



Manushi's wish

Actor Manushi Chhillar reveals one change she would make to improve the world if given the opportunity

LEISURE | P2



Modi in Israel

PM Modi arrives in Israel for a two-day visit that both countries have cast as a chance to deepen relations

INTERNATIONAL | P10



\$68.6bn IT rout

Shares have lagged their peers so far in February, pressured by a \$68.6 billion rout in the market value of information technology stocks

BUSINESS | P11



All or nothing

India seek answers to top-order worries in must-win second Super 8s game against Zimbabwe in T20 World Cup

SPORTS | P12

SOLAR GLOOM

US slaps 126% countervailing duty on Indian solar imports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: The US has announced a preliminary countervailing duty of 125.87 per cent on imports of certain Indian solar goods, alleging that these products are unfairly subsidised by New Delhi.

The US has also announced different duties on the imports of 'Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells, Whether or Not Assembled into Modules' from Indonesia and Laos.

"On February 24, 2026, the US Department of Commerce announced its preliminary affirmative determinations in the countervailing duty investigations of crystalline silicon photovoltaic cells, whether or not assembled into modules (solar cells), from India, Indonesia, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Laos)," a US order has said.

These duties are over and above the 10 per cent tariffs announced by the Donald Trump administration on all countries from February 24.

According to the order, solar imports from India into the US increased to USD 792.6 million in 2024 from USD 83.86 million in 2022.

Unless postponed, the final determination in these CVD (countervailing duty) investigations is currently scheduled to be issued July 6, 2026. Commerce (department) is also conducting concurrent anti-dumping duty investigations of solar cells from India, Indonesia, and Laos, it said. Countervailing duties help companies to protect them from increase in subsidised imports.

India is taking a series of measures to promote renewable energy production in the country and reduce its import dependence. Solar energy is one of the key components in this. India is the world's third-largest solar power producer.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We've been giving the govt clean chits all the time. This is how they reciprocate!

SC REBUKES; NCERT WITHDRAWS

Will not allow anybody on earth to defame the institution, said the CJI as the top court took suo motu cognisance of the matter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant Wednesday strongly objected to a chapter on judicial corruption in the NCERT's Class VIII social science curriculum, prompting the syllabus-setting body to withdraw the contentious textbook from its website.

Later, NCERT apologised for inclusion of "inappropriate material", saying the error was unintentional. The book will be rewritten in consultation with appropriate authorities, it said. The Education Ministry has directed NCERT to hold circulation of the controversial textbook.

A three-judge bench comprising the CJI and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took suo motu cognisance of the objectionable statements



'CORRUPTION IN JUDICIARY' ROW

about the judiciary in the new textbook after senior advocate Kapil Sibal, alongside Abhishek Singhvi, mentioned the matter for urgent consideration.

The NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) social science textbook for Class VIII says corruption, a massive backlog of cases, and the lack of an adequate number of judges are among the challenges faced by the judicial system.

After stern words by the Supreme Court that it will not allow anyone on earth to tarnish

who approved it.

NCERT Chairman Dinesh Prasad Saklani did not respond to calls and messages on the issue. Another top official at the council refused to comment, saying the matter was sub judice.

The government sources said while the NCERT is an autonomous body, the officials responsible for adding chapters should have applied their minds. If the issue of corruption was to be included in the textbook, it should have been about all three organs (the executive, the legislature and the judiciary), they said.

"We are very disturbed as members of this institution to find that children of Class VIII are being taught about corruption in the judiciary. It is part of the NCERT book. We have great stake in the institution; it (the chapter) is entirely scan-

dalous. We have the copies of the book," Sibal said in court.

"I can assure you all that I am fully aware of this," the CJI said, adding that he received various calls and messages and many high court judges were "perturbed". The CJI told Sibal he had already passed an order taking suo motu cognisance of the issue. "I will not allow anyone on earth to taint the integrity of the institution and defame the institution. At any cost, I will not permit it. Howsoever high it may be, the law will take its course. I know how to deal with it," a visibly irked CJI said.

Singhvi raised the issue of the NCERT adopting a selective approach and said it presumed that there was no corruption elsewhere. "There was not a word about corruption in bureaucracy, politics, public life and other institutions."

Maoist leader kills aide over surrender bid

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani/Daringbadi, Feb 25: A suspected internal rift among the cadres in Kandhamal district has come to light as a senior Maoist leader allegedly killed his aide for attempting to surrender before police, officials said.



The decomposed body of Anwesh, a member of the KKBN (Kandhamal-Kalahandi-Boudh-Nayagarh) divisional committee of the banned CPI (Maoist), was recovered from the Pakari reserve forest near Kutimaha village under Daringbadi police limits.

According to Kandhamal SP Harisha BC, Anwesh and some of his associates were in contact with police and were reportedly keen to surrender. However, this move was reportedly opposed by Shukru, a state committee member of the Maoists and one of the district's most wanted Maoist leader.

Police said that Shukru, along with a few associates, killed Anwesh January 29 and buried his body in the forest. The killing of Anwesh was aimed at creating fear among other Maoists who were considering their surrender, they added. The body has been sent to Berhampur for post-mortem and a murder case (58/26) has been registered.

Record ₹4.27cr in cash seized from officer's flat



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Stacks of notes packed in trolley bags, totalling over ₹4.27 crore, were allegedly recovered from the Bhubaneswar flat of Deputy Director of Mines Debabrata Mohanty, who was arrested in a corruption case by the state Vigilance department Tuesday night, officials said Wednesday.

Vigilance Director Yeshwant Jethwa said this is the highest-ever cash seized by the anti-corruption agency in the state.

Bhubaneswar division's Vigilance SP Saroj Kumar Samal said that so far, cash worth ₹4.27 crore has been counted.

Mohanty was booked in a similar corruption case in 2009, and the trial against him is still going on at a court in Mayurbhanj district, he added.

Attacking the ruling BJP, state Congress president Bhakta Charan Das alleged that the recovery of the cash exposed the staggering scale of corruption flourishing right under the watch of the so-called dou-

ble-engine government in the state. Mohanty was apprehended while allegedly accepting a bribe of ₹30,000 from a licensed coal vendor in exchange for facilitating smooth operations, officials said.

Following his arrest, the Vigilance department conducted simultaneous searches at his Bhubaneswar flat, his parental house in Bhadrak district, and his office in Cuttack, and made the seizures, they said.

Additionally, ₹1.20 lakh in cash was recovered from Mohanty's office drawer, they added.

Other assets detected so far include a palatial double-storey house in Bhubaneswar and approximately 130 gram of gold.

Besides, there is a 2,400 sq ft plot in his name where a two-storied building is being constructed, officials said.

Mohanty has 10 bank accounts and lockers in his name. Those are also being verified, the SP said.

A case under the Prevention of Corruption Act has been registered, officials said.

Mohanty entered government service as a junior mining officer at a salary of ₹8,000 in 2004. He worked in Bolangir, Baripada, and Berhampur before being transferred to Cuttack, where he is posted at present, they said.

The previous highest cash seizure made by the agency was ₹3.4 crore, found at the residence of an assistant engineer in the Minor Irrigation Division in Ganjam district April 7, 2022.



BY THE HORNS: Participants attempt to subdue a bull during Jallikattu, the traditional bull-taming sport, at Jamal Mohamed College premises in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, Wednesday

SC relief for Soren

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Wednesday stayed the trial in money laundering case registered against Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi issued notice to the Enforcement Directorate on the plea of Soren in which he had sought quashing of the case. In his plea before the top court, Soren had also challenged the repetitive summons issued to him by the ED. Soren has challenged the recent Jharkhand High Court's decision refusing to quash the case against him.

Bill Gates apologises

NEW YORK: American tech entrepreneur Bill Gates has apologised to the staff at the Gates Foundation over his ties with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein but maintained that he did nothing illicit, according to a media report. The Microsoft co-founder also admitted that he had two affairs with Russian women and that he made mistakes that had cast a cloud over the philanthropic group while insisting he didn't participate in Epstein's crimes, The Wall Street Journal said in an exclusive report Tuesday.

Trump delivers longest-ever State of the Union speech

In the record-breaking address, Trump proclaimed a "turnaround for the ages," hailing a "roaring" economy and "plummeting" inflation while sharply attacking Democrats. The nearly two-hour speech underscored deep partisan divides, with Republicans offering repeated standing ovations as Democrats sat in largely silent protest, punctuated by jeers. Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger, delivering the rebuttal, accused Trump of using the stage to "lie, scapegoat, and distract," and called his tariffs reckless. Inside the chamber, Rep. Ilhan Omar interrupted the President's section on immigration, accusing his administration of "killing Americans", while Rep. Al Green displayed a protest sign that read "BLACK PEOPLE AREN'T APES". Some Democrats boycotted the event for a rival "A People's State of the Union," highlighting intensifying polarisation ahead of midterm elections



tion crackdown and an assertive foreign policy reshaping the global order. The annual address, mandated by the US Constitution to update lawmakers on the nation's condition, has evolved into a platform for presidents to outline policy priorities and appeal directly to voters.

Trump introduced several surprise guests, including military personnel, a former po-

litical prisoner freed after the ouster of Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, and members of the US men's Olympic gold medal-winning hockey team. In a made-for-television moment, he announced he would award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the team's goaltender, Connor Hellebuyck, drawing bipartisan applause. He also bestowed a Purple Heart on Na-

WB SIR officials thrashed on child-lifter suspicion

Cops, journo come to their rescue, get beaten

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jaleswar, Feb 25: Two poll officials on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) duty in West Bengal were brutally assaulted by villagers at Rajnagar village under this block and Raibania police limits in Balasore district on suspicion of being child lifters, sources said Wednesday.

The two officials, Sumit Hazra and Som Hansda, both bank employees deputed for election-related SIR duty in Baliagara block under Nayagram police in neighbouring West Bengal, had reportedly come to the Subarnarekha River near the border

village for a bath as they were off duty Wednesday. After bathing, the duo sat at a local shop where illagers questioned them about their identity. Growing suspicious during the conversation, some locals allegedly branded them as "child lifters" and began assaulting them.

Raibania IIC Champabati Soren, ASI Rameshwar Soren and other police personnel, along with local scribe Santosh Jena, rushed to the spot to rescue the officials. However, the mob allegedly did not spare them either. An investigation has been launched against those involved in the attack.

Washington, Feb 25: US President Donald Trump delivered the longest State of the Union address in American history Tuesday, speaking for about 100 minutes and surpassing the previous re-

leisure



CARDI B HITS BACK AT DETRACTORS

Rapper Cardi B is hitting back at the naysayers. The rapper has shut down the doubters who questioned her commitment after giving birth, proudly announcing that every stop on her tour has been packed out.

GARNER ON REALITIES OF CO-PARENTING

Hollywood actress Jennifer Garner has opened up about the realities of co-parenting with her former husband, Ben Affleck. She describes both the "loss" and the lessons that come with raising children across two households.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
A favourable day as any can be, says Ganesha. You are happy and content with what you have, and you've planned and are working towards what you want. A romantic date may prove interesting or throw up a controversy — decide where you want to take it.

TAURUS
There is every possibility that you will enjoy a good rapport with people around you, predicts Ganesha. You will think with your stomach today, craving for delicacies. Such a feeling might be because of repressed hunger. Something refreshingly different might be on the cards today, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
You will witness a marked improvement in your emotional quotient, says Ganesha. This change may either come through watching a film, listening to a song or just a simple insight. At the workplace, people will be lavishing praise on you for your excellent performance.

CANCER
There is a fat chance that you will take pleasure in the company of your close friends and relatives, predicts Ganesha. You may have an awesome time with your mate. There may be a few minor problems here and there, but your family will rally behind you and will help you in solving your problems.

LEO
It may be that the best daffodils bloom early in the morning, but good ideas can come any time of the day, says Ganesha. So spruce up your management skills, as you shall need them to help organise and cash in on the multitude of ideas that will bombard you today. Remember, says Ganesha, a good idea can change your life, just the way a good poem can help you win a wife!

VIRGO
A la Sisyphus, you may realise the futility of your efforts and constant failure in achieving success. But do not despair, says Ganesha. Recharge your imagination, inquisitiveness and intelligence and focus on your long-term goals, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
It sure is tiring to run with the herd. You may feel the desire to get away from the rat race at work today. Maybe it is the monotonous and stressful environment in office that is pushing you to your limits. But you may seek a new direction and lifestyle, one that is less taxing. Sometimes, it becomes imperative to make a few changes. Ganesha wishes you a cheerful best in your efforts today.

SCORPIO
There is a big black hole in your pocket, and it's high time you looked for remedies there. Loved ones will make use of your money as sultan cream — liberally and carelessly. You are most likely to burn the holes larger by spending lavishly, especially to impress a member of the opposite sex.

SAGITTARIUS
A la a phoenix from the ashes, find yourself reborn as the perfect family person. You are bound to shower love and care on your betrothed. Children, too, will receive your share of love, and they will love it. Enjoy spending quality time with your loved one, says Ganesha.

CAPRICORN
Work will suck you dry of your energy today, says Ganesha. Business rivals will go out of their way to mar your reputation and project you as incompetent. But to their dismay, you will prove to be way too smart to let them succeed in their sinister motives. In fact, you will hit where it hurts most and show your foes that you have all it takes to be a winner.

AQUARIUS
You have your head on your shoulders and feet on the ground. Congratulations! You've covered the first step to success. Step two, says Ganesha, involves an inquisitive mind and a questioning attitude.

PISCES
Your fount of creativity spouts everyday like there is no tomorrow. However, you need to be organised and in position to implement all those revolutionary ideas that occur to you in a jiffy, that lesser mortals take aeons to dream up.

Manushi speaks beyond fame

Sandeepa busts beauty myths

Mumbai: Actress and former beauty queen Manushi Chhillar revealed the one thing that she would like to change about the world if given the opportunity.

On Wednesday, Manushi conducted an AMA (Ask Me Anything) session on her official Instagram handle, during which she revealed that if she could have her way, she would love to make sure that everyone across the globe has access to basic resources required to lead a healthy life, such as clean food and water, healthcare, and clean air, etc.

The *Samrat Prithviraj* actress was asked by an Instagram user, "If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?" Replying to the question, Manushi said, "If I could change one thing about the world, it would be for everyone to have access to basic resources. Like, the bare minimum of what's needed, at least that. (sic)"

When another netizen asked her what she likes to do in her free time, she revealed that she thought she would be reading a book, but instead, she is using her free time conducting an AMA session on Insta.

Manushi keeps on engaging with her InstaFam with such lively interactive sessions on social media.

Mumbai: Actress Sandeepa Dhar opened up about the unrealistic beauty standards for females in the entertainment industry and whether they push actresses toward cosmetic procedures.

Speaking exclusively to this agency, Sandeepa stated that these cosmetic procedures are now not only limited to actresses, but common women who are not public figures are also undergoing the knife to feel confident about their appearance.

Sandeepa was asked, "Do you feel actresses face additional pressure to appear flawless? And do beauty standards sometimes push them toward cosmetic procedures?"

Answering the question, she said, "It is not limited to actresses anymore. Many young women who are not in the public eye are opting for cosmetic procedures. Earlier, people assumed only film stars did it, but today it has become common."

She added that these days every woman wishes to feel like the heroine of her own story. However, Sandeepa warned that it is a dangerous path if it stems from feeling inadequate.

"We are creating unrealistic beauty standards that make people believe they are not enough. This needs to change, and it will only change when our immediate circles—friends and family—encourage us to embrace ourselves as we are," she went on to explain.

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Mumbai: In a recent conversation with a fashion magazine, Rakul Preet Singh reflected on what she wants from the next chapter of her career. "Balance," she said, when asked what she is seeking now.

"I want to do commercial films, yes, but with parts that have soul. I've done the ornamental roles. I don't want to just be the girl who shows up for four scenes and four songs. I want to play women with an arc—whether she's a sharply dressed urban girl driving the story forward or a rooted small-town character fighting her own battle."

The comment signals a clear shift. Rakul is not dismissing mainstream cinema; she is recalibrating her place within it. For her, the emphasis is now on characters that evolve—roles that allow her to participate in the narrative rather than decorate it.

Then comes the caveat, delivered with a laugh. "Having said that, if Shah Rukh Khan calls and it's four scenes and four songs, I'll do it. Obviously."

The remark is light, but it also underlines her pragmatism. "Sometimes you do a film because of the maker you want to work with. Sometimes it's the co-actor. Sometimes it's the part. I don't want to box myself," she explained.

'BOMBAY IS AN EMOTION'

Mumbai: Indo-Swiss artiste Bombay Mami has released her new track *Energy (Chak Dum Dum)* last month, inspired by the Hindi song *Dil To Pagal Hai* from the 1997 film of the same name.

Born in Switzerland, raised in India and now based in London, she says her multicultural upbringing shapes her artistic voice.

While Bollywood remains a strong influence, she emphasises that her sound is distinctly blended. "My aesthetic is a fusion. It is rooted in South Asian heritage and influenced by 90s and early 2000s mixed with R&B."

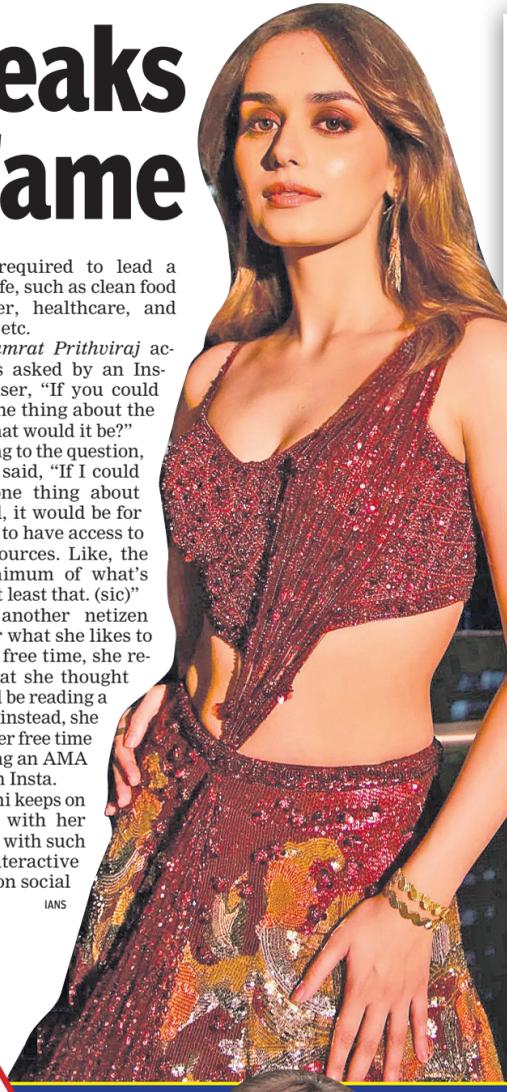
Explaining the story behind her stage name, she says, "Bombay Mami is my character. My alter ego. My power. She is

bold, unapologetic, deeply feminine, and rooted in culture. She takes up space without asking for permission."

She shares, "The identity was born about ten years ago in a very organic way. I was at the back of my parents' house in my village in Münsingen, Switzerland. A friend styled me in my dad's sherwani with my Air Force 1's. Tradition meeting street. Past meeting present. We needed a hashtag. She asked me my favourite city and I said Bombay," adding,

"Growing up, we always called Mumbai Bombay. It was an emotion. Mami came from people often thinking I was Latina."

AGENCIES



RAKUL ON CAREER'S NEXT CHAPTER

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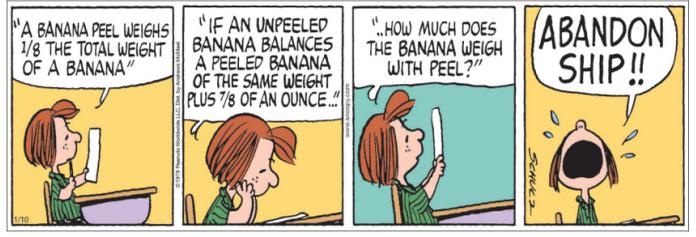
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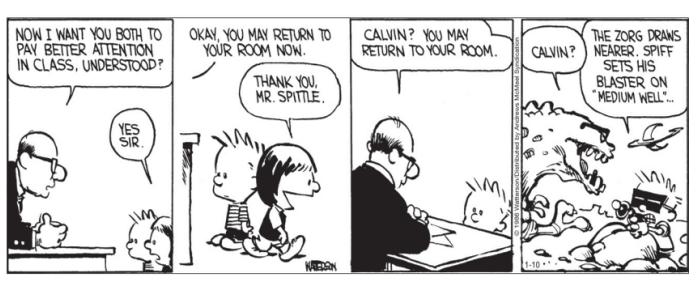
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PEANUTS



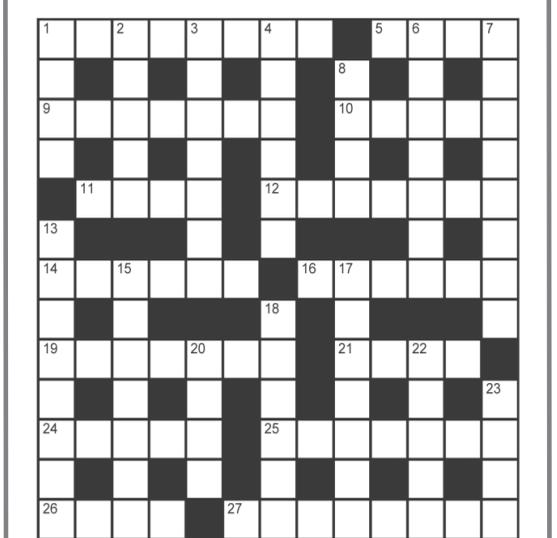
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Sot's future
 - 5 Fringe
 - 9 Melodious
 - 10 Small three-masted vessel
 - 11 Greek salad
 - 12 Boring
 - 14 Illness
 - 16 Horse-drawn cab
 - 19 Songbird
 - 21 Streetcar
 - 24 Undue speed
 - 25 Haggles
 - 26 Anchovy
 - 27 Aardvark
- Down**
- 1 Ship part
 - 2 Moxie
 - 3 Apple growing place
 - 4 Plaudits
 - 6 Questionable
 - 7 Attention getter (6,2)
 - 8 Canned
 - 13 Theatre blockbuster (5,3)
 - 15 Go-between
 - 17 Magazine op-ed
 - 18 Stockholm locale
 - 20 Marsh growth
 - 22 Masterful
 - 23 Belgian river

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.

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

SOLUTIONS

CROSSWORD

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

SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

₹1 crore for chariot of Lord Baladevjew

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The state government Wednesday approved a special financial assistance of ₹1 crore for construction of a new chariot for Rath Yatra of Lord Baladevjew in Kendrapara district.

A directive in this regard has been issued by the Law department through an official communiqué to the Commissioner of Endowments, it was learnt.

Responding to the development, Law, Works and Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said that the existing chariot was facing operational difficulties due to the deteriorating condition of its wheels over the past few years. "As a result, the chariot was unable to reach the Mausima Temple on schedule during the annual Rath Yatra, often causing delays of nearly two days," he said, adding that similar disruptions were also witnessed during the Bahuda Yatra.

"Keeping these issues in view and to ensure that no obstacles arise in the construction of a new chariot for Lord Baladevjew, the state government approved the special financial assistance of ₹1 crore. A separate directive in this regard has been issued by the Law department," Harichandan said.



FUN & FROLIC: Tourists participate in river rafting on the Ganga at Rishikesh, Uttarakhand, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

SC: Public figures in high offices cannot target a community

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Observing that fraternity serves as a critical element for national unity and social cohesion, the Supreme Court has said public figures holding high constitutional offices cannot target any particular community on the basis of religion, language, caste or region.

The SC said that nobody, including state and non-state actors, can vilify or denigrate any community through speeches, memes, cartoons or visual art.

The observations were made by Justice Ujjal Bhuyan in a separate judgment on a plea challenging release of Netflix crime thriller 'Ghooskor Pandat'.

"It is constitutionally impermissible for anybody, be it the State or non-State actors, through any medium, such as, speeches, memes, cartoons, visual arts etc. to vilify and denigrate any community. It will be violative of the Constitution to target any particular community on the basis of religion, language, caste or region by whoever he or she may be. This is particularly true for public figures occupying high constitutional office who have taken the solemn oath to uphold the Constitution," Justice Bhuyan wrote in a 39-page judgement.

RATNA BHANDAR INVENTORY LIKELY TO BEGIN IN MARCH 1ST WEEK: MIN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

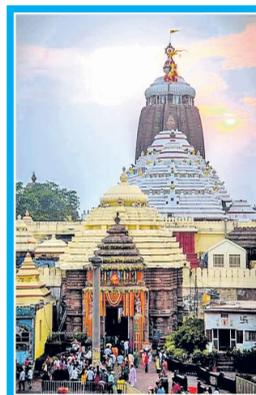
Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: A day after the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) announced that the state government had approved the 14-page standard operating procedure (SOP) for the inventory of valuables in the Ratna Bhandar of Srimandir in Puri, Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said Wednesday that the much-awaited exercise is likely to commence in the first week of March.

Speaking to reporters here, Harichandan said the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTMC), headed by Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb, and the SJTA will oversee the entire inventory process.

"The inventory exercise is likely to commence in the first week of March. The Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee will take the final decision on the exact date and time to begin the (inventory) process. It has to ensure that there is no disruption to the daily rituals of the deities or the darshan," Harichandan said.

The Orissa High Court had, January 27, asked the state government to complete the inventory and cross-verification within three months. The last inventory of the Ratna Bhandar was conducted in 1978.

The HC also directed the state government to table the Justice Raghubir Dash Commission



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PRITHIVIRAJ HARICHANDAN | LAW MINISTER

■ The Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee, headed by Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb, and the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration will oversee the entire inventory process

report on the missing keys to the inner chamber of the Ratna Bhandar before the Assembly during the ongoing Budget Session. Sources said the state government has allocated ₹5 crore in the Budget for the Ratna Bhandar inventory.

The SJTA has decided to constitute two panels – a supervisory committee to oversee and monitor the entire exercise, and a handling committee to carry out the crucial task of physically inventorying and appraising the Ratna Bhandar valuables.

According to SJTA Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee, the supervisory committee will be headed by the chief administrator. It will include two members from the previously formed high-level committee

on the Ratna Bhandar and one member from the Ratna Bhandar sub-committee. The panel will oversee the entire inventory process, Padhee said.

The handling committee will conduct the actual audit of gems and jewellery, he added. The panel will comprise the chief administrator, the high-level committee chairman, one servant from the temple managing committee, four additional servants, six empanelled goldsmiths from a public sector bank, two gemologists, two officials from the Reserve Bank of India, and two photographers.

Padhee said only three members of the supervisory committee and 10 members of the handling committee will be allowed inside the Ratna Bhandar during the inventory exercise.

PM-RAHAT in Odisha soon

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The state government is all set to roll out PM-RAHAT (Pradhan Mantri-Road Accident Victim Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment), a Central scheme aimed at ensuring cashless medical care for road accident victims, with Chief Secretary Anu Garg chairing a high-level meeting in this regard here Wednesday.

Under the scheme, any person hospitalised within 24 hours of a road accident will receive free treatment for up to seven days or a maximum of ₹1.5 lakh, funded entirely from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. The initiative is linked to the 112 Emergency Service to ensure rapid response at accident sites, with SMS alerts sent to hospitals and timely reimbursements for medical expenses. The meeting, also attended by senior transport, health and police officials, had a detailed discussion on institutional arrangements, monitoring, and grievance redressal mechanisms.

Garg highlighted that approximately 16 people die daily in road accidents, emphasising the government's priority to reduce this number. "PM-RAHAT's immediate hospitalisation and treatment provisions are expected to significantly lower fatalities," she stated.

Officials were advised to ensure preparedness at the district level and conduct awareness campaigns to make the public aware of the scheme.

Token validity for paddy procurement extended



The paddy procurement drive for this season will continue till March 31, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said

The state government has procured 63,65,000 metric tonnes of paddy so far. It is prepared to purchase up to 80,00,000 metric tonnes of paddy, surpassing previous records

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The state government Wednesday announced a 15-day extension of token validity to help farmers who have registered for paddy procurement.

In a video message, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW) Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said that the state government has procured 63,65,000 metric tonnes of paddy so far. "Districts like Bargarh and Sambalpur have completed nearly 95 per cent of their procurement," he said.

The state government is prepared to purchase up to 80,00,000 metric tonnes of paddy, surpassing previous records, the minister added.

The state government has already transferred over ₹17,000 crore directly into the bank accounts of farmers, he said, adding that payments are be-

ing processed within 48 hours of procurement to ensure financial liquidity for them.

"The procurement drive for this season will continue till March 31. District Collectors have been given the authority to extend token validity by 15 days to ensure that every registered farmer has the opportunity to sell their crops without hassle," he said. He added that paddy procurement is being monitored in real time through a central command centre.

Patra emphasised that no farmer in the state will face hurdles due to delays, logistical issues, or other problems, ensuring smooth sales at the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

The decision comes amid reports of procurement slowdowns and criticism from the Opposition. The move is expected to benefit thousands of farmers during the current marketing season.

ED attaches Anil Ambani's ₹3,716cr house in Mumbai

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) Wednesday said it has attached Reliance Group chairman Anil Ambani's Mumbai house, 'Abode', worth ₹3,716 crore under the anti-money laundering law.

The attachment comes a day before Ambani, 66, is expected to appear before the agency here for his second round of questioning Thursday in a case linked to the alleged bank loan fraud involving Reliance Communications (RCOM).

The luxurious house, which is stated to be 66-metre high with 17 floors, is located in the Pali Hill area of Mumbai.

A provisional order has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) to attach the multi-storey house in the case linked to an alleged bank fraud by Ambani's group company RCOM, it said in a statement.

It stated that the value of the attached asset was ₹3,716.83 crore. A part of this property, worth ₹473.17 crore, was similarly attached by the ED in November, 2025.

An email sent by PTI to the Reliance Group seeking comment on the development remained unanswered.

J'khand crash: Plane had no cockpit voice or flight data recorders



New Delhi: The nearly 40-year-old Beechcraft C90A aircraft that crashed in Jharkhand Monday, killing seven people, did not have cockpit voice or flight data recorders, according to DGCA. The mandatory requirement for an aircraft to have cockpit voice and flight data recorders was not in place when the ill-fated aircraft was issued an airworthiness certificate in 1987. On February 23, Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd's Beechcraft C90A aircraft VT-AJV, operating as an air ambulance from Ranchi to Delhi, crashed soon after takeoff. Five people and two crew members onboard died in the accident that happened in the forested area near Simaria in Jharkhand's Chatra district. A senior DGCA official said the twin-turboprop plane was manufactured in 1987, and its airworthiness review certificate was valid till January 20, 2027. In what could pose hurdles for investigators in probing the factors that could have led to the crash, the aircraft did not have a black box. Black box, which refers to the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Flight Data Recorder (FDR), records crucial data about an aircraft.

'Jaws' harpoon gun, 'Star Wars' treasures lead LA auction

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Los Angeles, Feb 25: A harpoon gun from 'Jaws', a jacket worn by 'The Terminator', and a 'Star Wars' lightsaber hilt and C-3PO head are among the eye-catching items to be sold at auction next month.

The collection of around 1,550 pieces of film and TV history will go under the hammer over three days from March 25, with in-room bidding on the first day only at the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles (LA).

From props to costumes, a selection of the memorabilia will also go on show for a day — March 11 — at The Maybourne Beverly Hills hotel.

The lots, which also include the so-called Marauder's Map from the 'Harry Potter' films, have a combined pre-sale estimate of \$9 million, according to Propstore, the auctioneers

staging the sale.

It noted that buyers from around the world, who increasingly utilise online bidding, were forging a new global collectors market.

"We're seeing 20 to 30 per cent more engagement, more registration, more people bidding," Ibrahim Faraj, Propstore's UK consignments manager, explained at a media preview of some British-based items before they headed to California.

"It's growing bigger and it's the new, modern thing people are collecting now."

'Star Wars' history

The fibreglass C-3PO head worn by 'Star Wars' stalwart Anthony Daniels in 'The Empire Strikes Back' (1980) is near the top of the pricing charts, with an estimate of \$350,000 to \$700,000.

Featuring illuminated eyes



A gallery assistant poses with a 'Light-Up C-3PO Head' from 'Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back' at a preview by memorabilia auction house Propstore in Rickmansworth, near London

in the film, and with original wiring in the right socket, this particular C-3PO head boasts several unique features including a forehead antenna.

"These things rarely come up... so it's quite exciting," Faraj said.

Another 'Star Wars' piece of memorabilia on offer is the

lightsaber hilt from 'The Force Awakens', which is valued at up to \$100,000.

"This is no ordinary lightsaber," he noted, branding it 'the Skywalker' version as it was used by Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) and Rey (Daisy Ridley).

They rediscover it in the 2015 instalment after prior genera-

tions wield it — albeit another model — in earlier franchise films.

"It's arguably one of the most important pieces in 'Star Wars' history," Faraj argued.

'Absolutely brilliant'

The harpoon gun wielded by Quint (Robert Shaw) and Matt Hooper (Richard Dreyfuss) in Steven Spielberg's 1975 favourite 'Jaws' is expected to generate similar buzz.

Estimated to fetch up to \$500,000, it is being offered alongside Quint's Fenwick fishing rod and reel, which featured during the film's early shark encounter scenes.

The rod is priced at up to \$150,000, with Propstore branding the two props 'the most significant artefacts to ever surface from the movie' at auction.

The jacket from the 1984 cult classic 'The Terminator' will require similarly deep pockets,

with a price estimate of \$75,000 to \$150,000.

It was worn during the first half of the film, after the T-800 cyborg steals and wears it through several violent sequences.

Featuring a leather collar, metal chains over the left shoulder, and metal studs on the back, it has been heavily distressed with stage blood, rips, mock bullet holes, and burns.

Two top lots from Ridley Scott's 'Gladiator' (2000) will also be offered, including the helmet and mask worn by Maximus (Russell Crowe) in his arena battles. That is predicted to go for up to \$250,000.

Meanwhile, the rare Marauder's Map joins other 'Harry Potter' movie props in the auction and is expected to fetch up to \$80,000.

"It pops up, it opens out, it's absolutely brilliant," Faraj said.



FRESH FROM FARM: Farmers sort freshly harvested baby corn at OUAT farm land in Bhubaneswar, Wednesday

PICT: BHAKSH NAYAK

One-day training on AI for Works dept officials

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: In a significant step towards embracing emerging technologies, Works department organised a one-day training programme on use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for its officers and staff under the guidance of Law, Works and Excise Minister Prithviraj Harichandan at Lok Seva Bhawan here Wednesday.

With the present era being defined by new knowledge systems and AI, the state government has set an ambitious target of building a developed Odisha by 2036. To achieve this vision, various strategic initiatives are being undertaken, with a strong focus on leveraging AI to ensure faster and more efficient implementation of government programmes.

The day-long training session was attended by departmental officers, engineers posted at different locations, and staff members. The training covered various aspects of AI, including its applications, methods of use, enhancement of work efficiency, and its capability to prepare documents based on diverse data sources. Participants were introduced to practical approaches for integrating AI tools into administrative and technical functions.

BMC tables ₹1,050cr Budget



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Wednesday presented a ₹1,050 crore Budget for the 2026-27 financial year, focusing on infrastructure development, sanitation and revenue augmentation.

The Budget was tabled by BMC Commissioner Chanchal Rana in the presence of Deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar and other senior officials at a special session held at Ekamra Hall, chaired by Mayor Sulochana Das. Councillors, officials and representatives of MPs and MLAs also attended the session.

Out of the total outlay, the civic body has projected ₹300 crore as its own revenue and estimated ₹750 crore from grants to be received from the Centre and the Odisha government.

Presenting the Budget, Finance Standing Committee

chairman Rajkishor Das said the corporation largely depends on government grants but a condition has now been imposed to ensure 12.65 per cent annual growth in revenue to avail such funds. He added that the civic body will have to strengthen its internal revenue collection to meet the target.

The Budget earmarks ₹639.41 crore towards miscellaneous and administrative expenditure, including ₹132.19 crore for salaries and pensions and ₹182 crore for sanitation and cleaning services. An amount of ₹24.61 crore has been allocated for bio-mining activities.

In the infrastructure sector, ₹90 crore has been proposed for construction of new roads and ₹75 crore for drainage and sewerage systems. The civic body has also allocated ₹10.28 crore for waste management centres and ₹15.75 crore for crematorium development.

CIPET IPT Bhubaneswar organises Sports Meet



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering and Technology (CIPET): Institute of Petrochemicals Technology (IPT), Bhubaneswar, recently organised its Annual Sports Meet 2025-26 at the IMMT Sports Ground as an inter-house competition for students.

Students took part enthusiastically in various athletic and team events, including 100-metre and 200-metre races, shot put, relay race, tug of war and cricket, showcasing discipline and sportsmanship.

The programme began with the National Anthem, followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Vice Principal PK Mandal in the presence of Senior Officer (P&A) SK Mohini and faculty members.

The ceremonial lamp was lit by Mandal, and the Sports Meet was formally declared open by Academic In-Charge LD Rout.

Technology (CIPET): IPT, Bhubaneswar's commitment to promoting holistic student development through sports and extracurricular activities.

HOARDING TRAGEDY

Kin, locals demand justice

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: A day after a hoarding board collapse during a nor'wester claimed two lives at Aiginia Square near Durga Mandap here, family members of the deceased and local residents staged a protest at the spot Wednesday, demanding justice and action against those responsible.

The protesters blocked the road and staged a dharna, leading to heavy traffic congestion, with vehicles stranded for hours.

On being informed, police reached the spot and pacified the agitators, following which traffic gradually returned to normal.

Family members of one of the deceased, identified as Sachidananda Pradhan (18), alleged negligence and demanded strict action against those responsible. "While returning from college, the nor'wester struck and he took shelter under a shed near the hoarding. However, it collapsed, leading to his death. We want justice and arrest of those who ignored safety measures," they said.

The family members and locals demanded action against the contractors and the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), alleging negligence in removing illegal hoardings in the City. They also blamed



the civic body for allegedly permitting the installation of such hoardings despite safety concerns.

Refuting the allegations, BMC Mayor Sulochana Das said the hoarding had been installed privately without civic body authorisation. "It was a tragic incident. The hoarding was neither authorised by the BMC nor the government; it had been set up under a private arrangement," she said.

She added that the matter will be investigated and steps have already been initiated to remove illegal hoardings across the City. "Action will also be taken against the agency concerned," Das said.

The bereaved families were initially provided an ex gratia of ₹30,000 each, which was lat-

er enhanced to ₹4 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF).

A complaint was lodged at Bharatpur Police Station against Sulochana Das, Ward No. 49 corporator Sanjukta Sundaray, her husband Ashwini Kumar Sundaray, local Durga Puja committee member Prasad Sundaray, and the agency concerned in connection with the hoarding collapse tragedy.

Meanwhile, a person was arrested Wednesday in connection with the mishap, Bharatpur police said. The accused, Sambit Mohanty (50), a City resident, was apprehended near Fire Station Square based on reliable information. His involvement was confirmed during interrogation.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: The Mahanadi Bachao Andolan (MBA) Wednesday questioned the purpose of the proposed five-day visit of the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal to Odisha, asking whether it would yield any tangible benefit for the state.

A fact-finding team will visit the affected areas February 27 to assess the ground situation and seek details of the proposed project from departmental authorities.

Announcing protests over tribunal's visit, the MBA said a demonstration would be held at Master Canteen Square here February 26. From February 27 to March 2, satyagrahas and sand protests will be staged at ten places, including Kanakotara, Sambalpur, Binika, Sonapur, Athmallik, Banki, Baideswar, Cuttack and Paradip.

At a meeting held at Netaji Bhawan in Unit-VI here under the chairmanship of Sudarshan Das, members of the movement expressed concern over the tribunal's visit from February 26 to March 2. The delegation will be

led by tribunal's chairperson Justice Bela M Trivedi and include members Justice Ravi Ranjan and Justice Indermeeet Kaur Kochhar, along with other officials.

Raising sharp questions, the activists alleged that a similar visit by the tribunal in 2023 had cost nearly ₹5 crore from the state exchequer but yielded no tangible outcome for Odisha. With the tribunal's tenure set to end in March and uncertainty over a possible extension due to the chairperson's post remaining vacant for nine months earlier, the organisation sought clarity on the objective and expected outcome of the fresh visit.

The movement reiterated that Odisha and the Mahanadi river have not received justice so far and called for an interim order directing the release of essential water to the state during the non-monsoon period.

The activists also expressed concern over a proposed barrage on the Daya river, warning that it could adversely affect downstream flow. Alleging large-scale sand lifting by mafias from the riverbed, they said such activities pose serious environmental and safety risks.



CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Litton Behra, Village: Niranjanpur, Distt.: Khorda, Jatni, Odisha - 752050, declare by this affidavit Serial No. 79AA335016, that now onwards I shall be known as Litton Behera for all future purposes.

I, Muralidhar Behra, Village: Niranjanpur, Distt.: Khorda, Jatni, Odisha - 752050, declare by this affidavit Serial No. 79AA335014, that now onwards I shall be known as Muralidhar Behera for all future purposes.

I, Sarojini Behra, Village: Niranjanpur, Distt.: Khorda, Jatni, Odisha - 752050, declare by this affidavit Serial No. 79AA335015, that now onwards I shall be known as Sarojini Behera for all future purposes.

BLUEPRINT FOR A PROGRESSIVE ODISHA ₹200 crore for urban growth

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 25: Emphasising planned urban growth, the Odisha government has earmarked a ₹200 crore corpus in the recent state Budget to build sustainable urban ecosystems.

Urbanisation is inevitable, but unplanned growth can be avoided through timely planning, said Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra, adding that the initiative aims to reflect the aspirations of a progressive Odisha.

In a significant move to reshape the state's development trajectory, the Odisha government has announced a dedicated allocation of ₹200 crore in the 2026-27 Budget for a pioneering Rural-Urban Transition initiative.

The strategic intervention aims to guide the state's emerging growth corridors towards planned, sustainable and inclusive urbanisation, ensuring orderly expansion and balanced regional development.

As economic momentum accelerates, several peri-urban areas and high-growth Gram Panchayats across Odisha are organically evolving into urban



clusters. To preempt the challenges of unplanned sprawl, the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department has introduced a proactive framework to manage this transition in a planned and scientific manner.

Unlike conventional reclassification, the initiative emphasises "governance readiness," equipping emerging regions with essential infrastructure and service delivery systems aligned with urban standards even before they are formally notified as towns.

The transition framework rests on several key pillars, including planned development of peri-urban belts to prevent haphazard expansion, early provision of urban-level civic amenities such as drainage,

waste management and street lighting, and regulated land use to promote climate-resilient and balanced growth.

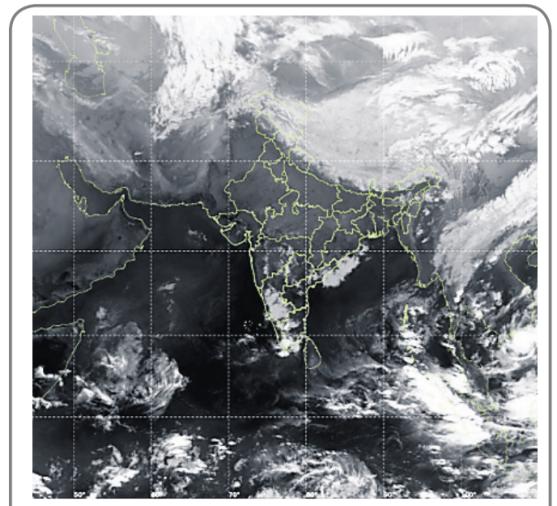
It also focuses on preparing local administrations across Odisha for a smooth shift from rural governance structures to urban management systems, ensuring efficient service delivery and orderly urbanisation.

Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee said, "Our objective is to institutionalise a structured pathway for peri-urban areas to evolve into vibrant centres without disruption. By leveraging data-driven spatial planning and infrastructure benchmarking, we aim to ensure that growth remains regulated, sustainable and citizen-centric."

Railways' spl trains to ease festive rush

Bhubaneswar: In view of heavy passenger rush for upcoming Holi and Dola Yatra, Indian Railways has announced a slew of additional Holi special trains to ensure smooth and convenient travel for passengers. Special services have been introduced to cater to the rising demand for travel from Odisha to various parts of the country during the festive season. Major railway stations in the state including Khurda Road, Bhubaneswar New, Puri, Brahmapur and Malatipatpur will be connected to key destinations through these temporary services. According to sources, the additional trains will operate between February 26 and April 1 on various routes linking Odisha with cities such as Anand Vihar Terminal, Charlapalli, Virangna Lakshmbai Jhansi, Patna, Shalimar, Santragachi, Yalahanka Junction, Chennai Central, Gomi Nagar (Lucknow) and Pune. Prominent among the announced services are the Anand Vihar Terminal-Khurda Road Specials, Charlapalli-Bhubaneswar New Specials, Patna-Puri Specials, Shalimar-Puri Specials, Santragachi-Yalahanka Junction Specials, and a one-way Puri-Pune Special, among others. Several of these trains will run on specific days of the week throughout March to accommodate festival-related travel demand.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for CURRENCY, BOURSES, and COMMODITIES.



WEATHER table with columns for Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, BBSR, CTC, and FORECAST.

Increasing school dropout rate in Nabarangpur dist raises concern

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nabarangpur, Feb 25: The dropout rate in Nabarangpur district is emerging as a serious concern, with an increasing number of students leaving school midway through their education. The trend, visible from primary to secondary levels, has alarmed both the School and Mass Education Department and social organisations.



REPRESENTATIONAL PIC

In the recent session of the state Assembly, Balasore Sadar MLA Manas Kumar Dutta sought details from state School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond regarding dropout figures in the state over the past five years. Data presented by the minister indicate that among the four districts of the undivided Koraput region, Nabarangpur's dropout rate is particularly worrying.

At the primary level, Nabarangpur records a dropout rate of 1.73 per cent, including 2.01 per cent among girls and 1.45 per cent among boys. The rate rises sharply at the upper primary level to 10.57 per cent, with 10.91 per cent for girls and 10.25 per cent for boys, indicating a significant jump as students transition from primary

to upper primary classes.

At the secondary level, the dropout rate climbs further, almost doubling to 19.55 per cent, comprising 20.83 per cent among girls and 18.39 per cent among boys.

In comparison, primary-level dropout rates stand at 1.90 per cent in Koraput district, 3.16 per cent in Malkangiri district and 2.46 per cent in Rayagada district. At the upper primary level, the rates are 4.96 per cent in Koraput, 2.99 per cent in Malkangiri and 4.25 per cent in Rayagada.

The figures highlight a consistent rise in dropout rates as students progress to higher classes in Nabarangpur, underscoring the need for urgent intervention.

The dropout rate at the secondary or high school level stands at 19.55 per cent in Nabarangpur district, 16.19 per cent in Koraput district, 13.10 per cent in Malkangiri district and 15.58 per cent in Rayagada district, according to official data.

Financial hardship, child labour, family responsibilities and lack of parental awareness are cited as the primary reasons for the rising dropout rate. Early marriage among adolescent girls has also contributed significantly to discontinuation of education.

Although the government has introduced several schemes such as the mid-day meal programme, free textbooks, uniforms, bicycles and scholar-

ships, there are allegations that these measures are not being implemented effectively.

The increasing number of dropouts is seen as a worrying trend. Experts warn that it could lead to higher levels of illiteracy, unemployment and social inequality. They stress the need for coordinated action by the government, the education department and parents to address the issue. In the current scenario, emphasis on quality education, regular counseling for students and awareness programmes for parents has become essential. Observers caution that unless firm policies and concrete steps are taken to curb dropout rates, the education system could face a deeper crisis.

To encourage students to return to school, the government is also providing incentives and stipends. Special initiatives to promote girls' education in the KBK region include Kasturba Gandhi residential schools as well as ashram and sevashram schools run by the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Department. Despite these measures, the dropout rate shows little sign of decline, causing concern among educationists and policymakers.

Two killed in elephant attacks; youth escapes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh/Ranpur, Feb 25: Two persons were killed in separate elephant attacks under the Khordha forest division on Wednesday, while a youth narrowly escaped unhurt, officials said.

In the first incident, Kalu Moharana, 58, of Mayurjhalia village in Nayagarh district was trampled to death near a health centre under the Ranpur forest range. He was riding a bicycle with his son seated behind him on the way to their cashew orchard when a tusker suddenly attacked.

On spotting the elephant, the youth jumped off the bicycle and ran to safety. Moharana, however, was dragged off the cycle, which was smashed, and then trampled to death, sources said.

Ranpur Tehsildar Arya Daman and forest officials visited the spot and met the bereaved family.

In another incident the same day, Babuli Parida, 58, was killed in an elephant attack at Kunjuri Naramanabi village in Khordha district. With the two deaths, fatalities in elephant attacks in the division rose sharply in a single day. Residents alleged that increased elephant movement in the Mayurjhalia area and inadequate preventive measures have led to recurring casualties in recent weeks.

4 held in Borigungumma double murder case



POST NEWS NETWORK

Koraput/Borigumma, Feb 25: Police have arrested four persons in connection with the sensational double murder in Borigumma area of Koraput district, Superintendent of Police Rohit Varma said Wednesday.

The accused were identified as the minor's boyfriend P. Adi Narayana Rao (21) of Dasiri Sahi, Preet Nayak (19), also of Dasiri Sahi in Borigumma, Adinarayana Panigrahi (19) of Bijapur, and Jagannath Jani (20) of Kamtara village. The minor girl has been sent to a juvenile home.

Addressing a press conference at Borigumma, Varma said the killings were the result of a conspiracy linked to a minor girl's relationship with the prime accused. The minor has been sent to a correctional home.

According to police, the girl allegedly plotted the murder of her mother and brother to clear

the way for her relationship. On the night of February 18, her boyfriend, along with three associates, allegedly killed the two victims.

Investigators said the accused later dumped the bodies in a canal in an attempt to destroy evidence and mislead police. The minor herself lodged a missing complaint at the local police station February 21, claiming that her mother and brother had disappeared.

However, a detailed investigation and collection of evidence led police to uncover the conspiracy and establish the involvement of the accused, Varma said. A murder case-45/26 has been registered against five persons in connection with the incident.

Police have seized the murder weapon and a scooter used in the crime. All four accused have been arrested and forwarded to court. The investigation is continuing, police added.

Saura tribal children in Gajapati to learn in native language

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, Feb 25: The children belonging to the Saura tribal community in Odisha's Gajapati district will now get pre-school education in their own language, officials said Wednesday.

The Gajapati administration has rolled out a programme - Aame Padhibaa Aama Bhasare (we will learn in our own language) - for this purpose, they said.

The initiative will cover 30 anganwadi centres in Gumma and Rayagada blocks in the district, where around 90 per cent of the population belongs to the Saura tribal community, District Social Welfare Officer Manorama Devi said.

"In the first phase, we have selected 30 anganwadi centres - 15 each in Gumma and Rayagada blocks to implement the initiative on a pilot basis," she said.

A workshop for the successful implementation was conducted at Paralakhemundi, Devi said.

Preliminary training was imparted to the anganwadi workers of the two blocks, and further training will also be given to them before the children enrol at the centres, she said.

"We will constitute an expert committee for the development of textbooks in these languages for the pre-school children soon," he said.

Additional district education officer S Giridhar said the initiative aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, which stressed the use of mother tongue or home language as the medium of instruction in pre-school education. "When the children see their language and culture reflected in the classroom, learning becomes joyful and meaningful," said Solomon Raika, district welfare officer. The government has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Piramal Foundation to support the implementation of the initiative.

In the first phase of the initiative, the government has decided to implement the programme in six tribal-majority districts, including Gajapati. Other districts include Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Rayagada, Kandhamal and Keonjhar.

The organisation will support four southern Odisha districts where the children will be taught in indigenous languages such as Koya (Malkangiri), Gondi (Nabarangpur), Kuvi (Rayagada) and Soura (Gajapati), said Devesh Acharya of the organisation.

"We will constitute an expert committee for the development of textbooks in these languages for the pre-school children soon," he said.

Gone missing as teen, man returns home after 18 years

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 25: Eighteen years after he was allegedly lured away from his village as a minor on the promise of being taught how to drive, a man from Sundargarh district returned to Rourkela Tuesday and reunited with his family at the railway station.

Purushottam Goud, a native of Sonapat village under Suidihi panchayat in Lathikata block, had gone missing in 2008 when he was 14. According to family members, an unidentified person had taken him away from Odisha on the pretext of providing driving lessons.

Despite extensive efforts to trace him, the family received no information about his whereabouts for years. However, they con-



tinued their search and, in January this year, approached the police with fresh inputs. With police assistance, Goud was eventually traced and brought back to Rourkela. He arrived at Rourkela railway station around 3pm Tuesday by the Jammu Tawi Express, where he was received by his family and well-wishers.

Speaking to reporters, Goud said he had been taken to Jammu in 2008 and later shifted to Samba district. There, he was allegedly forced to work without being paid.

"I was told that I would be taught driving, but after reaching Jammu, I was made to work. I was not paid any wages," he said, adding that he had long wanted to contact his family but was unable to do so.

Goud said it was due to his family's persistent efforts and police support that he was finally able to return to his native place after nearly two decades. Police officials said further details are being verified.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, MECHANICAL CIRCLE, HIRAKUD
No. 32001/139/2526 Email address: semech-eicwr.od@gov.in
E-Procurement Notice - Bid Identification No. ACECM/MDHKD-06/2025-26, Dt.25.02.2026

- Name of the Work : Mechanical Works of MI Division, Padampur
- No. of Work : 01 (One) No.
- Category of Executors : SSI Units registered under DIC/NSIC/MSME for Irrigation Shutters/Hydro Mechanical Gates
- Bid Identification No. : ACECM/MDHKD-06/2025-26, Dt.25.02.2026
- Estimated Cost : 12.55 Lakh (Excluding GST)
- Period of Completion : Two Calendar Months
- Date & time of availability of bid documents in the portal : From Dt.06.03.2026 (10.00 A.M.) to Dt.16.03.2026 (5.30 P.M.)
- Last date/time for receipt of bid in the portal : Dt.16.03.2026 (upto 5.30 P.M.)
- Date and place of opening of Bid : Dt.17.03.2026 11.30 A.M. onwards in O/o. the undersigned
- Name of the Officer Inviting Bid : Additional Chief Engineer, Mechanical Circle, Hirakud

Further details can be seen only from e-procurement portal <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>.
Sd/- Addl. Chief Engineer
Mechanical Circle, Hirakud
OIPR-32001/32344/1/25-26/0001

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER
CORRIGENDUM
In reference with corrigendum 1 dated 24.02.2026 for E-Tender notice No. LHBUpgrat01lets-1500-R-1 published earlier by Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer, Kharagpur Carriage workshop with corrigendum "regarding working days, payment condition and delivery schedule has been issued". Detail Tender Notice and Tender Document with corrigendum is available in the e-Portal website <https://www.ireps.gov.in> (PR-1235/C)

GOVT. OF ODISHA e-mail ID: eerwairangpur@yahoo.com
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, RURAL WORKS DIVISION, RAIRANGPUR
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works | Bid Identification No. - RWRDRP-33 of 2025-26

- Name of the Work : Repair and renovation & upgradation of refurbishing physical health infrastructure and strengthening basic patient amenities at Bisoil PCH New under Bisoil Block for the year 2025-26 (2nd Phase)
- Estimated Cost : Rs. 73.76 lakhs (approximately)
- Class of Contractor : "B" Class or relevant of works license
- Period of Completion : 09 (Nine) calendar months
- Tender paper cost : Rs. 10,000/-

The details are as follows

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender Online for Bidding		Last date and time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & time of Opening of Tender in O/o. Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division, Rairangpur	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
S.E.R.W. Division, Rairangpur	RWRDRP-33/2025-26	27.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	13.03.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	12.03.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	16.03.2026 at 11.30 A.M.	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Sd/- Er. Sanjeet Naik, Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Rairangpur
OIPR-25001/25107/1/25-26/0004

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No.32001/144/2526
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, UI RIGHT CANAL DIVISION NO-II, JUNAGARH
Dist-Kalahandi, e-mail address : eourcd2@gmail.com

1. Type of Work : Building Works, 2. Total No. of Works : 1 (One) No., 3. Approximate value of work : Rs.12.30 Lakh (Excluding GST), 4. Tender Paper Cost : Rs.6,000/- (On-Line), 5. Bid Security/E.M.D : Rs.12,300.00 (Online), 6. Period of Completion : 02 (Two) calendar months, 7. Class of Contractor : 'C' & 'D' Class

Procurement Officer	e-procurement Notice No.	Bid Amount	Availability of online viewing of Tender prior to Bidding		Bid clarification	Submission & availability bid on-line	Date & time of opening of Technical Bid
			From	To			
Superintending Engineer, UI Right Canal Division No.II, Junagarh Dist.-Kalahandi	SE_UIRCD-II-01(01)/2025-26	Rs.12.30 Lakh (Excluding GST)	02.03.2026 (10.30 A.M.)	16.03.2026 (Up to 5.00 P.M.)	From 02.03.2026 to 11.03.2026 During office hours	From 02.03.2026 (10.00 A.M.) to 16.03.2026 (up to 5.00 P.M)	17.03.2026 AT 11.30 A.M.

(A) Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said Website
(B) Further details can be seen from Government Website - <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>
OIPR-32001/32255/1/25-26/0001 Sd/- Superintending Engineer
U.I.R.C.D.No-II, Junagarh

Chola Corporate Office : Chola Crest, Super B, C54 & C55, 4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600 032, T. N.
DEMAND NOTICE

UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules")
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. (the Secured Creditor) under the Act and in exercise of the powers conferred under Sec. 13(12) of the Act read with Rule 3 issued Demand Notice(s) under Sec. 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the Demand Notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being affected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of Demand Notice(s) are extracted herein below :-

Sr. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower/s & Co-Borrower/s	Loan Amt.	Dt. of Demand Notice & O/S. Amt.	Description of the Property / Secured Asset
1.	Mr/Mrs. Ajay Kumar Rana	Rs. 20,61,376/-	17.02.2026	District-Cuttack, Tahasil-Kisan Nagar, SRO-Raghunathpur, P.S.-Kesanagar, P.S. No-71, Mouza-Sirilo Mutation Khata No-462/156, Plot No-378/1598, Area Ac.07'6dec with Status-Suburban, Kisan-Gharabari (Homestead) which corresponding to Khata No-297, Plot No-378, Area Ac.07'6dec O/o Aco 080dec. Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) North-Sarat Mohapatra & others, South-Gandharba Rana, East-Gandharba Rana, West-Road.
2.	Mr/Mrs. Bhagabata Rana	Rs. 20,61,376/-	17.02.2026	District-Cuttack, Tahasil-Kisan Nagar, SRO-Raghunathpur, P.S.-Kesanagar, P.S. No-71, Mouza-Sirilo Mutation Khata No-462/156, Plot No-378/1598, Area Ac.07'6dec with Status-Suburban, Kisan-Gharabari (Homestead) which corresponding to Khata No-297, Plot No-378, Area Ac.07'6dec O/o Aco 080dec. Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) North-Sarat Mohapatra & others, South-Gandharba Rana, East-Gandharba Rana, West-Road.
3.	Mr/Mrs. Snehabrata Rana	Rs. 20,61,376/-	17.02.2026	District-Cuttack, Tahasil-Kisan Nagar, SRO-Raghunathpur, P.S.-Kesanagar, P.S. No-71, Mouza-Sirilo Mutation Khata No-462/156, Plot No-378/1598, Area Ac.07'6dec with Status-Suburban, Kisan-Gharabari (Homestead) which corresponding to Khata No-297, Plot No-378, Area Ac.07'6dec O/o Aco 080dec. Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) North-Sarat Mohapatra & others, South-Gandharba Rana, East-Gandharba Rana, West-Road.
4.	Mr/Mrs. Rasmita Rana Add For Sr. No. 1, 2, 3 & 4 :- Sirlo, Kishorenagar, Cuttack, Odisha, Siva Temple, Kishorenagar, Orissa - 754131 Add For Sr. No. 1, 2, 3 & 4 :- Khata No-462/156, Plot No-378/1598, Sirlo, Kishorenagar Near Siva Temple Kishorenagar 754131	Rs. 20,00,000/-	17.02.2026	District-Cuttack, Tahasil-Kisan Nagar, SRO-Raghunathpur, P.S.-Kesanagar, P.S. No-71, Mouza-Sirilo Mutation Khata No-462/156, Plot No-378/1598, Area Ac.07'6dec with Status-Suburban, Kisan-Gharabari (Homestead) which corresponding to Khata No-297, Plot No-378, Area Ac.07'6dec O/o Aco 080dec. Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) North-Sarat Mohapatra & others, South-Gandharba Rana, East-Gandharba Rana, West-Road.

The borrower(s) are hereby advised to comply with the Demand Notice(s) and to pay the demand amount mentioned therein and hereinabove within 60 days from the date of this publication together with applicable interest, additional interest, bounce charges, cost and expenses till the date of realization of payment. The borrower(s) may note that Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. is a secured creditor and the loan facility availed by the Borrower(s) is a secured debt against the immovable property / properties being the secured asset(s) mortgaged by the borrower(s). In the event borrower(s) are failed to discharge their liabilities in full within the stipulated time, the Secured Creditor shall be entitled to exercise all the rights U/s. 13(4) of the Act to take possession of the secured asset(s) including but not limited to transfer the same by way of sale or by invoking any other remedy available under the Act and the Rules thereunder and realize payment. The Secured Creditor is also empowered to ATTACH AND /OR SEAL the secured asset(s) before enforcing the right to sale or transfer. Subsequent to the Sale of the secured asset(s), the Secured Creditor also has a right to initiate separate legal proceedings to recover the balance dues, in case the value of the mortgaged properties is insufficient to cover the dues payable to the Secured Creditor. This remedy is in addition and independent of all the other remedies available to the Secured Creditor under any other law.
The attention of the borrower(s) is invited to Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets and further to Section 13(13) of the Act, whereby the borrower(s) are restrained / prohibited from disposing of or dealing with the secured asset(s) or transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise (other than in the ordinary course of business) any of the secured asset(s), without prior written consent of the Secured Creditor and non-compliance with the above is an offence punishable under Section 23 of the said Act. The copy of the Demand Notice is available with the undersigned and the borrower(s) may, if they so desire, can collect the same from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.
Sd/-
Place : Cuttack, Odisha
Date : 17.02.2026
For Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited
Authorized Officer

HDFC Bank Ltd. Branch: Plot No. 98, 3rd Floor, Keshari Talkies Complex, Kharavela Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751001
Tel.: 0674-6633300, CIN L65920MH1994PLC080618, Website: www.hdfcbank.com
POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas the Authorized Officer of HDFC Bank Limited (erstwhile HDFC Limited having amalgamated with HDFC Bank Limited by virtue of a Scheme of Amalgamation approved by Hon'ble NCLT-Mumbai vide order dated 17th March 2023) (HDFC), under the Securitization And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("said Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices under Section 13 (2) of the said Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to pay the amounts mentioned against their respective names together with interest thereon at the applicable rates as mentioned in the said notices, within 60 days from the date of the said Notice/s, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc till the date of payment and / or realisation.

Name & Address of Borrower(s)	Outstanding dues as on	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Possession / Nature of Possession	Description of immovable property(ies) / Secured Asset(s)
Borrowers: a) Mr. Srikanta Kumar Sahoo	₹2,19,526/-	23.09.2025	20.02.2026 / Symbolic	A Plot of Land Admeasuring in aggregate Area: Ac. 0.012 Dec Six only (against Loan No.: 471293021), as on 31.08.2025
No.: 3941, 3942, Khata No.: 259, Mouza: Balara, P.S.: Kakatpur, P.S. No: 13, SRO: Kakatpur, Dist: Puri.				
Borrowers: a) Mr. Saroj Kumar Behera	₹4,46,173/-	13.12.2024	20.02.2026 / Symbolic	A flat ad measuring in aggregate suba : 750 sq ft approx situated at Flat No.: 316, 3rd floor
(Rupees Four Lakh Forty Six Thousand One Hundred Seventy Three only) (against Loan No.: 603191291), as on 31.10.2024				
including one car parking area in the project called "Shreya's Sri Balaji City" situated over Plot No.: 110, Khata No.: 33, Mouza: Bilipada, Place: Gudipokhari, P.S.: Pipili, Dist: Puri.				
Borrowers: a) Mr. Samir Kumar Mallick b) Mrs. Santilata Mallick	₹23,11,278/-	13.11.2025	20.02.2026 / Symbolic	A Plot of Land Admeasuring in Aggregate Carpet Area: 0.07.5 dec approx. Together with the construction situated at Plot No.: Thousand Three Hundred Forty Eight & Sixty Eight plus only, (against Loan No.: 0001016160002432203) as on 04.11.2025
(Rupees Twenty-Three Lakh Eleven Thousand Two Hundred Seventy-Eight only), (against Loan No.: 614897767, 692235453 & 702191033), ₹1,21,348.68 (Rupees One Lakh Twenty One Thousand Three Hundred Forty Eight & Sixty Eight plus only), (against Loan No.: 0001016160002432203) as on 04.11.2025				
and Khata No.: 384 at Mouza: Bhubanpur, Tahasil: Nimapara, SRO: Nimapara. Dist: Puri. Bounded by East: Seller Plot, North: Canal, West & South: Nimapara Collage.				

*With further interest as applicable, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc incurred till the date of payment and / or realisation.
However, since the borrower/s mentioned herein above have failed to repay the amounts due, notice is hereby given to the borrower/s mentioned herein above in particular and to the public in general that the Authorized Officer/s of HDFC have taken Symbolic Possession of the immovable property (ies) / secured asset(s) described herein above in exercise of powers conferred on him/ them under Section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned above. The borrower(s) mentioned herein above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the aforesaid immovable property(ies) / Secured Asset(s) or any dealings with the said immovable property (ies) / Secured Asset(s) will be subject to the mortgage of HDFC. Borrower(s) attention is/are invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset/s. Copies of the Panchanama drawn and inventory made are available with the undersigned, and the said Borrower(s) is / are requested to collect the respective copy from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.
Place : Bhubaneswar, Date : 25.02.2026
For HDFC Bank Ltd., Sd/- Authorised Officer
Regd. Office: HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Parel (West), Mumbai - 400013

USFDA delegation visits Ganjam

Chhatrapur/Berhampur: A delegation from the United States Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) on a 2-day stay visited Ganjam district to assess aquaculture practices and expressed satisfaction with the standards maintained in shrimp seed hatchery operations and brackish water aquaculture in the district Tuesday and Wednesday, district officials informed. During the visit, the USFDA delegation examined records related to feed management, seed production and sales, and other operational documents. The officials informed that the team also inspected different units of the hatchery and gathered first-hand information on the sea-water intake system, UV and ozone filtration process, laboratory culture procedures, and treatment protocols.

UCO BANK Zonal Office, UCO Bank Building, 2nd Floor, C-2, Ashok Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751009, Tel: 0674-2620423
POSSESSION NOTICE
For Immovable Property

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

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

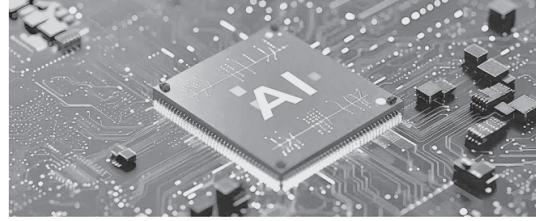
The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

SAHID NAGAR BRANCH/ Name and Address of the Borrowers	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Property
Borrowers: 1) Mr. K. Nilamadhaba Achary, S/o.: Mr. Dandapani Achary, 2) Mrs. K. Priyadarshini Achary, W/o.: Mr. K. Nilamadhaba Achary, Both are PO: Balipadar, Buguda, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha, PIN-761117	₹ 36,87,119.30 as on 29.10.2025 + interest & other charges thereon	27.11.2025 / 21.02.2026	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Land & Building standing in the name of Mr. K. Nilamadhaba Achary, S/o.: Mr. Dandapani Achary, House No.: HIG-12, Dharma Vihar, Jagamara, Bhubaneswar measuring Area: 1996 sqft. having RSD No.: 1131706996, Dt.22.08.2017, Bounded by North: Plot of Maheswar Mohanty, South: Road, East: Sub Plot No.: 11, West: Road

Place : Bhubaneswar
Date : 25.02.2026
Authorised Officer
UCO Bank

FOCUS INDIA'S AI VISION

RISKS & BENEFITS



Apart from the government's not-so-encouraging attitude, private investment also remains quite low compared with China, Japan, not to mention the US

systems that interact with people and language.” Another key question that arises is the effect of AI on healthcare for the common man. It has not yet been outlined that those who remain undiagnosed for diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases and even cancer – spreading very fast – will benefit from this new technology. AI for the Big Pharma will not benefit the common man.

Former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, in his book ‘Technofeudalism’ sees this age as a return to feudalism. In his portrayal, AI companies are the new extractors, and ordinary citizens must pay their dues to be able to go about their lives. He underlined the fact that most of these companies are based in the US and China and many have deep links to the state apparatus.

Therefore, it’s imperative for India and countries in the Global South to learn from the past and frame the issue right this time around. AI corporations, like the trading European companies of the yore, may be just service providers today but contain the seeds of a new kind of sovereign entity.

There is a strong argument in favour of equipping more people with AI literacy, building the computing and energy infrastructure that powers advanced AI systems and integrating AI more fully into the real workforce. India is well positioned to develop AI literacy and the necessary infrastructure needed to broaden the benefits of technology though much depends on the resources it could marshal towards this end.

INFA

Much hype has been created about Artificial Intelligence (AI) before and after the recent summit as world leaders and leading technical experts shared their experience and expertise. In his inaugural address, Prime Minister Modi presented India’s Manav (human) vision for AI and, at the end, the Delhi Declaration, adopted by 86 countries and two organisations called “for collaborative, trusted, resilient and efficient” AI with benefits being shared by humanity.

The big question is whether AI will benefit humanity per se and whether India, with limited R&D spending, will have resources to create AI infrastructure. India’s R&D spend stood at 0.7% of GDP in 2024 compared to 2.7% of China and 3.5% in the US. Not just these two countries, India spends much less among emerging economies and possibly the lowest among G20 nations. The picture is even more disheartening in absolute GDP terms. Apart from the government’s not-so-encouraging attitude, private investment also remains quite low compared with China, Japan, not to mention the US. China’s electronics giant Huawei alone spent nearly \$23 billion on R&D in 2023, more than India’s combined public and private spending.

If intentions are not matched with technological and financial support, the nation cannot proceed much farther. AI is still in its infancy in the country though it has built LLM that supports 22 languages. However, it remains to be seen how much investment India can finally attract after



Dhurjati Mukherjee

INDIA'S R&D SPEND STOOD AT 0.7% OF GDP IN 2024 COMPARED TO 2.7% OF CHINA AND 3.5% IN THE US



Salim Fakir & Prabhat Upadhyaya

New cooperative frameworks that deliver on critical but often competing goals – such as energy justice and energy security; both climate resilience and economic diversification; both human dignity and prosperity – might be our best bet



Case For Cooperation

If there was any doubt remaining about the return of great-power politics, it has been dispelled by US President Donald Trump’s attack on Venezuela, threats to annex Greenland, and refusal to extend the New START treaty limiting the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia. Such geopolitical upheavals are driven by “the will to power,” as Adam Tooze has pointed out – including “power over resources, purchasing power, the ability to resist the influence of others.”

The reverberations of this trend are being felt in the architecture of global cooperation, built around the Bretton Woods institutions, under which shared rules and formal governance structures shaped countries’ behavior. Within the “rules-based order,” at the heart of which lies the United Nations, cooperation was operationalized through regular engagement, leading to incremental gains. This system often required countries to make concessions and accommodations, but they generally were willing to do so in exchange for long-term stability and predictability.

But this institutional approach to cooperation has broken down in recent years, as institutions have proven incapable of responding effectively to states’ evolving needs. From an outdated UN Security Council structure and stalled Rio Conventions to the persistence of longstanding conflicts, evidence of the UN system’s limitations steadily accumulated, eroding trust. As gridlock became entrenched, the rules-based order increasingly appeared rigid, unjust, and ineffectual. This demands a fundamental rethink of how states engage with one another to deliver global public goods.

The Global South recognized this a long time ago, with developing-country voices like Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley often pointing out that powerful states act as if they are exempt from the rules they impose on others. Now, even G7 leaders are acknowledging this. In his much-discussed address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney conceded that the rules-based order always depended on a “pleasant fiction.” The benefits were sufficient, he admitted, that countries like his largely avoided “calling out the gaps between rhetoric and reality.”

Those gaps are now impossible to ignore. And institutional cooperation – and the UN system, specifically – is blighted by declining faith and effectiveness, as well as deep divisions over what actors’ roles and responsibilities should be, which values should underpin cooperation, and how cooperative efforts should be implemented.

The challenges associated with the institutional approach have driven some to embrace another form of cooperation: bilateral engagement, usually driven by narrow interests. This interest-based approach produces a complicated web of connections among states, and when guided by clear-headed diplomacy, it can foster interdependence, thereby helping to sustain a stable balance of power.

A classic example of such engagement is West Germany’s Ostpolitik, which sought to improve relations with East Germany and Eastern bloc countries in the 1960s and 1970s by promoting dialogue and economic cooperation. Conceptualized by Egon Bahr and implemented by Willy Brandt, first as foreign minister and then as chancellor, Ostpolitik opened the way for formal agreements that established diplomatic relations, clarified borders, and facilitated trade.

A similar logic guided then-US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger’s 1971 opening to China, which set the stage for decades of economic interdependence. The same can be said for Germany’s engagement with China and Russia in the 2000s. While the dependencies this created – on Chinese trade and Russian gas – have since begun to look more like vulnerabilities, America’s unreliability as a security partner shows that risks can arise even with close allies that have traditionally operated according to shared values.

But maintaining interest-based engagement demands substantial state capacity and diplomatic heft. Moreover, it does not necessarily reflect any overarching logic, and it can lead to insecurity and uncertainty, especially if it morphs into beggar-thy-neighbor policies, which ignore political, ethical, cultural, or historical sensitivities. This approach also leaves smaller countries vulnerable to unfavorable deals with larger partners, with the more powerful side dictating the terms of engagement.

There is a third way. Under a “minilateral” approach, like-minded countries form issue-based coalitions, often outside the UN system. Often built around shared ideas, goals, and worldviews, minilateral groupings prioritize pragmatism, agility, and efficiency over broad consensus and formal legitimacy. Countries can thus circumvent the gridlock of broad-based cooperation without putting themselves at the mercy of major powers.

But minilateralism can be a double-edged sword. While groupings such as the BRICS+ emerging-market countries can act as early movers that muster momentum on critical issues and challenge the status quo, other minilateral groupings can entrench the status quo by limiting membership to preserve influence (as with the G7). More broadly, they can lead to fragmentation that hampers progress, though forums like the G20 can help to overcome this pitfall by facilitating engagement across groupings.

At a time when the institutional approach to international order is breaking down, the minilateral approach holds much promise, despite its imperfections. While the emergence of more minilateral groupings will lead to fragmentation in the short term and hasten the hollowing out of the UN system, it might also offer a means of devising new ideas and carrying out scalable interventions that tangibly improve people’s daily lives. Without interventions that deliver tangible benefits, international cooperation will remain a hard sell amidst the return of great-power politics.

Reinforcing shared norms is also vital, but it will not, on its own, save us from the great power-induced disruptions we are witnessing today. New cooperative frameworks that deliver on critical but often competing goals – such as energy justice and energy security; both climate resilience and economic diversification; both human dignity and prosperity – might be our best bet.

Salim Fakir is Founder and Executive Director of the African Climate Foundation. Prabhat Upadhyaya is Adviser on International Cooperation and Multilateral Affairs with the African Climate Foundation.

SPECTRUM TOURISM

Unlocking Odisha’s golden gateway

In a world where economies increasingly pivot towards experience-driven tourism growth, Odisha finds itself blessed with an enviable portfolio of assets that few states can match. From the majestic spires of the Jagannath Temple in Puri to the serene backwaters of Chilika, from the ancient rock-cut caves of Khandagiri to the wild majesty of Similipal and the pristine Blue Flag beaches of Puri and Sonepur, the breathtaking mountain peaks and waterfalls of Koraput, the state is a living museum of spirituality, ecology, history and tribal heritage. Yet for too long, these treasures have remained under-monetised. Tourism is not merely an add-on sector for Odisha; it is the most potent instrument for inclusive, sustainable and geographically balanced development in a state where large swathes of the population, especially in the western and southern districts, still grapple with limited livelihood options. Developing tourism aggressively can generate lakhs of direct and indirect jobs, empower women and tribal youth, reduce rural-to-urban migration, preserve cultural identity while modernising local economies and earn valuable foreign exchange without the environmental cost that heavy industry often entails. The Economic Survey 2025-26 makes this imperative impossible to ignore.



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

THE NEED TO ACCELERATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IS NOT ASPIRATIONAL BUT STRATEGIC

The Survey presents a picture of an economy firing on multiple cylinders, with real GSDP growth projected at 7.9% for 2025-26, comfortably above both the national average of 7.4% and the state’s own decadal average. The services sector, which includes tourism, trade, hospitality, transport and IT is slated to expand at a robust 9.3% and contribute 39.1% to Gross State Value Added. This is no coincidence. Behind the numbers lie years of quiet infrastructure build-up like new domestic flight routes, upgraded airstrips, improved road connectivity to hinterland destinations and the designation of special tourism zones in western Odisha around Hirakud, Debrigarh and Sambalpur. The Survey also acknowledges the state’s push towards ecotourism circuits at Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Mahendragiri and Chilika, alongside cultural anchors like the Ratha Yatra and Buddhist heritage sites. These initiatives have undoubtedly helped widen the tourist footprint beyond the traditional Puri-Konark-Bhubaneswar golden triangle.

Yet a closer reading reveals that tourism’s contribution, while growing, is still far below its true potential. The sector remains heavily skewed towards religious and seasonal pilgrimage, with limited year-round footfalls in eco, adventure, wellness or heritage segments. Infrastructure bottlenecks persist in last-mile connectivity to tribal and rural destinations. Hotel room inventory, especially mid-segment and eco-lodges, lags behind demand. Skilled manpower like guides, homestay operators, adventure instructors, interpreters are in short supply. Marketing, both domestic and international, has not yet matched the scale of competing states like Kerala or Rajasthan.

The need to accelerate tourism development is not aspirational but strategic. First, the state must treat tourism as a core infrastructure sector on par with roads and power. This means ring-fencing higher budgetary outlays, the Rs 820 crore allocated in recent budgets is a beginning, not the end. Second, Odisha must move from ‘destination marketing’ to ‘experience branding’. Campaigns that weave together spiritual tourism with wellness retreats, tribal homestays with wildlife safaris and temple architecture with GI-tagged crafts can create unique value propositions that no other state can replicate. Third, sustainability must be non-negotiable. Carrying-capacity studies for Chilika and the wildlife sanctuaries, community-led eco-tourism models, waste management protocols at pilgrim sites, and climate-resilient infrastructure are essential.

Fourth, skill development must be localised and con-

tinuous. Partnerships with tourism and hospitality institutes, short-term certification programmes in every district, and incentives for women and tribal youth to become entrepreneurs in the sector can turn tourism into a genuine tool of social justice. Finally, digital enablement like a unified Odisha Tourism app with real-time booking, virtual tours and grievance redressal can dramatically improve visitor experience and data-driven policy making.

If policymakers, industry players and local communities seize this moment with imagination and urgency, Odisha can transform itself from a state visited mainly for its temples, waterfalls, mountain peaks into a year-round, multi-segment tourism powerhouse that powers inclusive prosperity across all 30 districts.

The Survey’s numbers are encouraging but they are also a gentle prod. The real test of Odisha’s economic maturity will lie not just in crossing the Rs 10-lakh-crore GSDP mark but in ensuring that every visitor who comes to witness the grandeur of Lord Jagannath leaves with memories of a state that has learnt to share its soul with the world profitably, sustainably and equitably.

The writer is a former college principal and founder of Supporting Shoulders.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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



Digital distraction

Sir, The Karnataka government’s move to ban mobile phones in schools and colleges is a sensible step to protect learning environments. While smartphones can support research, digital classrooms and collaboration, they also open easy access to games, pornography and other distracting content that pulls students away from the curriculum. Constant notifications reduce attention, weaken classroom discipline and affect behaviour, peer interaction and academic engagement. Teachers increasingly struggle to compete with screens for students’ focus. The mobile phone is therefore a double-edged sword, offering both opportunity and serious risk. A limited, carefully regulated use of technology through school-provided devices and monitored networks can still support modern education. For safety and basic communication, students should be permitted to carry simple feature phones that allow voice calls only. Such an approach can protect children from exposure while preserving connectivity, discipline and learning culture overall.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Willow dominance

Sir, Despite having a population of over 144 crore and vast potential for diverse sporting talent, cricket always dominates India due to a combination of deep-rooted historical legacy, unparalleled commercial investment, and consistent international success, leaving well behind other sports, especially football, which is easily the world’s most popular sport. With cricket ever sitting atop in Indian sports, it compels one to debate if football in India suffers because of the overwhelming popularity of cricket. While cricket’s massive popularity in India has undeniably overshadowed other sports, the willow game is in no way responsible for impeding football’s growth in the country. Unlike other games, cricket in India is seen as “religion”, commanding a vast majority of media coverage, sponsorship money and marketing. The game attracts huge investments due to higher and guaranteed ROI, which other sports like football could not. Also, while cricket in India has a strong and robust infrastructure, making it a more viable sport for youngsters, football struggles with inadequate facilities and lack of exposure. Football’s failure to grow in India is largely due to its own making, like poor advertisement, poor administration and its inability to build a sustainable and professional structure to rival cricket.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

CM Adityanath lands in Tokyo

Adityanath invited the firm to explore opportunities in medical devices manufacturing, leveraging the Dedicated Freight Corridor network and the Medical Devices Park in UP

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Tokyo, Feb 25: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is on a visit to Japan. Addressing a gathering of Indian diaspora in Tokyo, he said that previous governments kept the state in "darkness" due to their inclination towards corruption and lawlessness, asserting that his government brought UP "into the light" by all-around improvement in law and order, infrastructure and power supply.

The Chief Minister spoke about what he described as UP's transformation from "darkness to development."

"Earlier, there were no roads, no proper connectivity, and no electricity. People used to complain about constant power cuts. Those who work in darkness do not like light. When the tendency is towards robbery, everything is done in the dark," he said.

"If we want to free Uttar Pradesh from fear and corruption, we must bring it into the light. We are sons of the Sun; we need light like the Sun," he added, drawing a metaphorical contrast between past and present governance.

The CM said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is moving steadily towards becoming a Viksit Bharat, and Uttar Pradesh - with a population of nearly 250 million - is playing a key role in that journey.

"Earlier, news from UP revolved around curfews, riots and darkness. Today, it is about Diwali celebrations, the Maha Kumbh, and global investment," he said.

He highlighted improvements in law and order, road connectivity and electricity supply, claiming that the state



has emerged as a major investment destination in sectors such as semiconductors, data centres, artificial intelligence, green hydrogen, logistics parks and international airports.

Referring to cultural and religious events, CM Yogi said that large-scale celebrations such as Deepotsav in Ayodhya, Dev Deepawali in Kashi, and Holi festivities in Mathura and Vrindavan symbolise a positive transformation in the state.

Extending Holi greetings to the Indian diaspora in Japan, he said that events such as the Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj and the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya reflect India's cultural strength and civilisational heritage.

He also mentioned the redevelopment of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham as an example of blending modern infrastructure with tradition.

"India believes in leading the world through friendship and compassion, not dominance," he said, quoting the Sanskrit

Earlier, there were no roads, no proper connectivity, and no electricity. People used to complain about constant power cuts. Those who work in darkness do not like light. When the tendency is towards robbery, everything is done in the dark

YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH

phrase 'Janani Janmabhoomi Swargadapi Gariyasi' (Mother and motherland are greater than heaven).

The Chief Minister noted that around 55,000 Indians reside in Japan and urged them to contribute to the development of both India and Japan.

"We are in Japan, the land of the rising sun. India is the land of the sons of the Sun. Our tradition connects faith with duty and values. Even while living abroad, you are preserving India's cultural heritage and contributing to development,"

he said.

The CM also spoke about the celebration of Uttar Pradesh Day January 24, stating that the state has taken pride in promoting its heritage since 2017. He claimed that while only around 51,000 lamps were lit during the first Deepotsav in Ayodhya, the number has now grown to 2.5 to 3 million diyas simultaneously.

He further said that Uttar Pradesh has witnessed record tourist footfall, asserting that pride in cultural heritage drives social and economic progress.

The event began with a cultural programme featuring performances by young members of the Indian community. Praising their talent, the Chief Minister said their presentation of classical and devotional themes, including performances inspired by Ayodhya and Kashi traditions, was deeply impressive. Later, at a photo session with the performers, the venue resonated with chants of "Yogi, Yogi".

Nehru's statue demolished by miscreants in Assam's Cachar

Police have so far picked up one person and seized the excavator, by which the statue was uprooted, leading the Congress to raise allegations of leniency in taking action by the government

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Silchar (Assam), Feb 25: A statue of former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was demolished by unknown miscreants at Cachar district of Assam, triggering political outrage.

Coming down heavily on the government for its "disturbing silence" on the matter, Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi said the action has insulted the legacy of the freedom fighter who had laid the foundation of modern India.

The incident took place on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday at Pailapool market area under the jurisdiction of Lakhimpur police station in the Barak valley region, a police official said.

Police have so far picked up one person and seized the excavator, by which the statue was uprooted, leading the Congress to raise allegations of leniency in taking action by the government.

"We have not found any eyewitness to the incident. However, it is seen in a CCTV camera of the Merchant Association that some unknown miscreants were demolishing the statue with the help of an excavator," Lakhimpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Sankar Dayal told PTI.

The police have launched a probe into the incident and started to look out for the culprits, he added.

"We have registered an FIR. Although the police have apprehended one person relating to the incident and seized the excavator, we are not able to nab the driver yet," Dayal said.

Gogoi condemned the incident and demanded immediate



arrest of the culprits.

"Such an act does not merely destroy a statue; it insults the legacy of a great leader and distinguished freedom fighter who laid the foundation of modern India," he added.

Gogoi further stated that while there may be differences in political ideology, any attempt to erase democratic history through such unethical actions is unacceptable.

He also expressed concern that despite such a "disgraceful" incident occurring during the BJP's tenure, the government has maintained a "disturbing silence" on the matter.

"The strength of India and Assam lies in upholding pluralism and democratic values, and we must safeguard them at all costs," the Deputy Leader of Congress in Lok Sabha said.

He urged the authorities to immediately identify those involved in the act and take strict action against them.

Gogoi asserted that the people of Assam will never accept such acts of vandalism.

In a post on X, Assam Congress said, "The statue was brazenly vandalised using an

excavator. Assam Chief Minister's close aide, @iKaushikRai, is the MLA from Lakhimpur. We want to know: Who owns this excavator? Under whose direction was this act of vandalism carried out? We demand strict and exemplary action against the perpetrators."

Meanwhile, Congress leaders from Silchar reached the spot and filed a complaint with the police and demanded that the culprits be arrested immediately.

"It was a planned attack and an intentionally created incident. It was done to create tension among the people ahead of the elections," Silchar District Congress President Sajal Acherjee alleged.

Many other local groups also condemned the incident and sought the arrest of the culprits.

They also demanded that the police keep a strict vigil so that peace is not hampered months before the state goes into assembly polls.

The Assam Assembly elections for 126 constituencies are likely to take place in March-April this year.

Assam constitutes 8th Pay Commission; salaries of govt employees set to rise

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 25: The Assam government has constituted the 8th Pay Commission, 2026, for a comprehensive revision of the salary structure of its employees, according to an official order.

The 8th Assam Pay Commission will be headed by former Additional Chief Secretary Subhash Chandra Das, and consist of seven other members, the order issued by the Finance Department stated.

The last pay revision for Assam government employees took effect April 1, 2016, based on the recommendation of the 7th Assam Pay & Productivity Pay Commission.

The 8th Assam Pay Commission will submit its report within 18 months.

"The government is committed to strengthening fiscal sustainability, improving service delivery outcomes and



enhancing administrative efficiency. It is of the considered view that revision of pay structure must be accompanied by structural reforms in human resource management, technology adoption, outcome-based governance and rationalisation of manpower," the notification said.

The 8th Assam Pay Commission will exclude officers of all India services, posts drawing UGC or AICTE or technical pay scales in various educational institutions, and judicial service officers drawing salaries as per the recommendations of the Shetty Commission and the Second National Judicial Pay Commission, it said.

The state government-initiated panel will examine and recommend revisions in pay, allowances and service conditions in a manner that is equitable, performance oriented and fiscally sustainable, the order said.

It will also examine the emoluments given to the state government pensioners and family pensioners, particularly in relation to movements in the Consumer Price Index, and to recommend appropriate systems of dearness relief, pension revision and related matters consistent with fiscal sustainability, the notification added.



Activists of Asomiya Yuva Mancha take out a protest rally demanding justice for singer Zubeen Garg, in Guwahati, Assam, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

KAZIRANGA WATERBIRD ESTIMATION

Over 1L birds of 107 species recorded in Assam

THE FINDINGS REAFFIRM THE LANDSCAPE AS ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT WINTERING WATERBIRD ASSEMBLAGES IN THE BRAHMAPUTRA VALLEY AND AN IMPORTANT NODE WITHIN THE CENTRAL ASIAN FLYWAY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, Feb 25: A total of 1,05,540 birds belonging to 107 species were recorded during the 7th Kaziranga Waterbird Estimation conducted last winter across Kaziranga Lakhowa Burhachapori floodplain complex, an official said Wednesday.

The findings reaffirm the landscape as one of the most significant wintering waterbird assemblages in the Brahmaputra valley and an important node within the Central Asian Flyway, the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve official said.

Major species documented include grazing waterfowl, dabbling ducks, diving ducks, marsh specialists, waders,



storks, cormorants and piscivorous raptors, reflecting the presence of deep perennial beels, shallow mudflats, vegetated marshes and riparian

corridors within a connected floodplain matrix.

Migratory geese formed a substantial component of the total abundance, with 19,133

Bar-headed Geese and 6,533 Greylag Geese recorded, together accounting for over 25,000 birds.

High numbers were also recorded for Gadwall (5,283), Green-winged Teal (5,220), Ferruginous Pochard (5,594), Lesser Whistling Duck (6,700) and Grey-headed Swamphen (6,286), he said.

The official pointed out that the estimation comfortably exceeds the benchmark of 20,000 waterbirds, which is often referenced in Ramsar Criterion 5 for identifying wetlands of international importance.

The survey further documented species of global conservation concern, including endangered species such as *Leptoptilos dubius* (66) and *Haliaeetus leucorhynchus* (61).

Vulnerable species such as Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) (257) and near-threatened species, including Ferruginous Pochard (*Aythya nyroca*) (5,594) and Oriental Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*) (1,102) were also recorded.

Many of these species are also protected under various Schedules of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, reinforcing statutory conservation obligations at the national level.

Major wetlands such as Rowmari Beel and Donduba Beel functioned as key congregation centres, while wetlands within the Agoratoli and Bagori ranges, including Sohola and associated beels, contributed significantly to both abundance and species diversity, the survey noted.

Security tightened ahead of Lathmar Holi celebrations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mathura (UP), Feb 25: Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place for the famous Lathmar Holi celebrations to be held Wednesday evening in Barsana, with nearly 500 police officers and around 4,000 personnel deployed across the fair area, officials said.

District Magistrate Chandraprakash Singh and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar said the entire fair area has been divided into eight zones and 14 sectors to ensure the safety and security of devotees.

Around 4,000 security personnel drawn from various agencies have been deployed for crowd management and surveillance, they added.

According to officials, each zone will be supervised by an additional superintendent of police and a zonal magistrate, while every sector will remain under the charge of a deputy

superintendent of police and a sector magistrate.

More than 150 sensitive points have been covered with CCTV cameras, and drones are being used to monitor crowded areas.

Police personnel have been stationed across the fairgrounds to maintain strict vigil, and a specially constituted anti-hooligan squad has been tasked with keeping anti-social elements in check.

Authorities said all officials and personnel have been instructed to behave courteously with devotees and remain alert while on duty.

Strict action will be taken against any police personnel found absent from their assigned posts during inspections. Misbehaviour with visitors during the festival will not be tolerated, they said.

Surveillance is also being carried out through watch towers installed at 10 locations and five drone cameras.



Despite land having been allotted during the Congress government, the BJP government has now cancelled the satellite hospitals at Kanota and Achrol after coming to power. This is unfortunate, especially when the highest number of road accidents occur on the Agra and Delhi roads

ASHOK GEHLOT | FORMER RAJASTHAN CM

SHAH IN BIHAR ON THREE-DAY VISIT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Bihar Wednesday for a three-day tour during which he is expected to attend several functions in the strategically located Seemanchal region, besides reviewing "demographic changes" in the area



of the day quote

The Punjab Police is fighting Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and guarding the International Border with full vigilance, ascertaining that it is not just state's police but the nation's police

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM



Sending notices to voters on a large scale was the ruling BJP's 'votebandi' campaign after notebandi. The party's intent was wrong then and remains wrong now

AKHILESH YADAV | SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF



I want justice. I don't want to see whether those citizens left out of the rolls are (voters of) the TMC, Congress, CPI(M) or the BJP. I am against the deletion of anyone's name... It does not matter to me whether the victims are Hindus or Muslims, or members of any other community. I will pray for them, stand by them and fight for them. I want to say live and let live

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM



Quietly slipped off to Israel: Rahul's dig at PM

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Narendra 'Surrender' Modi, it's been more than 24 hours since I challenged you to cancel the US Trade Deal -- and once again, you've quietly slipped off to Israel"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Wednesday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying it has been more than 24 hours since he challenged the PM to scrap the India-US interim trade deal and once again, he (Modi) has "quietly slipped off to Israel".

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Narendra 'Surrender' Modi, it's been more than 24 hours since I challenged you to cancel the US Trade Deal -- and once again, you've quietly slipped off to Israel."

"At least once, you've already 'danced and sung' in Israel at Epstein's behest - so this time, on whose orders will you strike a deal against the country's interests and return?" the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha said.

Speaking in Bhopal, Gandhi on Tuesday had said the Indo-US interim trade deal was sealed under pressure and dared Prime Minister Modi to scrap the "anti-farmer" agreement, following the US Supreme Court ruling.

Addressing the 'Kisan Mahachaul' rally, the former Congress chief had described the agreement as "an arrow in the heart of farmers".

"After the US Supreme Court ruling on the trade deal (global tariffs), I challenge PM Modi to scrap it if he has courage...but he won't be able to do so," Gandhi had said.



Left parties slam Modi's Israel visit

New Delhi: The Left parties Wednesday strongly opposed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, alleging that the trip comes at a time when Israel is "waging a genocidal war in Gaza" and amounts to betrayal of the Palestinian cause. In a statement issued here, the Politburo of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) accused Israel of continuing strikes in Gaza despite a ceasefire, resulting in civilian casualties. It said the visit would "legitimise the murderous regime" of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "The CPI(M) strongly opposes Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel. The visit comes at a juncture when Israel has been waging a genocidal war in Gaza," the party said. "Despite a ceasefire, there are daily violations by Israel, which conducts strikes killing scores of Palestinians. In the occupied West Bank, there are stepped-up attacks on Palestinians and a spurt in illegal settlements," it said. The party said that the declared intent of the visit is also to deepen strategic, military and economic ties with a "Zionist expansionist regime" which seeks to dominate the region with the help of the United States.

In a major setback to Trump's pivotal economic agenda for his second term, the US Supreme Court, in a 6-3 verdict, ruled that the tariffs imposed by the president on nations around the world were illegal and that he had exceeded his authority when

he imposed the sweeping levies. Gandhi has alleged that the prime minister approved the agreement under external pressure linked to the threat of releasing "Epstein files" and an ongoing criminal case involving industrialist Gautam Adani in the US.

Developer shot dead in full public view in Howrah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 25: Tension prevailed throughout the day in the Pilkhana area under the Howrah city police commissioner's jurisdiction in West Bengal after a real estate developer was shot dead by assailants at point-blank range in full public view in the early hours of Wednesday, police said.

The incident, the chilling visuals of which were caught on CCTV cameras, took place around 4.10 am before a tea stall in Second Bye Lane in Pilkhana, a shanty town in the Golaria PS area of the city.

Till reports last received, no arrests were made in connection with the murder. One of the assailants was identified as Harun Khan who, the opposition BJP alleged, had close links with local TMC MLA Gautam Chowdhury.

While a mob brutally assaulted Mayukh Thakur Chakraborty, a correspondent with vernacular news channel ABP Ananda, when he reached the spot to cover the incident later in the day, incensed locals alleged police inaction, blocked the adjacent GT Road and burnt tyres, prompting the police and RAF to conduct route marches in the area. CCTV footage of the incident, which could not be independently verified by PTI, showed the victim, Safiq Khan (27), a local real estate developer, having a verbal exchange with one of his attackers and then collapsing after being shot in the head and chest repeatedly by two assailants.

The footage also showed panicked bystanders rapidly running away from the spot after the first shot was fired on the victim's head from behind, even as his attackers continued to pump bullets into the chest of Khan after he had collapsed.

Ex-branch manager among 4 held in ₹590-cr fraud



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 25: Haryana's State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau has arrested four people, including the alleged masterminds behind the Rs 590-crore IDFC First Bank fraud, with a private firm owned by the wife of a former employee emerging at the centre of the financial irregularities.

Two of the arrested are former employees of the IDFC First Bank, while the other two are private individuals who ran a partnership firm that allegedly received a substantial portion of the siphoned funds, officials said. The arrests were made Tuesday evening as part of the ongoing investigation into the fraud that has rocked the Haryana government's financial dealings.

Speaking to the media in Panchkula, State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (SV&ACB) Director General A S Chawla identified the arrested individuals as Ribhav

Rishi, Abhay Kumar, Swati Singla, and Abhishek Singla.

Rishi, who served as head of the bank's Sector 32 branch in Chandigarh until about six months ago, and Abhay Kumar, a relationship manager who resigned in August last year, have been described as "masterminds" of the fraud. According to investigators, the two allegedly orchestrated the diversion of government funds.

Swati Singla and her brother Abhishek Singla ran a firm named Swastik Dosh Project. Swati holds a 75 per cent stake in the company, while Abhishek owns the remaining 25 per cent. Chawla revealed that Swati is Abhay's wife.

Nearly Rs 300 crore -- more than half of the total fraud amount -- was transferred into the account of Swastik Dosh Project. "This is the main private company into whose accounts most of the funds were transferred. According to the bank records, nearly Rs 300 crore was transferred, and later the money was moved further," he said.

LEADER OF OPPOSITION BHUPINDER SINGH HOODA AND HARYANA CONGRESS CHIEF RAO NARENDER SINGH HAVE DEMANDED A CBI PROBE IN THE MATTER

EARLIER, SAINI, IN THE ASSEMBLY, SAID THAT THE IRREGULARITIES WERE PRIMARILY RELATED TO THE BANK'S CHANDIGARH BRANCH AND INVOLVED ALLEGED COLLUSION AT THE MIDDLE AND LOWER LEVELS

SHORT TAKES

CPI stalwart Nallakannu dead

Chennai: Veteran leader of the CPI and freedom fighter, R Nallakannu died here Wednesday at a government hospital where he had been treated for age-related ailments. He was aged about 101, party sources said. Chief Minister M K Stalin, paying glowing tributes, announced full state honours at the funeral of the departed leader. Condolences poured in from across the political spectrum, paying rich tributes to the Left leader.

Mandya teen's organs save six

Bangalore: The family of a 19-year-old youth donated his organs after he was declared brain dead, giving a new lease of life to six patients, officials said Wednesday. Darshan, a native of Chikka Mandya village in Karnataka's Mandya district, fell off his bike February 22 and sustained injuries, they said. Initially dismissing the fall, he returned home and went to sleep, officials added. According to a statement, when his condition worsened, he was rushed to a hospital, where doctors detected a severe internal brain haemorrhage.

Leopard captured from school premises

Ghaziabad (UP): The forest department Wednesday captured the leopard after it was sighted in a school premises in the Govindpuram area. Upon receiving information from the Greenfield Public School management, which sighted the leopard in CCTV, a team from the department reached the campus and evacuated the school for the safety of the students and faculty, and the school was closed, and authorities have established a security perimeter around the institution with police cordoning off all major access roads, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Isha Singh told PTI.

Army busts terror hideout in Poonch

Mendhar/Jammu: Security forces Wednesday unearthed a terrorist hideout in a forward village in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district and recovered a cache of arms, including two ready-to-use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and a pistol, officials said.

Scindia condemns BSNL director's Prayagraj trip



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia Wednesday slammed the "absurd and shocking" demands and arrangements linked to BSNL director Vivek Banzal's proposed visit to Prayagraj, saying a show-cause notice has been issued for violation of rules and the "unacceptable" conduct.

The cancelled two-day visit, scheduled for February 25-26, included a tightly planned schedule with a dip at the Sangam, a boat ride, and visits to Bade Hanuman Mandir, Akshayavat, and Patalpuri temples. The itinerary reportedly

included around 20 tasks and involved 50 officials assigned to manage every aspect of the trip, including transport, accommodation, and personal arrangements for Banzal.

Office orders revealed arranging for 'Snan' kits with towels, undergarments, slippers, combs, mirrors, soap, shampoo, and oil - six male kits and two female kits - along with a bed sheet for general use at the ghat. Hotel and Circuit House arrangements reportedly included dry fruits, fruit bowls, towels, toiletries, and shaving kits for the director, and possibly his guests. A show-cause notice has been issued to Vivek Banzal, Director (Consumer Fixed Access) of the BSNL Board, and the visit has been cancelled pending an official inquiry.

Speaking to reporters on Wednesday, Scindia said the episode was "unacceptable" and one that "flouts all rules and traditions".



Smoke and flames billow after a fire broke out in a hardware warehouse, at Kumbharpet in Chickpet area, in Bangalore, Karnataka

PTI PHOTO

After Keralam, chorus for renaming Delhi, Bengal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: BJP MP Praveen Khandelwal on Wednesday urged Union Home Minister Amit Shah to change the name of Delhi to Indraprastha, claiming that it reflects the city's true historical roots and cultural legacy.

In a letter to Shah, a day after the Union Cabinet gave its nod to rename Kerala to Keralam, the Lok Sabha MP from Delhi's Chandni Chowk constituency said that the Mahabharata describes Indraprastha as a magnificent city built on the banks of the Yamuna river, precisely matching the geographical setting of modern Delhi.

It is also supported by the Archaeological Survey of India's excavations at Purana Qila, Khandelwal claimed.

"Historical literature, archaeological findings and long-standing civilizational traditions establish that the



present-day Delhi corresponds to the ancient city of Indraprastha, the grand capital established by the Pandavas as described in the epic Mahabharata," he said in the letter to the Union home minister.

The epic describes Indraprastha as a magnificent city built on the banks of the Yamuna river, precisely matching the geographical setting of

modern Delhi, he pointed out.

Excavations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India at Purana Qila have revealed ancient settlement layers dating back to around 1,000 BC, along with Painted Grey Ware pottery associated with the Mahabharata era, Khandelwal claimed, adding that these findings strongly support the belief that the ancient city of

BJP MP PRAVEEN KHANDELWAL WROTE TO UNION HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH SEEKING A FORMAL PROCESS TO RENAME DELHI AS INDRAPRASTHA

..... KHANDELWAL REFERRED TO EXCAVATIONS BY THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA AT PURANA QILA TO SUPPORT THE BELIEF THAT ANCIENT INDRAPRASTHA EXISTED AT PRESENT-DAY DELHI

..... THE VHP HAD EARLIER RAISED A SIMILAR DEMAND

..... UNION CABINET APPROVED KERALA'S PROPOSAL TO RENAME THE STATE AS KERALAM TUESDAY

Indraprastha once flourished at the site where Delhi stands today.

The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) also raised the demand last year, arguing on the same lines. The name Indraprastha is used by some academic institutions as well as a CNG supplier to the city -- IGL.

Khandelwal argued that the name Delhi emerged during a much later historical phase. Scholars believe the name evolved from medieval references such as Dhillika or Dehli, associated with ruling dynasties of the early medieval period, he claimed. Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Wednesday said the Centre should accept the West Bengal government's demand to rename the state. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event here, Abdullah said, "Other states have also proposed name changes. If the West Bengal assembly is seeking to rename the state, the Centre should accept this demand." The chief minister also welcomed Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on his maiden visit to Kashmir. The vice president will attend the 21st convocation of the Kashmir University Thursday.

GURDASPUR COPS KILLING CASE

Punjab Police shoots 1 dead, nabs another

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, Feb 25: The Punjab Police shot dead a man in an exchange of fire and arrested another for their alleged involvement in the killing of two police personnel in Gurdaspur, an officer said Wednesday.

The action came after assistant sub-inspector Gurnam Singh and home guard Ashok Kumar were found dead Sunday inside a checkpoint in Adhian village, about 2 km from the International Border with Pakistan.

The bodies were discovered by Adhian village sarpanch Kamaljeet Singh around 8.15 am Sunday.

The area where the bodies of the police personnel were found is a hotbed of heroin smuggling and arms drop-offs by drones from across the border. Posters allegedly issued by an outfit calling itself Tehreek-e-Taliban Hindustan circulated on social media, claiming responsibility for the killings.

A police official said that three people -- Ranjit Singh (19), Inderjit Singh (21), and Dilawar Singh (19) -- had killed the two police personnel at the behest of their Pakistan-based handlers backed by the spy agency ISI.

While one of the accused has died in the encounter and another has been arrested, the third accused is still at large, the officer said.

Speaking to reporters in Gurdaspur, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Border Range) Sandeep Goel said Dilawar Singh and Ranjit Singh were arrested in connection with the murders and found that they were in touch with Pakistan ISI handlers.

The trio were tasked by their Pakistan-based handlers to kill police personnel, Goel said, adding that Dilawar Singh was offered Rs 20,000 by his handlers for the task, and he had received Rs 3,000.

They were lured by money, he said, adding that Inderjit was facing three drug cases.



Unity and faith are the foundation stones for a strong nation. When mutual trust increases in society, people rise above personal benefit and work together for a common aim. By promoting equality, leaving discrimination and by participating in social causes, every citizen can contribute to nation-building

3 PER CENT DA HIKE FOR MAHA GOVT EMPLOYEES

The dearness allowance (DA) of Maharashtra government's employees and other eligible staff will be hiked by three per cent to 58 per cent, with effect from July 2025, Minister of State for Finance Ashish Jaiswal announced in the legislature Wednesday



DA HIKE

Int'l Conference Plants to Patients 4 concludes successfully

AGENCIES

Haridwar, Feb 25: The two day International Conference Plants to Patients 4: Ethnopharmacology Beyond Times, organised by Patanjali Research Foundation and Patanjali University, concluded Wednesday. The event underscored the potential of traditional healing systems, particularly Ayurveda, to shape the future of global healthcare when supported by scientific research.

The conference brought together renowned scientists, researchers, and medical experts from across the globe, including Professors Domenico Vittorio Delfino, Louis-Felix Nothias, Rudolf Bauer, and YK Gupta, among others. The discussions focused on integrating Ayurveda, modern science, and contemporary medical systems to develop a holistic, evidence-based healthcare model.



Yog Rishi Swami Ramdev emphasised the importance of validating India's ancient medical knowledge with scientific evidence, ensuring its global acceptance. Acharya Balkrishna stressed the need for research-driven advancements in various traditional medical systems, including Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, and others, to create accessible, safe, and affordable healthcare solutions. Professor YK Gupta highlighted that true research begins with acknowledging the unknown, forming the foundation for evidence-based Ayurveda. Dr Anurag Varshney, Chief Scientist at Patanjali, discussed efforts to integrate Ayurveda with modern science for future drug discovery. The conference sent a strong message: when ancient wisdom is rigorously examined through modern scientific methods, it becomes stronger and more credible. Patanjali's ongoing efforts aim to elevate Ayurveda's global scientific recognition, signaling the start of a healthcare revolution.

AI SUMMIT PROTEST

Ugly standoff between Delhi, Shimla police



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shimla/New Delhi, Feb 25: In an ugly face-off, Himachal Pradesh police Wednesday registered a kidnapping case against Delhi police personnel and "detained" their vehicles at the Shogi border near Shimla when they were heading back to the national capital with three Youth Congress members arrested in connection with the "shirtless protest" at the AI Summit.

"A case has been registered against 15-20 unknown people in plain clothes for forcibly taking three people staying in a resort in Rohru. They also took the CCTV installed in the resort with them and did not give any receipt," a statement issued by the Shimla police said.

The Delhi police had earlier Wednesday said it had arrested three Youth Congress activists in connection with the February 20 protest at AI Impact Summit from a hotel in Chirgaon area of Rohru subdivision of Himachal's Shimla district.

Saurabh, Siddharth and Arbaz were apprehended by the Special Cell of Delhi Police. They were produced before a local court, which granted transit remand to enable the police to bring them to Delhi for further questioning, an official of the Delhi police said in the national capital.

Himachal Police sources claimed they intercepted three vehicles in Shimla and Solan districts and brought them back to Shimla as the Delhi police had not taken transit re-

mand. Both the Shimla police and the Delhi police accused each other of hampering the investigation.

The sources in Himachal Pradesh police claimed the team from Delhi carried out the operation in Shimla without informing the local police.

Acting on this, Himachal Pradesh police intercepted three vehicles carrying the accused - who are reportedly not residents of Himachal Pradesh - and Delhi Police personnel.

Two vehicles were stopped in Shimla, while the third was intercepted near Dharampur in Solan district. Around 20 people, including police personnel, were detained, the source said.

The Delhi police personnel again tried to leave for the national capital but were intercepted at Shogi border Wednesday night on the road to Chandigarh and not allowed to leave.

In a video that appeared from the Shogi border in the suburbs of Shimla city, the Delhi police officers were heard saying that they had arrested three people in the morning in connection with an FIR registered February 20. "We have to produce the accused arrested at 5 am today in the court in 24 hours, and you have stopped us after registering an FIR at 8 pm," an officer of the Delhi police said.

However, the Shimla police officers maintained that a case of abduction has been registered and the Delhi police is hampering the investigation.

They alleged that the Delhi police carried out an illegal operation at Rohru without informing the local police and no papers of arrest were shown.

The "shirtless" protest at Bharat Mandapam February 20 had triggered a major security response, with police earlier invoking charges including rioting and promoting enmity under relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).



A visitor clicks photographs amid blooming tulips during the Delhi Tulip Festival along the Shanti Path lawns, in New Delhi

Kerala Health Minister injured during protest by KSU activists

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kannur/Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 25: Kerala Health Minister Veena George was allegedly injured on Wednesday during a protest by activists of the Congress student wing, KSU, at Kannur railway station, police said.

The Kerala Students Union (KSU) and the state Congress leadership strongly denied the allegations and claimed that the incident was a "drama" staged by the minister and her party, the CPI(M).

The alleged incident occurred when the minister reached the station to board a Vande Bharat train after inaugurating the Kalyad International Ayurveda Research Centre, officials said.

State Assembly Speaker A N Shamseer, who was present at the station, said the minister suffered injuries to her hand and neck.

Television visuals showed the minister, accompanied by police personnel, involved in heated exchanges with slogan-shouting protesters holding black flags.

The protesters were seen being restrained by the police. At least five KSU activists have been taken into custody in connection with the incident.

Senior CPI(M) leader P Jayarajan said George was shifted to the District Hospital in Kan-



nur and is being treated in the intensive care unit.

The incident comes days after Youth Congress workers trespassed into George's official residence in Thiruvananthapuram and laid a funeral wreath in protest against alleged medical negligence cases linked to a surgical lapse at the Vandanam Government Medical College in Alappuzha several years ago.

The Kannur incident has triggered a political row in the poll-bound state, with the ruling CPI(M) and its youth wing DYFI holding protests in different parts of Kerala.

KSU leaders said their members staged only a peaceful protest and demanded the release

The Kerala Students Union (KSU) and the state Congress leadership strongly denied the allegations and claimed that the incident was a "drama" staged by the minister and her party, the CPI(M)

of CCTV footage from the railway station to establish what happened.

The ruling CPI(M) alleged a conspiracy behind the incident, while Congress leaders rejected the charge and accused the government of politicising the issue.

Amid claims and counter-claims between the CPI(M) and the Congress over the issue, a medical bulletin issued by the District Hospital stated that expert doctors appointed by the superintendent of Pariyaram Medical College Hospital examined the minister and recommended an MRI scan and other specialist examinations in connection with the injury to her neck.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan visited George at the hospital and condemned the incident.

Delhi man slits throats of pregnant wife, 3 daughters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: A man allegedly slit the throats of his two-month pregnant wife and three daughters at their residence in outermorth area of the national capital, with police suspecting that his preference for a son could be behind the killings, officials said.

First responders at the Prem Chand Park area house Wednesday morning witnessed a grisly sight 27-year-old Anita and her daughters, aged three, four and five years, lying in a pool of blood.

"All four victims had their throats slit with a sharp-edged weapon. The injuries were so deep that their windpipes was cut," a senior police officer said, describing the crime scene as

SHOCKING FAMILIAL TRAGEDY



"extremely brutal".

While investigators are probing all possible angles, including a suspected extramarital affair, preliminary inquiry suggests that the gruesome killings may have been triggered by the couple's three girl children and the lack of a son, police said, adding that the suspect, Mun-

chun Kewat, has been missing from the house.

Police said a PCR call was received at 8.07 am on Wednesday regarding the bodies lying inside a room on the ground floor of the house.

The bodies were first noticed in the morning by relatives and neighbours. "This morning, when my brother-in-law's son came with his uncle to go to the market, he was crying. I came down and asked him what happened," Rubi, a relative, told PTL. "He said aunt and cousins' throats have been slit." Rubi said. "When I asked around, I found out that there had been a murder. No one knew anything about it last night."

Prima facie, it appears that Kewat, allegedly intoxicated his wife and daughters before

attacking them. He has been missing since early morning and is the prime suspect in the case, police said.

"No specific reason has come to light yet, but it has been learned that they had a dispute around 9 pm last night," a police officer said, adding that all angles, including the possibility of an affair, are being examined.

Rubi said the family, originally from Bihar's Patna district, had been living in the area for the past two years and that the couple did not usually fight. Kewat worked as a vegetable seller at Azadpur Mandi, police said.

Crime and Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) teams inspected the scene and collected evidence. The bodies have been sent for postmortem examination.

Electoral bodies can't be reactive to tech disruption: Experts

Electoral institutions cannot afford to be reactive to technological disruption and must actively shape the normative and operational frameworks within which such technologies are deployed, the experts felt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: A group of experts representing international electoral institutions have said that expanding digitisation increases exposure to cybersecurity vulnerabilities, while "opaque automated systems" raise concerns about transparency and accountability.

It also felt that poll bodies cannot afford to be reactive to technological disruption. They noted that dependence on "external technological ecosystems" and uneven access to ex-

pertise further constrain institutional autonomy and widen disparities across jurisdictions.

They made these observations at an international symposium on 'AI and Elections: Innovation, Integrity and Institutional Preparedness' organised here last week by Election Commission's training arm, India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIDEM).

The panellists, according to details shared by IIDEM, felt that artificial intelligence holds significant promise for electoral administration.



When thoughtfully deployed, AI can enhance voter facilitation, improve accessibility for marginalised and under-represented communities, optimise logistics and operational planning, strengthen data-informed decision-making, and modernise communication between institutions and citizens.

These applications can contribute to greater efficiency, responsiveness, and inclusivity within electoral systems.

"The discussions were equally attentive to the risks embedded within rapid technological adoption. The proliferation of misinformation and AI-generated deepfakes threatens the integrity of public discourse and, by extension, voter confi-

dence," IIDEM said.

Algorithmic bias, if insufficiently examined, may erode principles of equality and fairness.

Expanding digitisation increases exposure to cybersecurity vulnerabilities, while opaque automated systems raise legitimate concerns about transparency and accountability, it noted.

Dependence on external technological ecosystems and uneven access to expertise further constrain institutional autonomy and widen disparities across jurisdictions, it said citing proceedings of the symposium.

"Taken together, these concerns underscore a central institutional imperative: preparedness must precede, or at least accompany, technological

integration. Ethical standards, regulatory clarity, operational safeguards, and sustained capacity-building are not peripheral considerations but foundational requirements," it said.

Electoral institutions cannot afford to be reactive to technological disruption and must actively shape the normative and operational frameworks within which such technologies are deployed, the experts felt.

The international panel included Alberto Fernandez Gibaja, head of programme, International IDEA, Juliane Muller, associate programme officer, International IDEA, Ameer Faiaz from the Election Commission of Sri Lanka, Raghava Mutharaju, associate professor, IIT Palakkad, and Sumit Talwar, co-founder of CreativebitsAI.

international



This reach-out was not related to encouraging Ukraine from refraining to attack Russian military and energy infrastructure. It was related to the very fact that American economic interest was affected there

OLGA STEFANISHYNA | AMBASSADOR, UKRAINE

SWIRLING BEAUTY OF MILKY WAY GALAXY'S HEART CAPTURED

A telescope in Chile has revealed in unprecedented detail the swirling splendour of star-forming gases at the heart of our Milky Way galaxy. The picture released Wednesday by the European Southern Observatory zeros in on a region of cold cosmic gases more than 650 light-years across



of the day quote

Our message from a European point of view is the same: We want partnership with China balanced, reliable, regulated and fair. This is our offer. At the same time, it is what we also hope for and expect from the Chinese side



I will send to Congress next week a bill to reform the electoral law that opponents worry could slash election budgets and open the door for the ruling Morena party to consolidate power in Congress



I see that Ukraine is preparing further actions to disrupt the operation of the Hungarian energy system. Therefore, I have ordered the reinforcement of protection for critical energy infrastructure. This means that we will deploy soldiers and equipment necessary to repel attacks near key energy facilities



Trump lays out case for possible attack on Iran

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 25: US President Donald Trump briefly laid out his case for a possible attack on Iran in his State of the Union speech to Congress Tuesday, saying he would not allow the world's biggest sponsor of terrorism to have a nuclear weapon.

Even while assembling a massive military force in the Middle East, Trump has done little to explain to the American public why he might be leading the US into its most aggressive action against the Islamic Republic since its 1979 revolution.

In his speech, Trump pointed to Tehran's support for militant groups, its killing of protesters and the country's missile and nuclear programs as threats to the region and the United States.

"The (Iranian) regime and its murderous proxies have spread nothing but terrorism and death and hate," the Republican president said about 90 minutes into his annual address to a joint session of the Senate and House of Representatives.

He accused Iran of restarting its nuclear program, working to build missiles that "soon" would be capable of reaching the United States and of being responsible for roadside bombings that have killed US service members and civilians.

Iranian state media have claimed that Tehran is developing a missile capable of reaching North America.

The run-up to Trump's address was overshadowed by the buildup of US military forces in the Middle East and preparations for a possible conflict with



Iran that could last for weeks if Tehran does not reach a deal to solve a longstanding dispute over its nuclear program.

Trump has repeatedly expressed frustration with negotiators' failure to reach an agreement. "They want to make a deal, but we haven't heard those secret words. 'We will never have a nuclear weapon,'" Trump said in his speech.

Iran says its nuclear research is for civilian energy production.

Trump also faulted the government in Tehran for the deaths of thousands of protesters during recent anti-government demonstrations, although the specific figure he cited - that 32,000 people had been killed - is much higher than most public estimates.

"What is claimed about Iran's nuclear program, Iran's intercontinental ballistic missile, and the number of people

killed in the January unrest is nothing but the repetition of a series of big lies," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said in a post on X Wednesday.

'FOREVER WARS' Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a briefing on Iran hours before the speech for Congress "Gang of Eight" - composed of the leaders of the Senate and House of Representatives and the two chambers' intelligence committees.

"First and foremost, if they want to do something in Iran - and who the hell knows what it is - they should make it public and discuss it with the public and not keep it in secret. When you do these military operations in secret, it always causes longer wars, tragedy, more expenses and mistake(s)," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer told a press conference shortly before the classified session.

Trump says Iran spreads 'terrorism and death and hate' Middle East military buildup overshadows run-up to speech Trump says he wants peace but Iran won't make deal

UK enforces digital permission to travel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, Feb 25: New rules in force from Wednesday will see the UK transition to a digital transit system, including mandatory eVisas for Indian travellers and Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) for non-visa requiring visitors.

The new procedure will replace paper-based visa stickers as part of a phased programme over recent years. While the new system will still involve a physical visit to the application centre for biometric registration, it will do away with the need to leave behind the passport document during the processing period.

"I'd urge anyone wanting to travel to the UK to ensure they are travel-ready and have the right permission, to make their journey much smoother," said Mike Tapp, UK Minister for Migration and Citizenship.

It will be mandatory for visitors to the UK to have obtained digital permission to travel, which means airlines can prevent passengers from boarding planes if they do not have an eVisa, ETA or other valid documentation.

The UK government had launched the eVisa system last year, with physical documents being accepted during the transition phase up until this week.

"An eVisa cannot be lost, stolen or tampered with, and allows visa holders to instantly and securely prove their immigration rights. Switching won't change, impact or remove a customer's current rights or immigration status," the Home Office said at the time.

The Home Office said it has been phasing out physical documents for several years through this transition to eVisas, with over 10 million issued to date.

PM Modi visits Israel as US-Iran tensions mount



Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the 'Speaker of the Knesset Medal' in recognition of his exceptional contribution to strengthening strategic relations between India and Israel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jerusalem, Feb 25: In a historic address to the Knesset, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday described the Gaza Peace Initiative as a path towards "just and durable peace" in the region even as he delivered a powerful message of solidarity with Israel, asserting that "terrorism anywhere threatens peace everywhere".

Modi said like Israel, India has a "consistent and uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism with no double standards" and called for sustained and coordinated global efforts to counter the menace.

The prime minister's address to the Knesset, Israel's house of representatives, came hours after he landed in the country to a rousing welcome with his

Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu along with his wife Sara receiving him at the Ben Gurion airport.

"I also carry with me the deepest condolences of the people of India for every life lost and for every family whose world was shattered in the barbaric terrorist attack by Hamas October 7 (2023)," Modi said.

"We feel your pain. We share your grief. India stands with Israel, firmly, with full conviction, in this moment, and beyond. No cause can justify the murder of civilians. Nothing can justify terrorism," he said.

Marking the first-ever speech by an Indian prime minister to the Knesset, Modi showed India's strong resolve to combat terrorism with full force.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and several other senior leaders were among the parliamentarians who attended the event. In the current context, Modi explicitly backed the Gaza Peace Initiative, describing the UN Security Council-endorsed plan as the definitive path toward a "just and durable peace" for the entire region.

"The Gaza Peace Initiative that was endorsed by the UN Security Council offers a pathway. India has expressed its firm support for the initiative," Modi said.

SHORT TAKES

Pak security forces kill 34 terrorists

Islamabad: At least 34 terrorists have been killed by Pakistani security forces as part of ongoing counter-terrorism operations, the army said Wednesday. The security forces killed 26 terrorists in four separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the north-west and another eight in Balochistan province in the south-west of the country. Over the last few days, security forces conducted a series of intelligence-based operations, part of a relentless counter-terrorism campaign, the army said in a statement. The statement said that the campaign is aimed at eliminating 'Fitna-al-Khwarji' and 'Fitna-al-Hindustan', a term the government uses claiming that the militants allegedly receive support from Indian intelligence agencies.

2019 Easter attack: SL's ex-intel head arrested

Colombo: Sri Lanka's former state intelligence service chief Suresh Sallay was arrested Wednesday, in connection with the 2019 Easter bombings that killed 270 people, police said. Sallay, a retired Major General, will be detained for 72 hours for questioning under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Sanjewa Madawatta, senior deputy inspector general, told reporters. The 2019 Easter Sunday bombings killed 270 people, including Indians, at Colombo five star hotels. Sallay headed the state intelligence service under the then Mahinda Rajapaksa government prior to 2015. He was arrested based on the investigations thus far on the 2019 Easter Sunday attack, Madawatta said. "There will be extensive investigations upon his arrest and the details could only be released later," he added.

US to end health aid to Zimbabwe

Harare (Zimbabwe): The United States has said it will begin winding down health assistance to Zimbabwe after the collapse of negotiations on a proposed multi-million-dollar bilateral funding agreement. Zimbabwe's decision was driven by concerns over data sharing concerns, fairness, sovereignty and Washington's broader shift away from global health institutions, government spokesperson Nick Mangwana said Wednesday. The US had offered \$367 million over five years to support Zimbabwe's priority health programmes, including HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention, tuberculosis, malaria, maternal and child health, and disease outbreak preparedness, the US embassy in Zimbabwe said.

Ukrainian negotiators to meet US team Thursday

REUTERS

Kyiv, Feb 25: Ukrainian negotiators will meet US officials Thursday to discuss post-war reconstruction, including a "prosperity package", ahead of a new round of trilateral talks with Russia expected in March, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. Zelenskyy said the US wanted to find a way to end as soon as possible Europe's biggest conflict since World War Two. But Moscow and Kyiv remain far apart in their positions.

"In my opinion, the difficulties are not at the military level right now. The problem lies in the political will to end this war and in the issue of territories," Zelenskyy told a joint news conference with visiting Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere.

"I think that trilateral talks will be held in early March. Tomorrow, economic documents will be prepared at a bilateral meeting between Ukraine and the United States."

Zelenskyy also said that Rus-

- Ukraine-US to discuss post-war reconstruction in Geneva Zelenskyy denies Russian claims of seeking nuclear weapons Ukraine pitches EU membership, investment opportunities

sian claims Tuesday that Kyiv was trying to obtain nuclear weapons were an attempt to exert political pressure on Ukraine during the ongoing talks.

He reiterated that Ukraine had no nuclear weapons and called on the US to react to what he described as dangerous rhetoric by Russia. Rustem Umerov, the secretary of the National Security and Defence Council, and head of Ukraine's negotiating team, will meet in Geneva Thursday with US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

Proceeding with the reconstruction of Ukraine after the destruction wrought by Russian aerial strikes and frontline combat has become a major element in broader talks on how to end the war, which entered its fifth year this week.

US, SK militaries signal joint drills in March

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, Feb 25: The US and South Korean militaries said Wednesday they will conduct their annual springtime exercises next month to bolster their countries' combined defence capabilities against a backdrop of a deepening diplomatic freeze with nuclear-armed North Korea.

The Freedom Shield drills are set for March 9-19, according to the announcement. North Korea has long described the allies' joint exercises as invasion rehearsals and used them as a pretext to dial up its own military demonstrations and weapons testing activity. The allies say the drills are defensive in nature.

The announcement came as North Korea is holding a major political conference where authoritarian leader Kim Jong Un is expected to outline his key domestic, foreign policy and military goals for the next five years. North Korean state media have not so far reported any direct comments by Kim on



relations with Washington and Seoul at the ruling Workers' Party congress, which began last week.

Based on recent public comments, experts say Kim could use the congress to further entrench his hard-line stance toward South Korea, reiterate calls for Washington to drop its demand for denuclearisation as a precondition for renewed

while incorporating evolving war scenarios and security challenges.

As usual, the March drill will be accompanied by a field training program called Warrior Shield to enhance "training realism and combat readiness," Col. Ryan Donald, public affairs director of US Forces Korea, told a news conference.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said about 18,000 South Korean troops will participate in Freedom Shield, while the US military did not disclose how many American troops will be involved.

There has been speculation that the allies are seeking to tone down the drills to create conditions for dialogue with North Korea.

Liberal South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has expressed a desire for inter-Korean engagement, and some of his top officials have voiced hope that President Donald Trump's expected visit to China in late March or April could open the door to renewed talks between Washington and Pyongyang.

Record 129 journalists, media workers killed in 2025: CPJ

REUTERS

Washington, Feb 25: A record 129 journalists and media workers were killed in the course of their work last year, two-thirds of them killed by Israel, the Committee to Protect Journalists said Wednesday.

It was the second straight year that press killings set a record and the second straight year that Israel was responsible for two-thirds of them, the CPJ, a New York-based independent organization which documents attacks on the press, said in its annual report.

Israeli fire killed 86 journalists in 2025, mostly Palestinians in Gaza but also including 31 workers in an attack on a Houthi media centre in Yemen, the second deadliest attack the CPJ has ever recorded, it said.

Israel was also responsible for 81 percent of the 47 killings that the CPJ classified as intentionally targeted, or "murder". It said the actual figure was probably higher due to access restrictions that made verification difficult in Gaza.

Israel's military did not respond to a request for comment. It has said in the past that its troops in Gaza target only combatants, but that operating in combat zones carries inherent risks. Israel acknowledged targeting the media centre in Yemen in September, describing it at the time as a propaganda arm of the Houthis.

In several cases Israel has acknowledged targeting journalists in Gaza it said had links to Hamas, without providing verifiable evidence. International news organisations



have strongly denied that slain reporters had links to militants. The CPJ called such allegations by Israel "deadly smears".

Israel does not permit foreign journalists to enter Gaza, so all the media workers killed there

were Palestinians.

The report said the "Israeli military has now committed more targeted killings of the press than any other government's military on record", noting that the CPJ started

- ISRAEL RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE KILLINGS, CPJ SAYS CPJ SAYS AT LEAST 47 JOURNALISTS WORLDWIDE WERE DELIBERATELY TARGETED GROUP SAYS AT LEAST 104 OF THE 129 JOURNALISTS KILLED DIED IN CONNECTION WITH CONFLICTS

collecting data more than three decades ago.

Its report said at least 104 of the 129 journalists killed died in connection with conflicts. Apart from Gaza and Yemen, the deadliest countries for journalists include Sudan, where nine were killed, and Mexico, where six died. Four Ukrainian journalists were killed by Russian forces and

three journalists died in the Philippines, it said.

Two sources say investment firm General Atlantic is selling an equity stake in ByteDance in a deal that values the Chinese social media giant at \$550 billion. Russia has denied deliberately targeting journalists and has accused Ukraine of targeting Russian reporters, which Kyiv denies. There was no immediate comment from Russia's embassy in Washington to the CPJ report.

Those killed last year included Reuters journalist Hussam al-Masri, killed by Israeli fire in August while operating a live video feed at Gaza's Nasser Hospital. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu regretted the attack, which also killed four other journalists, as a "tragic mishap".



By transitioning vehicle movement from road to rail, the project demonstrates how scale, operational efficiency and environmental responsibility can seamlessly go hand in hand

HISASHI TAKEUCHI | MD AND CEO, MARUTI SUZUKI

FLY91 EXPANDS FLEET

Regional air carrier FLY91 Wednesday said it has inducted two new ATR 72-600 aircraft into its fleet, bringing the total number of aircraft to six. The latest two aircraft acquired from Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) will be deployed across underserved, emerging regional destinations in India, the Goa-headquartered airline said. FLY91 is the most recent entrant in the domestic aviation space, having started commercial flight operations in March 2024



of the day **QUOTE**

India's next aviation leap will not be incremental -- it will be transformational. Electric regional aircraft offer a real opportunity to reduce operating costs while dramatically cutting emissions

RAVI ANDREWS | FOUNDER, MAKMOR



AI enables real-time visibility of every revenue stream, helps detect fraud and leakage early, and supports the launch of new services with full traceability, trust, and compliance

NISHA DUTT | MD AND CEO, SUBEX



Under the guidance from the ministry of coal, we have identified seven mine dumps for rare earth elements extraction. We have started the tendering process and within a year or so we will identify which area, which mine dumps, overburden carry rare earth elements

HARISH DUHAN | CHAIRMAN AND MD, SECL



SHORT TAKES

Xiaomi challenges India tax authority

New Delhi: Xiaomi has challenged an Indian tax ruling that said the company evaded \$72 million in tariffs on royalty payments, according to legal documents, a dispute that the Chinese company and lawyers say is a test of the country's legal framework for contract manufacturing. Xiaomi, a major player in the Indian smartphone market, has for years had its contract manufacturers in the country import parts from China, pay customs duties and then assemble the devices. In a Supreme Court challenge, Xiaomi argued that the tax tribunal erred by saying it was the "beneficial owner" of the components while requiring it to pay tax on the royalties. Xiaomi has asked that the ruling be overturned. The implications of the tribunal's ruling are far-reaching as they indicate "an implicit mistrust of the entire contract manufacturing industry," Xiaomi said in a filing dated January 15.

Fitch affirms stable outlook for PNB, BoB

New Delhi: Fitch Ratings Wednesday affirmed ratings of two public sector banks -- Punjab National Bank (PNB) and Bank of Baroda (BoB) at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook. PNB and BoB's long-term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) reflects Fitch's expectation of a high probability of extraordinary state support for the bank, if required, the global rating agency said in two separate statements. The government holds 70 per cent and 64 per cent in PNB and BoB, respectively.

\$68.6bn rout: AI takes down IT

The selloff reflects growing concerns that rapidly advancing automation tools could compress project timelines and disrupts the labour-intensive delivery model underpinning India's roughly \$300bn IT services industry

IT COMPANIES FEEL THE HEAT

Company	Change in market cap (\$ billion)
Coforge	1.6
HCLTech	10.6
Infosys	16.3
LTIMindtree	4.8
Mphasis	1.1
Oracle	1.3
Persistent	2.4
TCS	21.9
Tech Mahindra	4.3
Wipro	4.2
Total	68.6

Note: As of markets close on Feb 24, 2026
Source: Exchange data

There are no easy answers to whether AI eventually renders IT services obsolete over the long term. The narrative that AI is coming for not just IT but large swathes of the economy could be too strong to shake, at least in the short term

ABHISHEK PATHAK, ANALYST | MOTILAL OSWAL

Mumbai, Feb 25: Indian shares have lagged their Asian and emerging market peers so far in February, pressured by a \$68.6 billion rout in the market value of information technology stocks, as investors fretted over disruptions linked to artificial intelligence. The Nifty 50 index has risen 0.4% so far this month, while the Sensex edged 0.1% lower, underperforming both the MSCI Asia ex-Japan and MSCI Emerging Markets indexes. The pressure on the benchmark indexes has largely come from IT stocks, which carry roughly an 11% weightage in the blue-chip index, the second-highest sectoral weight. The 10 Nifty IT constituents have lost a combined

\$68.6 billion in market capitalisation in February, as of the last close, with the index down 21% and on course for its worst monthly performance in nearly 23 years. All 10 index members have fallen between 16.8% and 27% in February to date. Coforge is the steepest percentage de-

Nifty 50 down 21%, on course for worst month in about 23 years

Shares underperform Asian, emerging market peers in Feb so far

Foreign portfolio investors' outflows from IT intensifies this month

heightening concerns over faster project execution, pricing pressure and reduced billable hours. Brokerages warn the Indian IT sector could face further pressure if AI starts to eat into application services revenue, which typically accounts for 40% to 70% of total revenue for these companies. A slowdown or contraction in India's IT sector, whether through layoffs or reduced hiring, can have immediate consequences on both residential and commercial real estate demand. The Nifty Realty index has risen roughly 2% in February, following a nearly 18% decline over the past three months. Concerns over Indian IT companies have also accelerated foreign selling in the sector in 2026 so far. While FPIs have turned buyers of Indian stocks in February on an overall basis, with inflows of Rs 196.75 billion, they pulled out about Rs 110 billion (\$1.21 billion)

GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

Silver, gold surge on safe-haven demand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Precious metal prices increased up to 2 per cent in the national capital Wednesday, with silver rising to Rs 2.77 lakh per kilogram, and gold advancing to Rs 1.64 lakh per 10 grams, tracking strong global trends and sustained safe-haven buying. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal jumped Rs 5,900, or 2 per cent, to Rs 2,77,900 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 2,72,000 per kg. Extending its gains for the fifth consecutive session, gold of 99.9 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 1,000, or nearly 1 per cent, to Rs 1,64,200 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,63,200 per 10 grams in the previous market session. "Gold held on to moderate gains on Wednesday as persistent uncertainty over US trade policy and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East continued to drive safe-haven flows into precious metals," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. He added that ongoing tariff-related uncertainty, along with US President Donald Trump's renewed threats of higher duties, has kept financial markets on edge and reinforced investor demand for defensive assets such as gold.

Markets edge up in volatile trade

MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty pared early sharp gains to close marginally higher in a volatile session Wednesday as the US imposing 126 per cent import duties on Indian solar goods dampened investor sentiment and triggered profit-taking. Retreating around 674 points from the day's high, the 30-share BSE Sensex finally ended 50.15 points or 0.06 per cent higher at 82,276.07. During the day, it jumped 731.99 points or 0.89 per cent to a high of 82,957.91. The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 57.85 points or 0.23 per cent to settle at 25,482.50. It hit a high of 25,652.60 during the day, up by around 228 points from the last close. In the broader market, solar sector shares tanked more than 14 per cent after the US announced a preliminary countervailing duty of nearly 126 per cent on imports of certain Indian solar goods, alleging that these products are unfairly subsidised by New Delhi. Waaree Energies tumbled 10.47 per cent, Premier Energies dropped 6.27 per cent, Vikram Solar declined 5.45 per cent and Sterling and Wilson Renewable Energy dipped 1.05 per cent.

from IT stocks in the first half of February, following a record Rs 750 billion of net selling in 2025.

WEAK YIELDS

Sugar output estimate cut 5.57% for 2025-26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: India's sugar production has been revised down 5.57 per cent to 32.40 million tonne for the 2025-26 marketing year, industry body ISMA said Wednesday, citing lower yields in top producers Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh. The third advance estimate, released after an executive committee meeting, follows a second projection of 34.35 million tonne. Output last year was 29.62 million tonne. After diverting 3.1 million tonne for ethanol, net availability will reach 29.3 million tonne, up from 26.12 million tonne in 2024-25. Including 5 million tonne opening stock, the total availability of 34.3 million tonne exceeds domestic consumption of 28.3 million tonne, ISMA said. ISMA forecast exports at 700,000 tonne and closing stocks at 5.3 million tonne. Net production in Maharashtra is estimated at 10.6 million tonne, Uttar Pradesh at 9.25 million tonne and Karnataka at 4.84 million tonne - all revised lower but above last year's levels. In Uttar Pradesh, lower yields stem from a varietal replacement programme, though recovery rates improved. Maharashtra and Karnataka saw reduced yields from early sugarcane flowering due to excess rain and shorter harvest windows from higher crush rates, ISMA said in a statement.

TechnoSport solidifies retail presence in Odisha

The activewear brand launches Exclusive Brand Outlet in Rourkela



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, Feb 25: TechnoSport, India's fastest-growing activewear brand, has announced the launch of its first Exclusive Brand Outlet (EBO) at the Plutone Mall in Rourkela Odisha. Spread across 3,419 square feet on the second floor, Unit-4, the new store marks a key milestone in the brand's ongoing retail expansion journey, as it continues to strengthen its offline presence across emerging Indian markets. With the Rourkela EBO open-

operating channel, and with this segment, Odisha ranks among the strongest markets nationally. From a consumer lens as well, the state demonstrates exceptionally high brand recall placing Odisha as a priority market. Reinforcing its long-term commitment to the state, TechnoSport had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Odisha last year, announcing a 100 crore investment to set up a state-of-the-art activewear manufacturing facility. The upcoming unit, which will be part of a world-class industrial estate, is expected to generate employment for over 1,000 workers, contributing to the region's industrial and economic development. Speaking on the launch, Puspita Maity, CEO, TechnoSport, said, "The launch of our Exclusive Brand Outlet in Rourkela marks an important step in strengthening TechnoSport's presence across high-potential Tier-2 and industrial markets. Odisha has consistently been one of our strongest regions, backed by high consumer brand recall and deep general trade strength. This store allows us to build closer engagement with the market while expanding our organized retail footprint in East India."

Essen Premia Cuttack unveils new Harley-Davidson X440T

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, Feb 25: Essen Premia, Odisha's premier Harley-Davidson dealership, Wednesday officially launched the highly anticipated Harley-Davidson X440T here. Priced at an attractive Rs 2,79,500 (ex-showroom), the X440T represents a massive leap forward in the premium mid-size segment. The "T" variant is far more than a visual refresh; it incorporates a staggering 72 significant changes over the standard X440. Engineered for modern riders, the X440T features ride-by-wire technology, road and rain modes, refreshed neo-retro styling, and optimised mechanicals for smoother urban and highway performance. The high-profile unveiling was led by Nabajit Kakati (zonal lead, East) and Ankur Singh (territory manager, East). They were joined by the leadership team of Essen Premia - dealer principal Hemant Kumar Thacker, alongside managing directors Jitendra Kumar Thacker, Saurabh Thacker, and Nishant Thacker. "The X440T is a testament to Harley-Davidson's commitment to innovation," said Hemant Kumar Thacker. "With 72 upgrades and advanced electronics like Ride-by-Wire, we are offering Cuttack's riders a world-class motorcycling experience at a compelling price point." The launch event was a vibrant celebration of the local riding culture, attended by existing customers, veteran riders, and prominent social media influencers. The energy peaked with the on-the-spot delivery of three new X440T motorcycles to their proud first owners.



Smartphones now lead India's export basket

Total overseas shipment worth \$30bn in 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Smartphone has become India's top export category with overseas shipments worth \$30 billion in 2025, Union Electronics and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said Wednesday. The minister shared the development in a social media post. "Becoming the smartphone manufacturing factory for the world," Vaishnav said. The photo post titled Smartphones India's No 1 export category displayed that there were exports worth \$30 billion in January-December 2025. Mobile phones worth Rs 5.5 lakh crore (\$60 billion) were produced in the country, and

India will be touching almost 30 crore units of mobile phone production, and one in four smartphones produced in India are estimated to have been exported in 2025

NEIL SHAH | CO-FOUNDER, COUNTERPOINT

exports from the segment were worth around Rs 2 lakh crore (about \$22 billion) in 2024-25. Electronics exports from the country have crossed Rs 4 lakh crore (\$44 billion) in 2025 and are expected to grow when four semiconductor plants begin production this year. Neil Shah, Co-Founder and VP for Research at market research and analysis firm Counterpoint, said Apple has



become a poster child for India by expanding its manufacturing post-US tariffs on China and with exports from India reaching a record high. "High ASP (average selling price) or premium USA market is one of the largest export destinations driven by Apple, Samsung, and Motorola, also boosting the export value reaching highest ever," Shah said. According to the International Data Corporation's World-

Steel industry pioneer J Mehra no more

Mehra played an instrumental role in advancing the Paradip steel project in Odisha

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 25: Jatinder Mehra, a veteran of India's steel and metals industry with a career spanning more than six decades, died February 24. He was 86. Mehra was serving as vice chairman of the Metals & Mining Division at Essar Group, where he provided strategic direction across the conglomerate's metals and mining businesses. He was widely regarded for his technical expertise, operational leadership and role in shaping large-scale industrial projects.



"The Essar family is deeply saddened by the passing of Shri Jatinder Mehra ji, a respected veteran of India's steel industry and a leader whose vision charted some of our most significant milestones at Essar Group," the group said in a post on X. Mehra, it said, "spearheaded numerous transformation-

al projects, turning ideas into impact and inspiring teams with his clarity, commitment and leadership. His contributions remain embedded in our journey, and his legacy will continue to guide us forward." During his tenure at Essar, Mehra played a key role in expanding steelmaking capacity at Hazira and advancing integrated steel projects, including the proposed Paradip steel facility in Odisha. His leadership contributed to strengthening the group's footprint in the global steel sector. Prior to joining Essar, Mehra held several senior positions in public sector steel industry. He served as executive director at the Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) and later as chairman-cum-managing director of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL).

Bounce-back mission

Men in Blue seek answers to top-order worries in must-win Super 8s game against Zimbabwe

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, Feb 25: Bugged down by top-order brittleness and under pressure after a heavy loss, defending champions India would need every ounce of resilience they can muster when they take on a tricky Zimbabwe in their second Super 8 match of the T20 World Cup here Thursday.

Winning this contest by a big margin is critical to India's existence in the ICC showpiece given the beating their net run rate (-3.80) took after the 76-run defeat to South Africa Sunday.

But for that, India need to fix the issues surrounding the opening and No 3 slots. Coming into this World Cup, the reigning champions rode on excellence from Ishan Kishan and Abhishek Sharma at the pole position to quell the bilateral challenges against South Africa and New Zealand at home.

But light seems to have gone out of Abhishek's batting after a stomach infection. A combination of dull pitches and off-spinners, who took the ball away from his hitting arc, has reduced the left-hander's firepower.

He is certainly a better batter than his current numbers -- 15 runs from four matches at an average of 3.75 made at a strike-rate of 75.

However, the real question is can he set aside the desire to play his natural game, and grind some runs against his name?

It may not look flashy, but one needs to look ugly, at times, to win. Tilak Varma too needs a course correction, but of a different nature. One can ar-

T20 WORLD CUP



SUPER 8s STANDINGS						
Group-A						
TEAMS	M	W	L	N/R	PT	NRR
West Indies	1	1	0	0	2	+5.35
South Africa	1	1	0	0	2	+3.8
India	1	0	1	0	0	-3.8
Zimbabwe	1	0	1	0	0	-5.35

Group-B						
TEAMS	M	W	L	N/R	PT	NRR
England	2	2	0	0	4	+1.49
New Zealand	2	1	0	1	3	+3.05
Pakistan	2	0	1	1	1	-0.46
Sri Lanka	2	0	2	0	0	-2.80

TODAY'S CLASHES		
West Indies vs South Africa	Time: 3:00 pm	
India vs Zimbabwe	Time: 7:00 pm	

gue that Abhishek's lean patch has necessitated Tilak to play a more supportive role to Kishan, who continues to impress with a strike-rate of 193 amid the top-order ruins around him.

But even then, a strike-rate of 118 is too less for a batter playing in the Power Play segment as per the modern T20 template. He generally strikes around 141 in T20Is.

Suryakumar Yadav has 180 runs but those have come at 127, way less than his T20I ca-

reer strike-rate of 161. It has left Kishan with the job of doing all the heavy-lifting by himself.

Had it not been for the acceleration given by Shivam Dube and Hardik Pandya, India would have struggled to reach par totals in a couple of matches at least.

Should Samson be back?

The opposition teams have cleverly fielded off-spinners in the Power Play against the three left-handed batters -- Kishan, Abhishek and Tilak -- to reduce their scoring opportunities.

The inclusion of Sanju Samson, a right-hander, in top three can be a quick fix, but the Kerala batter himself is not in the pink of form.

So, the effect of adding another struggling batter to an already difficult space is debat-

SEMIFINALS: INDIA'S QUALIFICATION MATH

Scenario 1 - India win both of their remaining matches

India's semifinal hopes hinge on multiple scenarios. If the Men in Blue beat Zimbabwe and West Indies, they will finish the Super 8 with four points. Should South Africa win both their remaining matches, they will top the group with six points, and India can qualify without depending on Net Run Rate (NRR). However, if South Africa lose to West Indies, all three teams could be tied on four points, making NRR decisive. If South Africa lose both games, West Indies (six points) and India (four points) will advance, eliminating South Africa.

Scenario 2 - India win one of their two remaining matches

India must beat West Indies to stay alive in the semifinal race. If South Africa win both remaining matches, they will top the group with six points. Should India defeat West Indies but lose to Zimbabwe, all three teams could finish on two points, bringing Net Run Rate (NRR) into play again. Even if South Africa lose both games, they can still reach the semifinals if their NRR remains superior to India's.

able. What might work for India is the fact that Zimbabwe's spin attack of Graeme Cremer, Sikandar Raza and Ryan Burl is not as potent as some others that the co-hosts have faced

thus far in the tournament.

Adding teeth to India's attack, left-arm spinner and vice-captain Axar Patel, who was benched against South Africa, is poised to make a return for this match.

KIWIS KNOCK OUT CO-HOSTS SRI LANKA BY 61 RUNS

Colombo: Co-hosts Sri Lanka were Wednesday knocked out of T20 World Cup as Rachin Ravindra grabbed a career-best 4/27 in a splendid all-round display to power New Zealand to a comprehensive 61-run victory in their Super Eights clash here. Cole McConeh justified his selection with a composed unbeaten 31 off 23 balls (3x4, 2x6) while skipper Mitchell Santner came into his own with a 26-ball 47 (2x4, 4x6) as the duo stitched a match-defining 84-run seventh wicket stand off 47 balls to lift New Zealand to 168/7 after Sri Lanka opted to bowl. Chasing 169, Sri Lanka could only score 107/8 with Ravindra -- who also made 32 with the bat -- leading the spin charge after pacer Matt Henry rocked the islanders in the powerplay with a sensational bowling display of 2-1-3-2. The emphatic victory margin not only sealed two crucial points for New Zealand but also put them firmly on the brink of a semifinal berth. Pakistan will now need a massive win in their final game against Sri Lanka to keep their semifinal qualification hopes alive.

J&K tighten grip on Karnataka

RANJI TROPHY FINAL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hubballi, Feb 25: Jammu and Kashmir piled on the agony for Karnataka, reaching a commanding 527 for six against the eight-time champions before bad light forced an early end to the second day of the Ranji Trophy final here Wednesday.

Resuming on 284/2, J&K batters capitalised on a good surface with Kanhaiya Wadhawan and skipper Paras Dogra scoring 70 each to keep the scoreboard moving at a steady pace.

Shubham Pundir (121) had set the tone earlier, while Yawer Hassan (88) and Abdul Samad (61) ensured Karnataka bowlers were made to toil for long periods.

Sahil Lotra, who found a place in the XI due to Vanshaj Sharma's injury, grabbed his opportunity with a fluent unbeaten 57



Jammu and Kashmir skipper Dogra set to be fined 50% of his match fees for head-butting Karnataka's KV Aneesh

at No 7, becoming the sixth J&K batter to cross the 50-run mark.

Abid Mushtaq was unbeaten on 20 as J&K ended the day firmly in control. For Karnataka, pacer Prasad Krishna was the pick of the bowlers with 3/90, but it was largely a day of hard grind for the hosts, who

rotated as many as six bowlers.

Karun Nair also rolled his arm over for a couple of overs of part-time off-spin in search of a breakthrough.

Jammu and Kashmir skipper Paras Dogra is all set to be fined 50 per cent of his match fees for intentionally head-butting Karnataka's substitute fielder KV Aneesh during an ill-tempered second day of the Ranji Trophy final. While the official announcement from BCCI match referee Narayanan Kutty will only come after the end of the game, physical handling of opposition player obviously leads to sanctions and match bans. In this case, the doyen of domestic cricket is set to escape with a mild punishment.

BRIEF SCORES	
Jammu and Kashmir:	527/6 in 156 overs (Shubham Pundir 121, Yawer Hassan 88, Paras Dogra 70, Kanhaiya Wadhawan 70, Abdul Samad 61, Sahil Lotra 57 batting, Abid Mushtaq 20 batting; Prasad Krishna 3/90) vs Karnataka.

India deaf team wins ADCA T20I Asia Cup



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Cuttack, Feb 25: The first edition of the ADCA T20I Asia Cup 2026 at Cuttack's Barabati Stadium came to an end Wednesday with Team India beating the Sri Lanka Deaf team by six wickets to win the first Asia Cup trophy.

The event saw some amazing performances throughout the series, with India winning their very first match against Sri

Lanka by 4 wickets, followed by a dominating 10-wicket win against Nepal in the second match, and Sri Lanka winning by 6 wickets against Nepal in the third match.

In the reverse fixture, Sri Lanka again won against Nepal by 157 runs, followed by India registering a narrow 1-run win against Sri Lanka and a dominating 9-wicket victory against Nepal to secure their spot in the

FIH PRO LEAGUE

INDIA'S LOSING STREAK ENDS

Shoot-out glory against Australia helps Men in Blue register their maiden win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hobart, Feb 25: The Indian men's hockey team ended a prolonged losing streak in the FIH Pro League, upstaging world No 3 Australia 3-1 in a shoot-out after both sides were locked 1-1 at the end of regulation time, here Wednesday.

It was a close battle between the two teams in the first three quarters, which ended goalless but the win in their final game of the Hobart leg of the Pro League should be a confidence booster for the Indians.

Australia finally took the lead in the 49th minute through a penalty corner conversion by Jeremy Hayward.

But the home team's joy was short-lived as Shilanand Lakra (51st) scored a fine field goal two minutes later to draw level.

Thereafter, both teams tried hard to score the all-important winner but failed as the match went into the shoot-out, where India emerged victorious to

take two points while Australia pocketed one point.

In the shoot-out, Lakra, Maninder Singh and Vishnu-kant Singh scored for India, while Australia's lone goal was scored by Hayward as India custodian Mohith Shashikumar Honnenahalli produced a superb show under the post.

After a disastrous Rourkela leg of the Pro League where India had lost all four matches, India had made a losing start to the Hobart leg.

India are currently placed eighth in the nine-team competition with just four points from eight matches

India had lost 0-2 to Spain in the first leg match before going down 4-5 in shoot-out against Australia following a 2-2 draw.

The Indians then went down 3-4 in a shoot-out against Spain in the return leg after a tense 1-1 draw Tuesday.

India will next play against the Netherlands and Germany in the Rotterdam leg, starting with a match against the hosts June 21.



Army defends KIWG team championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Gulmarg, Feb 25: Army won an overall nine goal medals including eight in the Gulmarg leg to defend their team championship title in the Khe-10 India Winter Games, here Wednesday.

Himachal Pradesh finished as the runner-up with four goal medals on the final day of the competition. The closing ceremony the KIWG will be held at the Golf Course here Thursday, hosted by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council and managed by the Sports Authority of India.

The first leg of KIWG was held in Ladakh from January 20-26. On the third day of the competition, Army and Himachal Pradesh won equal number of four gold medals apiece while hosts J&K won their first gold. J&K finished with a gold and a silver and 10th spot in the medal standings.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Giant-killers Bodo/Glimt's remarkable rise

AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE

Milan, Feb 25: Bodo/Glimt are on the march in the Champions League after dumping out European giants Inter Milan, the latest chapter in a remarkable rise for the tiny club from north of the Arctic Circle. Kjetil Knutsen's team reached the last 16 of the biggest club competition on the planet with two wins over last year's beaten finalists -- a 5-2 aggregate victory giving them the greatest result in their history.

"I think it's an amazing evening for the club, for the players, for the town and also for Norwegian football," said Knutsen, who has been in charge of Bodo/Glimt since 2018.

"We are not talking about goals, we are talking about how to perform and how we can take steps and develop the players and the team. Now I think that's



extremely important. "We have our way to do it and that's really important."

Tuesday's triumph was their fourth straight win in the Champions League, with Manchester City and Athletic Madrid also falling in the final two league phase

- BODO/GLIMT ENTER CL LAST 16 FOR FIRST TIME
- INTER MILAN SLUMP FROM FINALIST TO PLAYOFFS EXIT

matches, which allowed Bodo/Glimt to snatch a spot in the knockout play-offs.

Bodo/Glimt were only promoted to Norway's top tier, a competition which had been dominated for three decades by Rosenborg of Trondheim, in 2017 but have since been crowned national champions in four of the last six seasons.

And since then, they have slowly risen up the domestic and European ranks, last season becoming the first Norwegian team to play in the semi-finals of a major European competition with their run to the last four of the Europa League. Before this season, their best result was beating Lazio on penalties in the quarter-finals of the Europa League before being eliminated by Tottenham Hotspur.

But now, the team of no stars with a tiny budget has moved to a whole new level with one of either City or Sporting of Portugal awaiting next month.

MEXICO CARTEL VIOLENCE

FIFA World Cup: Host cities express security concerns

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Feb 25: With just over three months until the start of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, officials from host cities -- USA, Canada and Mexico -- say security planning has fallen dangerously behind schedule, raising fears of major disruptions when the tournament begins June 11.

During testimony before the United States House Homeland Security Committee, local representatives cited two key setbacks: a freeze on federal security funding and poor coordination between federal and local authorities, the West Australian reports.

The funding concerns stem from a decision by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to scale back operations to what it called "bare-min-

imum, life-saving operations" amid the federal government shutdown. As a result, nearly USD 900 million allocated for World Cup security has been put on hold, the report stated.

The suspended funds include USD 625 million previously designated for host cities to manage large-scale security operations aimed at protecting players, fans and infrastructure. An additional USD 250 million had been earmarked for host states to improve their ability to monitor and counter drone activity.

Mike Sena, president of the National Fusion Centre Association, told lawmakers the delay has left cities scrambling. "I feel that if we'd been having this conversation two years ago, we'd be in better shape but today, as we're approaching these games, we're nowhere near the capability we need," he said.