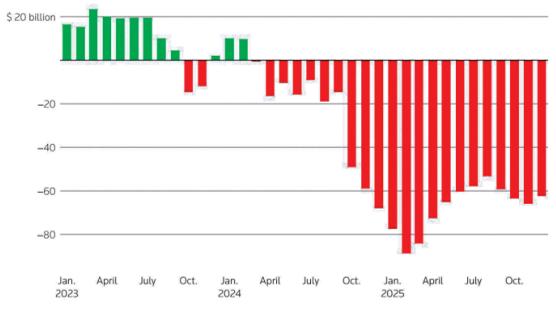
New Delhi: India's apparel exports registered a moderate growth of 1.6 per cent during April-January 2025-26 despite global headwinds and supply chain disruptions, AEPG said Monday. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPG) Chairman A Sakthivel said exports to several key markets have shown encouraging growth, including Italy (16 per cent), the UK (4.8 per cent), UAE (10.6 per cent), Saudi Arabia (18.5 per cent), Germany (8.7 per cent), and Spain (7.1 per cent). Strong performance has also been recorded in Japan, Iceland, and Australia. "Despite global headwinds, geopolitical uncertainties, and ongoing supply chain disruptions, the sector registered a moderate export growth of 1.6 per cent during April-January 2025-26 compared to the corresponding period of the previous financial year," he said.

Torrent Group enters diagnostics vertical

New Delhi: Torrent Group Monday announced its foray into the diagnostics vertical. The company commenced operations of the country's largest National Reference Laboratory in Navi Mumbai, marking the group's expansion into diagnostics services through a reference-led model. The National Reference Laboratory spans over 1 lakh square feet and supports 15 diagnostic disciplines and more than 3,500 test modalities covering preventive, routine and specialised testing, the Gujarat-based group said.

Rupee support tool turns pressure point

RBI's sizeable forward book



Source: RBI

\$7 billion NDF maturities come due

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 23: The Indian central bank's reliance on using the non-deliverable forward market to manage rupee volatility is expected to weigh on the currency, with contracts worth at least \$7 billion due to mature this week and more due in the coming weeks, four bankers said. Selling dollar/rupee forwards in the NDF market lets the Reserve Bank of India support the rupee without an immediate drain on foreign exchange reserves or domestic liquidity. However, when these contracts, typically of one-month to 3-month tenor, mature, counterparties may need to buy dollars in the market. This puts pressure on the rupee unless the central bank decides to roll them over, bankers said. They did not want to be identified since they were not

RBI's forward book maturities may pressure rupee, bankers say

NDF contracts worth at least \$7 billion set to mature this week

Durable inflows could reduce RBI's forward positions, alleviate rollover pressure

authorised to speak publicly. "The pressure on account of forward book maturities could persist for the next couple of months," said Dhiraj Nim, an economist at ANZ. "Combined with tepid foreign portfolio flows, alongside some pressure on India's current account position, it seems to be a recipe for gradual depreciation of the spot rupee." Maturities are expected to remain high in March, reflecting the RBI's forward book and its intervention in recent sessions to keep the rupee from sliding past

91. Central bank data showed that December 31, the outstanding forward contracts totalled more than \$20 billion in the up-to-one-month tenor, \$5.9 billion in one to three months, and \$4.3 billion in three months to one year. Analysts have repeatedly warned that the size of the RBI's forward book, which includes NDF and onshore forward contracts, will be a source of pressure on the rupee or, during favourable conditions, lead to its underperformance against Asian peers.

The RBI did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment on concerns that NDF interventions could contribute to maturity-related pressures on the rupee. The rupee has remained under broad and persistent pressure for much of the past several months, punctuated only by brief periods of stability. It dropped 5% in 2025 and was among the worst-performing Asian currencies.

The persistent weakness has required the RBI to intervene frequently both via direct dollar sales and forward market intervention. Due to RBI's intervention via onshore forwards and NDF, the size of the central bank's short FX forward book stood at \$62.3 billion December 31. Each round of forward intervention adds to the outstanding stock of contracts that will mature later, creating a rolling dynamic in which support measures can weigh on the currency again at maturity.

A "durable" revival in inflows would help break this dynamic, a banker said.

THREE-WEEK HIGH

Safe-haven demand: Silver, gold surge 3%

GOLD & SILVER



Spot gold prices for 24-carat in Delhi for per 10 grams. Silver prices are in national capital for per kg. Source: All India Sarafa Association

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Precious metal prices climbed 3 per cent in the national capital Monday, with silver surging to Rs 2.7 lakh per kilogram and gold advancing to Rs 1.6 lakh per 10 grams, due to strong safe-haven demand amid growing global trade uncertainties after the US Supreme Court ruling against Trump's tariffs.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver jumped Rs 8,000, or 3.03 per cent, to Rs 2,72,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from Friday's closing level of Rs 2,64,000 per kg. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also increased by Rs 3,300, or 2.06 per cent, to Rs 1,62,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,59,500 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

Silver and gold extended bullish momentum Monday, with both metals trading at a three-week high, supported by renewed safe-haven demand. The rally came following a landmark US Supreme Court ruling against Trump's tariffs, which triggered sharp cross-asset volatility and prompted investors to seek safe-haven

Gold prices have risen amid Trump's tariff turmoil and uncertainty surrounding their legality. Even if the Supreme Court views the tariffs as invalid, ongoing trade tensions may still pressure the US dollar and support bullion

HAREESH V | HEAD OF COMMODITY RESEARCH, GEOJIT INVESTMENTS

assets, Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In response to the ruling, US President Donald Trump swiftly moved to preserve his trade agenda by announcing an increase in the global tariff rate from 10 per cent to 15 per cent Saturday.

Gandhi added that the sudden policy shift has intensified global uncertainty, with several governments across the globe reacting cautiously -- some reaffirming trade agreements, while others wait for Washington's next steps. In the international market, spot silver gained 1.79, or 2.2 per cent, to \$86.50 per ounce, while gold was trading nearly 1 per cent higher at \$5,151 per ounce.

SBI organises friendly cricket match



CUTTACK: A friendly cricket match was organized by State Bank of India, Regional Office, Cuttack, at an open turf ground located in Trisulia. Teams representing SBI from Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Khurda, and Puri participated enthusiastically in the event. The Bhubaneswar Zone-11 team emerged as the champion of the tournament. The programme was graced by Prasant Kumar, DGM, SBI Bhubaneswar Administrative Office, as the chief guest. He highlighted the importance of sports and physical exercise in maintaining a healthy balance amidst a busy work life. The event also witnessed active participation from local residents, who were welcomed by Asmin Anupam Praharaj, Regional Manager, SBI. He shared useful insights on maintaining good health and fitness and stressed the need for public awareness about protecting themselves from digital fraud. Participants were also informed about various banking services offered by SBI and their easy accessibility. During the programme, SBI employees voluntarily collected contributions to support underprivileged people residing in a nearby old-age home as part of a social welfare initiative. Employees of the SBI Regional Office actively coordinated and successfully managed the entire event.

Canara Bank conducts mega retail expo

BHUBANESWAR: Canara Bank, Circle Office Bhubaneswar has successfully conducted a 'Mega Retail Expo' at Hotel Pal Heights, Bhubaneswar. The retail expo was conducted with the objective of promoting various retail loan products such as Home Loans, Vehicle Loans, Personal Loans, Education Loans, and other related banking services. The event aimed at expanding our retail portfolio, generating quality leads, and enhancing customer engagement in the Bhubaneswar region. The programme witnessed encouraging participation from builders, automobile dealers, DSA (Direct Selling Agent) apart from branches in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack along with regional heads, retail section of Circle Office and members of the business community. The meeting was presided over by Suman Chakraborty, Circle Head, Canara Bank Circle Office Bhubaneswar and addressed the guests. Netra Mohan Patra, Deputy General Manager also attended the meeting and gave insights about the retail products offered by the bank. Key Outcomes of the Expo were Generation of substantial enquiries across retail segments, sourcing of fresh loan proposals with good business potential, strengthening of relationships with local builders and vehicle dealers and enhanced visibility and brand positioning in the local market.



Markets gain on US tariff relief, IT firms extend losses

REUTERS

Mumbai, Feb 23: Indian equity benchmarks rose Monday after the US Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs, but the gains were capped as persistent concerns over the disruption from AI kept IT shares under pressure.

While Trump has imposed a new temporary 15% tariff on imports from all countries, India has delayed plans to send a trade delegation to Washington this week, Reuters reported, citing a source in the trade ministry. The delegation had been set to leave for talks to finalise an interim trade deal with US tariffs on Indian goods set to be cut to 18%. The benchmark Nifty 50 closed 0.55% higher at 25,713, and the BSE Sensex added 0.58% to 83,294.66. The broader small-caps rose 0.3%, while mid-caps lost 0.4%. Thirteen of the 16 major sectors rose with heavy-weight fi-



nancials and state-owned banks adding 0.9% and 1.4%, respectively. The IT index lost 1.4%, taking its year-to-date drop to 16.7%. Jefferies downgraded six Indian IT companies, including TCS and Infosys, on concerns about likely structural changes to IT business due to AI tools. Infosys and Wipro dropped 1.9% each, while Mphasis and Coforge shed 2.7% and 3.9% respectively. IDFC First Bank tumbled 16.1% and was the biggest loser among Nifty 500 companies after the lender said it was investigating a suspected fraud of \$65 million by some employees involving accounts of government entities in the northern state of Haryana.

US tariffs: Exports face 10% levy for 150 days; uncertainty looms

US is a key export destination for Indian exporters, and uncertainties over import duties impact the sentiments of businesses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 23: Indian exports to the US will attract an additional 10 per cent tariff against 25 per cent currently for 150 days starting Tuesday after the American Supreme Court struck down the Trump administration's sweeping tariffs.

Exporters, however, said there is uncertainty among the trading community as US President Donald Trump has announced a hike in tariffs to 15 per cent, though no official order has been issued in this regard. Following a Supreme Court verdict against his earlier

sweeping tariffs last week, Trump February 21 imposed a 10 per cent tariff on all countries, including India, from February 24 for 150 days.

Within hours of issuing this order, Trump announced a hike in tariffs to 15 per cent.

"As per the current order, Indian goods will attract 10 per cent tariffs from February 24. But we are keeping our fingers crossed, as a new order for 15 per cent tariffs has not been issued by the US so far. But uncertainty is there," Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Director General Ajay Sahai said.

There is also confusion over these tariffs, as there is no clarity on what will happen after 150 days.

The 10 per cent levy will be over and above the existing MFN (most favoured nation) or import duties in the US. For instance, if a product faces a 5 per cent MFN duty, an



additional 10 per cent will be imposed, taking the effective duty to 15 per cent. Earlier, this was 5 plus 25 per cent. If 15 per cent will be notified, then the duty will be 5 plus 15 per cent. Yogesh Gupta, MD of Kolkata-based Megaa Moda and a major processor and exporter of seafood products, said that the reduction in the reciprocal

tariffs to 10 per cent will help us increase shipments in the American markets.

The removal of the 15 per cent uncertainty will give a clearer picture to exporters, he added.

In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda in his second term, the US Supreme Court last week ruled that the

We need to bring down the curtains on this tariff drama now. Clarity and certainty over these tariffs will help us in pushing exports to the US

SHARAD KUMAR SARAF | EXPORTER AND FOUNDER CHAIRMAN, TECHNOCRAFT INDUSTRIES

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 by using the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) of 1977.

The US had imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariff on India in August 2025. Later, an additional 25 per cent duty was imposed for buying Russian crude oil, taking the total tariffs on India to 50 per cent. India and the US, earlier this month, agreed on a framework to finalise an interim trade

deal, under which Washington will cut down the tariffs to 18 per cent. So far, the punitive 25 per cent has been removed. The remaining 25 per cent exists.

To sign and implement the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the framework has to be converted into a legal document.

To finalise the legal text for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, an Indian team was scheduled to meet its counterparts in Washington from February 23-26, 2026. But this visit has now been postponed.

During 2021-25, the US was India's largest trading partner in goods. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent of its imports, and 10.73 per cent of its bilateral trade. In 2024-25, bilateral trade totalled \$186 billion (\$86.5 billion in exports and \$45.3 billion in imports).

T20 WORLD CUP AXE HANGS OVER OUT-OF-FORM BATTERS

After Proteas humiliation, the Men in Blue will have to win the remaining two games with a good net run rate to keep their hopes of defending the T20 World Cup alive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 23: The Indian team management may drop at least one among three out-of-form batters and revisit its one dimensional template of playing too many left-handers in the top-order, indicated head coach Gautam Gambhir's understudies Ryan Ten Doeschate and Sitanshu Kotak.

South Africa thrashed India by 76 runs in a Super Eight clash of the T20 World Cup here Sunday and with two must-win games left, the team management might have to revisit the performances of Abhishek Sharma (15 runs in four games) and Tilak Varma (107 runs in five games at Strike Rate of 118).

TODAY'S CLASH
England vs Pakistan
Time: 7:00 pm

Not to forget, the designated finisher Rinku Singh's aggregate of 24 runs in 29 balls at a disastrous strike rate of 82.75 is embarrassing to say the least.

"If head coach and team management feels we need to do something different we will do things differently. Definitely a thought now comes if we have to change, what do we change and how do we change," batting coach Sitanshu Kotak didn't



make bones about the fact that the team is indeed in a spot.

Ten Doeschate was a bit more forthcoming when he admitted that it is indeed a "concern" that there are no back-up specialist batters in the squad and Sanju Samson, despite his wretched form, might be back in the mix.

The logic could be bringing in a right hander to break the monotony.

"You stick with the guys you you feel have performed really well over the last 18 months and maybe shy of a few runs now? Or do we twist and bring Sanju, who's also a fantastic player and obviously helps tactically with having a right hander at the top of the order," Ten Doeschate also echoed Kotak's sentiments but with more definitive answer that changes could be on cards.

"I'm sure that (Samson's inclusion) will be a talking point over the next few days going into these two very important games (Zimbabwe and West Indies)."

Ten Doeschate feels that Rinku, coming in at Nos 7 or 8, hasn't really helped his cause as it has been an incredibly difficult position to bat on.

"Rinku, I think that num-

Now we have reached a point where we need to think if we need to do something different or stick with same combination

SITANSHU KOTAK | BATTING COACH, INDIA

LEAN PATCH		
Players	Runs	Innings
Abhishek Sharma	15	4
Tilak Varma	107	5
Rinku Singh	24	5

ber seven, eight position has become incredibly tough in T20 cricket. You look where he walked in against Namibia, he's had to turn down the single three or four times, so yes, it looks like he scored two or eight balls, whatever.

"And then he comes in in a pretty hopeless situation again tonight, and he's opted to go for the boundary and try to get us as close as we can, and on a wicket that holds a little bit, that can happen. So he hasn't had the best opportunities, but that's the nature of the position

WI pulverise Zim

Mumbai: Shimron Hetmyer blasted a scintillating 85 off 34 balls as West Indies defeated Zimbabwe by 107 runs in a T20 World Cup Super Eights fixture here Monday. Sent in to bat, Hetmyer produced the fastest fifty in T20 World Cups for West Indies, smashing seven sixes and seven fours to power WI to the second-highest total in the history of T20 World Cup, a massive 254-6. In reply, Zimbabwe folded for 147 in 17.4 overs with No 8 batter Brad Evans top scoring with a 21-ball 43. Gudakesh Motie (4/28) and Akeal Hosen (3/28) shared seven wickets for WI. Earlier, Hetmyer added 122 off 52 balls with Romario Powell (59). After the two departed, Sherane Rutherford (31) and Romario Powell (21) piled up further agony on the Zimbabwe bowlers.

as well. And we're at the phase now where it's only performances that are going to talk. There's no point talking about rhythm in nets or how guys are feeling or what they're not feeling.

"It's time to pull our sleeves up and get performance out of all the players and that's the challenge for the staff along with the players now to regroup and put in a big effort leading up to the next game against Zimbabwe," Ten Doeschate got down to the brass tacks of the matter.

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Men in Blue seek redemption

Winless India will look for revenge against Spain after gritty draw with Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hobart, Feb 23: The Indian men's hockey team, after a prolonged slump in the FIH Pro League, will look to turn the tide when it takes on Spain in the reverse fixture Tuesday, drawing confidence from hard-earned lessons in the gritty stalemate against Australia.

India have endured a tough run in the nine-team tournament, losing five and drawing one across the two legs in Rourkela and Hobart. The mounting defeats have intensified scrutiny on coach Craig Fulton, who is facing growing criticism over the team's dismal showing.

However, there was a silver lining for India, who also made a mid-tournament captaincy change after regular skipper Harmanpreet Singh pulled out of the Hobart leg for personal reasons, with young midfielder Hardik Singh stepping in.

They held the Kookaburras to a 2-2 draw in regulation time before losing 4-5 in the shoot-out, earning their first point of the campaign.

Against Spain, who beat them 2-0 in the opening game Saturday, India will hope to script a resurgence - especially recalling their win over the Spaniards in the bronze-medal match at the 2024 Summer Olympics.

The two sides have shared a competitive rivalry over the years with results swinging both ways, and India will be eager to build on that history to regain momentum.

With Amit Rohidas and Jugraj Singh handing India a 2-0 lead against Australia, the familiar issue of conceding late goals resurfaced as the hosts clawed back and sealed the contest in a penalty shoot-out.



Currently at eighth position with only one point, India's immediate goal is to climb the table, currently led by Belgium (8 games, 22 points), Australia (7 games, 20 points) and Argentina (8 games, 17 points)

Still, the fightback offered a significant morale boost after India were swept aside in all four matches in Rourkela, including a crushing 0-8 defeat by Argentina.

Shilanand Lakra too showed flashes of brilliance, his sharp run and reverse-hit beating the Australian goalkeeper before the effort was ruled out for a back-stick infringement. Young Aditya Lalage also made a strong impression.

From here, India can at best look to salvage some pride as

they sit eighth in the nine-team FIH Pro League table with just one point from six matches.

Pakistan are the only side below them, having endured a controversy-hit campaign in Australia and at home. They have lost all eight matches so far and are yet to open their account.

This will be India's penultimate match of the Hobart leg, followed by a clash against Australia Wednesday. The action then shifts to Europe in June, where India will play in the Netherlands, Belgium and England.

Currently at eighth position with only one point, India's immediate goal is to pick up points and climb the table, currently led by Belgium (8 games, 22 points), Australia (7 games, 20 points) and Argentina (8 games, 17 points).

A strong showing in the FIH Pro League will be crucial ahead of a year that includes the Asian Games in Japan, which doubles as the Los Angeles Olympics qualifying tournament, serving as a key benchmark for team selection

KIWG 2026: Army makes rousing start

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gulmarg, Feb 23: Army made an emphatic start to the Gulmarg leg of the Khelo India Winter Games, winning three of the five gold medals at stake here Monday.

CRPF and Himachal Pradesh also finished among the gold medals on the first day.

It was not a day for the favourites as veterans like Bhavani Thekkada Nanjunda of Karnataka and Aanchal Thakur of Himachal Pradesh were usurped by skiers who have been doing well in the national circuit.

Young Jiah Aryan, all of 17 and one of India's upcoming talents in Alpine skiing from Karnataka, won a bronze in her second Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG).

Jiah lined up against seniors like Aanchal and Sandhya Thakur, who have represented India at the Asian Winter Games in Harbin China last February. Himachal Pradesh's Sandhya beat Aanchal in a tight race on the Kongdoori slopes.

It was an emotional day for CRPF's Kajal Kumari Rai, who won the gold in the 15km Nordic skiing (cross-country) for women at the Gulmarg Golf Course. Kajal relegated hot-favourite Bhavani to the bronze in a brilliant finish.

The Meghalaya-born Kajal dedicated her gold to her father who died last year in February.

CRPF's Renu Danu won the silver. Bhavani has won a hat-trick of gold medals in KIWG 2025.

Army's Sunny Singh won the day's first gold medal in the men's sprint in Nordic skiing. Sunny has been winning medals for Army at the KIWGs on a regular basis and Monday, the Kathua skier, who has trained at the High Altitude Warfare School in Gulmarg, led an Army 1-2-3 in the opening event before the inauguration ceremony took place on the Golf Course.

ADCA T20I ASIA CUP

Last-ball drama as India edge SL



POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 23: India clinched a tense and hard-fought victory over Sri Lanka in an exciting ADCA T20I Asia Cup encounter at the Barabati Stadium here Monday, showcasing composure under pressure in a match that remained evenly balanced until the final overs.

Winning the toss, India opted to bat first and posted a competitive total of 164 for 8 in their allotted 20 overs, built around a steady middle-order performance. Santosh KM anchored the innings with a responsible knock of 42 runs off 40 balls, while Sai Akash and skipper Virender Singh provided stability at the top.

Pranil More added valuable

late runs to push the total to a defensible score on a surface that offered assistance to both pace and spin. Sri Lanka's bowlers, particularly S Maduranga and Asanka Manjula, bowled disciplined spells and claimed timely wickets to restrict India from posting a bigger total.

In response, Sri Lanka fought valiantly but fell agonisingly

short, finishing at 163 for 8 in 20 overs. Dinuka Sachin led the chase with an aggressive 40 off 29 balls, while Alanrose Kalep's brisk 49 off 30 deliveries kept Sri Lanka in contention deep into the innings, supported by contributions from Gimadu L Malkam.

The post-match presentation ceremony was graced by chief guests Susant Kumar Mohanty, Journalist and current State Information Commissioner and Sumit Jain, President of ADCA and IDCA.

The Indian captain credited his teammates for their collective effort, described the contest as extremely tough, and said the team would plan carefully for the final.

The Player of the Match, Yashwanth Naidu, reflecting on his performance, revealed that when the team was under pressure, the captain entrusted him with the responsibility to bowl, and he dedicated the success of his spell to the collective support and teamwork of his fellow players.

OFC to lock horns with Inter Kashi



RISHABH PAREKH, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 23: Welcoming back the Juggernauts for their first home game after a hiatus of the Indian Super League (ISL), a press meet was held at the Kalinga Stadium here Monday. Odisha FC will start their campaign against debutants Inter Kashi Tuesday.

Odisha FC captain Carlos Delgado along with the new head coach TG Purushothaman shared few words on the return of ISL to the state.

The Spanish captain Carlos,

known for his defensive ability, who has been with the club since the 2019-20 season said, "It's been a difficult time for the club since we last played a game in April. When we heard we would be coming back home, we were really happy."

When asked about preparations for their upcoming game, Purushothaman added, "We are looking forward to face Inter Kashi and will not underestimate them. We have a bunch of new promising players for this season that have added more stability to the team."

Milan Cortina Olympics: Arrivederci, games of ice

TWIN MILAN AND CORTINA OLYMPIC CAULDRONS ARE EXTINGUISHED, SIGNALING THE END OF WINTER GAMES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Verona (Italy), Feb 23: The Milan Cortina Olympics ended as the twin flames in co-host cities Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo were extinguished during a closing ceremony inside the ancient Verona Arena, roughly mid-distance between the far-flung mountain, valley and city venues that made these the most spread-out Winter Games ever.

In declaring the 2026 Games over, International Olympic Committee President Kirsty Coventry told local organizers that they "delivered a new kind of winter games and you set a new, very high standard for the future."

The next Winter Games will be held in neighboring France, which received the Olympic flag in the official handover earlier in the ceremony. Following the same spread-out model, the 2030 Winter Games will stage events in the Alps and Nice, on the Mediterranean Sea, while speedskating will be held either in Italy or the Netherlands.

A total of 116 medal events were held in eight Olympic sports across 16 disciplines, including the debut of ski mountaineering this year, over the course of 17 days of competition. With the final events wrapping up just hours before the ceremony, the 50-kilometer mass start men's and



women's cross country medals were awarded by Coventry inside the Arena.

"Your outstanding performance united Italians everywhere and played a fundamen-

tal role in the success of the games," Giovanni Malago, the president of the Milan Cortina Foundation told the Italian athletes sitting behind him wearing headbands embla-

Host Italy won its highest Winter Olympic tally ever with 30 medals - 10 gold, six silver and 14 bronze, crushing the previous record of 20 set at the Lillehammer Olympics in 1994

zoned with 'Italia.'

In a key moment, the Olympic flame encased in a Venetian glass vessel was carried into the Arena by Italian gold medalists from the 1994 Lillehammer Games. The Olympic rings illuminated in white appeared high on the stone stairs behind the stage, flanked by national flags,

when one raised the flame in the center of the stage.

This was the first Olympics for Coventry, a two-time Olympic champion in swimming, who watched much of the ceremony alongside Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

Some 12,000 spectators joined the athletes and officials for the closing ceremony, which was much more intimate affair than the opening ceremony starring Mariah Carey and Andrea Bocelli in Milan's San Siro soccer stadium, attended by more than 60,000 people.

The closing ceremony concluded with the Olympic flames extinguished at the unprecedented two cauldrons in Milan and Cortina, viewed in Verona via video link. A light show substituted fireworks, which are not allowed in Verona, to protect animals from being disturbed.