



Mindful living

Actor Rakul Preet Singh embraces life with gratitude and boundless energy

LEISURE | P2



Conflict intensifies

Afghanistan says it is firing at Pakistani jets in Kabul after blasts and gunfire rocked the capital Sunday

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Auto sales rise

Leading automakers report an increase in vehicle dispatches to dealers in February, riding on sustained demand

BUSINESS | P11



India in semis

Sanju Samson struck a magnificent unbeaten 97 as India beat West Indies by five wickets to book their semifinal berth at the T20 WC

SPORTS | P12

Majhi for safe return of Odias

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has discussed with the Ministry of External Affairs the safe return of people of the state residing or stranded in West Asia, a minister said here Sunday.

Replying to a media query on the rescue of Odia people from the conflict-hit zone, Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said, "Our chief minister held discussion with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and very shortly the people, who belong to our state, would return to Odisha."

The Prime Minister and the MEA have taken all-round efforts to evacuate every Indian citizen from the conflict region, he said.

"The government has made all plans, and everything is on schedule. Most likely, all these people (Indians) not a single person will be left behind ... everybody will be rescued and brought back to India," the minister said.

The United States and Israel launched a major attack on Iran Saturday, with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei killed early Sunday.

Hundreds of flights have been disrupted across West Asia and in other countries, including India, due to airspace restrictions following the joint attack and retaliatory action by Iran.

PM condemns attacks on UAE

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday spoke to UAE President Mohd bin Zayed Al Nahyan and condemned the attacks on the country amid Iranian retaliation for the US-Israeli strikes. "Spoke with President of the UAE, my brother Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Strongly condemned the attacks on the UAE and condoled the loss of lives in these attacks. India stands in solidarity with the UAE in these difficult times. Thanked him for taking care of the Indian community living in the UAE. We support de-escalation, regional peace, security and stability," said Modi on X.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



As Vishwaguru, our STAND in any international crisis is firm and clear... we SIT quietly

War escalates as Khamenei killed

AGENCIES

Jerusalem/Dubai, March 1: Hours after Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the joint strikes by Israel and US, Iran Sunday retaliated with full force by launching a barrage of missiles and drones targeting Israel and several US military bases in Arab Gulf countries. The air war could rattle global markets, particularly if Iran makes the Strait of Hormuz unsafe for commercial traffic. Around 20 per cent of the world's traded oil passes through the vital waterway, and oil prices are already set for swings. In repeated barrages across Israel, at least nine people were killed and more than 120 injured, according to authorities. Many missiles were intercepted, the military said.

Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said Sunday that Israel will have "a non-stop air train" of strikes against military and leadership targets in Iran.

Flights across the Middle East were disrupted, and air defence fire thudded over Dubai. The United Arab Emirates' commercial capital has long drawn business and expatriates by billing itself as a safe haven in a volatile region.

Shrapnel from Iranian attacks on the Emirates' capital of Abu Dhabi killed two people, state media said, and debris from aerial interceptions caused fires at the city's main port and on the facade of the iconic Burj Al Arab hotel.

Death toll from strike on Iranian girls' school climbs to 165



Rescue workers and military personnel survey the scene of a direct hit a day after an Iranian missile struck in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sunday

PTI PHOTO

The killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and US President Donald Trump's calls for the overthrow of the decades-old Islamic Republic, marked the start of a stunning new US intervention in

the Middle East and potentially a prolonged war.

It is also a startling show of military might for an American president who swept into office on an "America First" platform and vowed to keep out of "for-

US military says 3 service members killed, 5 wounded in Iran operation

A senior White House official Sunday said the "new potential leadership" in Iran has suggested they are open for talks with the US. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration deliberations, said President Donald Trump said he is "eventually" willing to talk, but for now the military operation "continues unabated".

Talks likely

A senior White House official Sunday said the "new potential leadership" in Iran has suggested they are open for talks with the US. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal administration deliberations, said President Donald Trump said he is "eventually" willing to talk, but for now the military operation "continues unabated".

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi says a new supreme leader will be chosen in one or two days

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was speaking to the Al Jazeera network on Sunday, a day after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in US and Israeli strikes. P 3, 9 & 10

Iran shuts Hormuz

Dubai/London: At least three tankers were damaged off the Gulf coast after US and Israeli strikes on Iran triggered Iranian retaliation that put merchant ships at risk of collateral damage while navigating through the Strait of Hormuz, which has reportedly been shut by Iran. Shipping sources and officials said Sunday that risks to commercial shipping have surged in the past 24 hours, with more than 200 vessels including oil and liquefied gas tankers dropping anchor around the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding waters. Iran has said it has closed navigation through the critical waterway. P10

Iran strikes oil tanker with 15 Indians aboard

Palau-flagged oil tanker, with 15 Indian and five Iranian citizens, under US sanctions was hit Sunday off Oman's Musandam peninsula, injuring four people, the country's maritime security centre said, without specifying what hit the vessel. The attack followed earlier drone strikes elsewhere in the Gulf country, at the commercial port of Duqm on the Arabian Sea. The incidents mark the first time targets in or near Oman have been hit following a wave of retaliatory strikes.

Man 'murders' wife after terminating pregnancy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Parjang, March 1: In a shocking incident, a man allegedly murdered his 29-year-old wife after terminating her three-month pregnancy under Parjang police limits in Dhenkanal district.

The deceased was identified as Pyari Munda, 29, second wife of Sarama Gaya at Thakurmunda Sahi under Manikmara panchayat of Dadrughati police outpost and Parjang police limits in Dhenkanal district. The deceased is a native of Pallahara area in Angul district and worked as a casual labourer in Cuttack.

She entered into a relationship with Sarama while working in Cuttack and eventually married him three years ago.



Police said Sarama was already married and has a wife and child from his previous marriage. Family members of the deceased alleged that the couple's marital life was marked by frequent disputes and fights. They further alleged that Sarama had forced the termination of Pyari's three-month pregnancy a few days ago. Sarama informed Pyari's

mother about her death late Friday night. Deeply shocked, the deceased sister Dina Munda lodged a complaint at Parjang police station February 28. Admitting the complaint, police detained the husband and launched an investigation.

A police team led by SI Sushree Anamika, reached the spot and sent the body for postmortem to the Parjang community health centre (CHC) Sunday. A district forensic team collected samples related to the crime.

The SI said further details would emerge after availability of the postmortem report. A case (132/26) has been registered under Sections 85, 103, 80, 89 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and further investigations are underway, she added.

18 killed, 24 injured in Nagpur factory blast

AGENCIES

Nagpur, March 1: At least 18 workers were charred to death, and 24 others were injured, most of them critically, in a powerful blast that tore through an explosives manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district Sunday morning, police said.

The explosion occurred at the detonator packing unit of SBL Energy Limited, a mining and industrial explosives manufacturer, at Raulgaon in Katol tehsil between 7am and 7:15am.

With one more person succumbing to injuries during treatment later in the day, the death toll has mounted to 18, a police officer said, adding that 24 injured workers are undergoing treatment at two hospitals in Nagpur.

The bodies were charred beyond recognition, and samples of the family members were being taken for DNA testing to ascertain the identities of the deceased, police said.

Inconsolable family members of the victims thronged the factory compound, located about 50 km from the district headquarters, for some news about their loved ones.

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident.

PM Modi announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF).

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis ordered a thorough investigation into the cause of the explosion.

Man kills elder bro in Jharsuguda



POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, March 1: A 28-year-old man was allegedly killed by his younger brother, who smashed his head with a stone following a quarrel late Saturday night near Brundamal railway station in Jharsuguda district.

The deceased was identified as Bibekanath Nag, 28, a resident of a slum near Brundamal railway station under Badmal police limits. His body was later found in a nearby field. The accused, his younger brother Khirodnath Nag, 24, is absconding, police said.

According to sources, an argument broke out between the two brothers late Saturday night for reasons yet to be ascertained.

During the altercation, Khirod allegedly picked up a stone and attacked his elder brother, fatally injuring him on the spot, police said. On being informed, a team of Jharsuguda police and the Government Railway Police (GRP) reached the spot. "The GRP has registered a case (15/2026) and started an investigation," GRP IIC Santosh Mirdha said.

Meanwhile, Jharsuguda SP Gundala Reddy Raghavendra also reached the spot to investigate the case.

"A team has been formed to investigate the incident. Efforts are underway to trace and apprehend the accused," said the police. The body was sent to the district headquarters hospital in Jharsuguda for postmortem before it was handed over to the family, the police added.

Dramatic changes observed in one of the biggest stars

REUTERS

Washington, March 1: The largest stars in the universe live the life of a rock star – they are born brilliant, live fast and die young. If that is the case, the one named WOH G64 might be considered the stellar equivalent of Jimi Hendrix. WOH G64, which is 28 times the mass of the Sun and resides in a satellite galaxy to the Milky Way called the Large Magellanic Cloud, is one of a handful of the biggest stars known, just like Hendrix was in rock 'n' roll. And observations spanning more than three decades show it is behaving unlike any star seen before.

Astronomers have only an incomplete understanding of the

life history of the largest stars, and the WOH G64 observations are providing new insight.

Researchers observed a change that occurred in 2014 in the star's colour, corresponding to an increase in its surface temperature, as it evolved from red to yellow. The star had been classified as an extreme red supergiant but rapidly became a yellow hypergiant. This transition happened quickly, in cosmic terms, and with no evidence of an eruption or explosion.

"Typically the evolution of a star takes place on timescales of billions of years. On human timescales, we only observe more abrupt and violent events, such as eruptions, the merger of two stars or their explosive



deaths," said astronomer Gonzalo Muñoz-Sanchez, lead author of the research published this week in the journal Nature Astronomy.

"No current stellar models can fully explain this trans-

formation" in WOH G64, said Muñoz-Sanchez, who worked on the study at the National Observatory of Athens.

Compared to the Sun, its luminosity is about 3,00,000 times greater and its diameter about

- Star, named WOH G64, is 28 times the mass of the Sun
- It resides in the Large Magellanic Cloud galaxy
- The star was observed evolving from red to yellow

1,500 times greater. If it were in the place of the Sun, its surface would extend to a distance between the orbits of Jupiter and Saturn, our solar system's fifth and sixth planets. Travelling at the speed of light would take six hours to circumnavigate the star's surface.

WOH G64, around 10 million years old, appears to be near the end of its lifespan. In contrast, the Sun is about 4.5 billion years old and has an

estimated 5 billion more years left. WOH G64 is located about 160,000 light-years from Earth. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

"WOH G64 is a massive star and very different from the Sun," Muñoz-Sanchez said.

Stars between about eight and 23 times the Sun's mass are expected to evolve into red supergiants and eventually explode as a supernova.

For stars in the range of 23 to 30 times the Sun's mass, their fate is less certain. It remains unclear whether they go boom as a supernova, collapse directly into forming a black hole or evolve from a red supergiant phase into a yellow hypergiant stage before ending their lives.

leisure



KATE HUDSON CRITIQUES MODERN ROM-COMS

Fresh from her Oscar-nominated turn in *Song Sung Blue*, Kate Hudson is critiquing modern romantic comedies. The *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* star says today's rom-coms lack star power, budgets and emotional spark, arguing true classics need big stars, chemistry and heartfelt storytelling

CILLIAN MURPHY UNBOOTHERED BY HOLLYWOOD'S ATTENTION

Cillian Murphy is stoic in the perfect sense. The actor, who is known for his extremely introverted personality, thinks he is "an incredibly average person". The *Peaky Blinders* star has little interest in Hollywood fame and confessed that he is "really bad" at being on the red carpet and giving interviews about himself



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ARIES
 Joining a yoga class? Good for you. Try an Ayurvedic diet too. You may be in for a lot of new things in your life, but you will have to choose today! There's a bit of money coming in to smoothen the road, assures Ganेशha.

TAURUS
 There is every possibility that you will keep people around you in good humour, predicts Ganेशha. A craving for food might overcome you today. Such a feeling might be because of subdued hunger. Kick back and enjoy as fun will top your priority list, feels Ganेशha.

GEMINI
 You will propose, or get married today. Your family will be with you, trying to make sure that you don't let this opportunity go. You will look fantastic today, and nobody in his/her right mind would be able to say no to your proposal.

CANCER
 With Ganेशha's blessings, your day will be quite peaceful. It means that though you will have to face unfavourable circumstances, you will overcome them easily. Happiness on the home front enables you to display your efficiency in office. An exciting day!

LEO
 With your penchant for being almost surgical in your tasks, it seems there isn't a single blunder that escapes your trained eye. This fact comes to the fore today and helps you step into the limelight, especially at work, where your efforts get noticed and appreciated. Wisdom always was the prerogative of the observant mind, and so was a bit of indulgence. Ganेशha has this feeling that you are filled with the desire to splurge on electronic gadgets today.

VIRGO
 Speech-craft will be your potent weapon today, predicts Ganेशha. The gift of gab was never more silvery, as you enchant your way into the hearts of the opposite sex sometime late in the day. Put-off work will be completed. Doctors and public servants will have a field day, predicts Ganेशha.

LIBRA
 Speech-craft will be your potent weapon today, predicts Ganेशha. The gift of gab was never more silvery, as you enchant your way into the hearts of the opposite sex sometime late in the day. Put-off work will be completed. Doctors and public servants will have a field day, predicts Ganेशha.

SCORPIO
 Today, your confidence speaks a lot and makes you a self-reliant person. Whether it's home or work, you are capable enough to manage chores at both the places. You play an important role in maintaining harmony at both the places, says Ganेशha.

SAGITTARIUS
 Interaction and exchange of ideas with like-minded people will rejuvenate you today, says Ganेशha. You may express yourself better in front of them. Planning and execution of ideas at work may not be in sync today. Be practical and move on, look forward to a better tomorrow.

CAPRICORN
 Dreading the consequences of errors induced in the past, you will be extra cautious while working on important assignments and will try to save your skin, says Ganेशha. This apart, you will spend a major part of the day worrying over career prospects and mulling a change of job. But you will feel more relaxed in the evening and may spend a nice time at home with family and some close friends.

AQUARIUS
 Today, you will be determined to clean up the mess on your desk at the office or your home. Your enthusiasm to have a neat and clean space around will certainly win you some brownie points at both the places, says Ganेशha. Later on the day, you may enjoy a nice romantic dinner with your sweetheart.

PISCES
 A good day for investments and speculations, especially in the real estate markets. Your gains will outweigh the risks associated with your transactions. However, maintain some monetary reserves to invest in other opportunities, as even better times are round the corner. You will come across as a happy soul in the face of such good fortune, says Ganेशha.

Samyuktha's fangirl moment

MUMBAI: Actress Samyuktha recently experienced a heartfelt fangirl moment while shooting for her upcoming film *Slum Dog*, directed by Puri Jagannadh. Sharing screen space with acclaimed performers like Vijay Sethupathi and Tabu, Samyuktha found herself particularly starstruck by Tabu's presence on set.

Opening up about the experience, she described Tabu's aura as captivating and unforgettable. "She is something. The aura and the energy with which she walks onto the set, she's beautiful," Samyuktha said, expressing genuine admiration. A long-time fan, she revealed that

Kandukondain Kandukondain is one of her favourite films and praised Tabu's timeless elegance in it. "She's beautiful in that. Not much has changed since then," she shared warmly.

Samyuktha also recalled noticing Tabu speaking in Hyderabad Hindi while interacting with people on set, a detail that pleasantly surprised her. Although they did not share many scenes together, she said she thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to work alongside the veteran actress.

For Samyuktha, known for her strong performances across industries, this moment reflected the excitement and humility of an artiste meeting someone she has long admired.



MUMBAI: Actress Shweta Tripathi is set to travel to Amsterdam to attend a live concert by the Oscar and Grammy-winning music composer Hans Zimmer.

The actress had a long-standing wish to watch him perform live. Hans Zimmer is known for shaping the contours of Hollywood, and adding depth to stories through his



Shweta's long-standing dream comes true

Shweta, music ways more some-plays in ground. the first stays with her thanks to geniuses like Hans Zimmer.

His compositions known for his iconic score for films like *Dune*, *Interstellar*, and *The Dark Knight*, in particular, have been a constant presence for her through her years as an actress.

Talking about the same, she said, "His music has always stayed with me long after a film ends. There's an honesty and depth in his compositions that really hits you emotionally. As an actor and a cinema student, I'm drawn to anything that helps me understand emotion better, and his music does that quietly, without explanation. Watching him live feels like the most direct way to experience that energy".

The concert is also an excuse to step away from routine and allow herself to simply absorb something without needing to analyse it too much.

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Rakul embraces mindful living

MUMBAI: Actress Rakul Preet Singh is embracing life with gratitude, positivity and boundless energy. Reflecting on conversations around age, the actress believes numbers should never define anyone, especially in showbiz where they often become unnecessary headlines. "I don't understand why people have to mention anybody's age. It's never done in any other

profession. To me, age is just a number. You are only as old as you feel, and I am forever 16 at heart," she says with confidence.

Now in her mid-30s, the *De De Pyaar De 2* actress strongly advocates mindful living and wellness. She believes healthy habits formed early, through conscious food choices, disciplined lifestyle routines and holistic therapies, make ageing a graceful process. "What you sow is what you reap. Staying happy and mentally balanced keeps you youthful," she shares.

On the personal front, Rakul married actor-producer Jacky Bhagnani in 2024, calling this phase deeply fulfilling. She says their friendship has always been the foundation of their bond. "We were best friends before and we're best friends now. We focus equally on our work and relationship. What's better than living with your best friend?" she smiles.



MUMBAI: As actress Karishma Tanna was honoured for her performance in Hansal Mehta's *Scoop* at the Busan International Film Festival, she decided to reflect on her acting journey, which commenced from the small screen, and overcoming several doubts, moved on to reality shows, movies, and web series.

She added that for her, *Scoop* was a reminder that if one does not give up on their dreams, their moment arrives sooner or later. Karishma's emotional note on social media went like this, "From

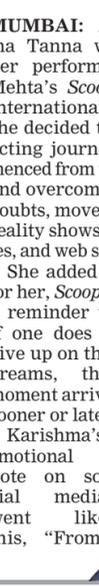
television sets...To reality shows...To being boxed. To being doubted. To standing at the Busan International Film Festival for *Scoop*. There's something beautiful about not giving up on yourself. About choosing growth over comfort. About waiting for the role that changes your narrative. *SCOOP*

wasn't just a project. It was a shift. A reminder that if you stay long enough, work hard enough, evolve honestly enough... your moment will come. And when it does — it feels like home. Thank you for watching, supporting, believing! (sic)."

Karishma took a moment to look back at the girl who patiently waited for her turn and never stopped believing in herself.

She pointed out that some journey's take time as they are building towards something concrete.

KARISHMA reflects on resilience



PEANUTS



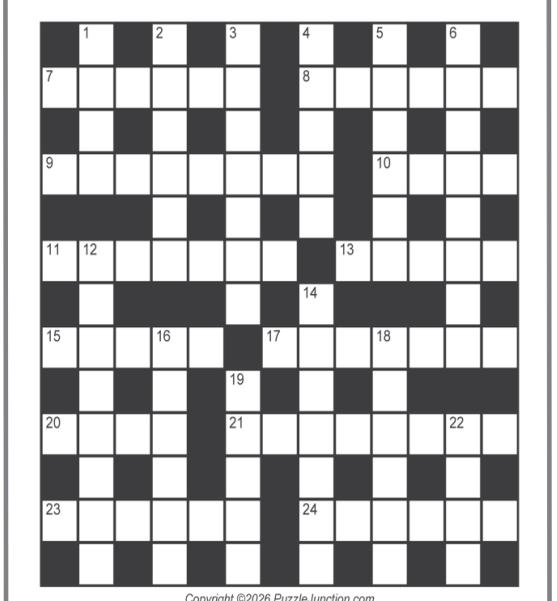
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



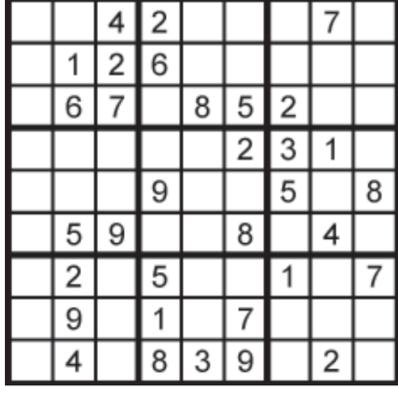
FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Cane material
 - 8 Shoat
 - 9 Kind of lifestyle
 - 10 Follow orders
 - 11 Garnish
 - 13 Deserve
 - 15 Plato's plaza
 - 17 Crowed
 - 20 Pesky insect
 - 21 Four-leaf clover
 - 23 Abrasive stone
 - 24 Ice chest
 - 3 Mermaid
 - 4 Chow
 - 5 Snub, in a way
 - 6 Broadcast
 - 12 Jason was one
 - 14 Love affair
 - 16 Not wholesale
 - 18 Lecture
 - 19 Hibachi residue
 - 22 Pool sticks
- Down**
- 1 Stalactite site
 - 2 Depth charge targets (1-5)

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

YOUTUBER'S MURDER

Army jawan, his 2 nephews arrested



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 1: An Army jawan and his two nephews were arrested in the sensational murder of a 32-year-old YouTuber in the Mancheswar police station area of Bhubaneswar over a petty issue. The deceased was a resident of Palasuni locality in the City.

The arrested persons were identified as Army jawan Sangram Kesari Behera (37) alias Satura and his two nephews, Samarendra Behera (20) alias Muna, and Sangram Behera (24) alias Kuna. The accused are natives of Kanpur area in Cuttack district.

According to Bhubaneswar (Zone-V) ACP Biswaranjan Senapati, the incident took place in GGP Colony under the jurisdiction of Mancheswar police station Saturday evening.

Rahul Maharana, who got married a couple of months ago, was attacked with a sharp weapon following an alterca-

tion with the intoxicated trio, he said.

"Two groups were sitting a little distance apart on a school ground in GGP Colony. Shiba, a friend of Maharana, was taking a stroll while speaking on the phone and reached near the other group of the accused persons. He was using abusive language on the phone to which the other group objected, leading to a heated argument between them," Senapati said.

When the three accused attacked Shiba, Maharana came to his rescue. The younger nephew of the jawan suddenly stabbed Maharana with a knife, which was in his possession, he said.

He was left in a pool of blood, and Shiba and other locals took him to a nearby private hospital. He was then shifted to Capital Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the ACP said.

Police scrutinised the CCTV footage of the area and arrested the three persons, and seized two motorcycles, three mobile phones and a knife used in the crime, he said.

Ruling out any past enmity, Senapati said, "The cause of the incident was sudden provocation and a fight." "We appeal to people to inform the police if anyone is seen drinking in public," he added.



SCULPTING CREATIVITY: A foreign visitor admires a contemporary artwork on display at an exhibition at Kalinga College of Art in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

Odisha declares two more dists 'Naxal-free'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 1: Odisha Police Sunday declared Bolangir and Bargarh districts as 'Naxal-free' after 15 Maoists operating in the two areas surrendered before security personnel in neighbouring Chhattisgarh, officials said.

DGP YB Khurania said the force has achieved a significant milestone in its sustained anti-Naxal operations across the state. "Now, Bolangir and Bargarh districts are officially declared Naxal-free," Khurania said in a statement.

With this, the number of Naxal-free districts in Odisha has risen to seven. These are Nua-pada, Nabarangpur, Koraput, Malkangiri, Boudh, Bolangir and Bargarh. Maoist presence, however, continues in three other districts.

The declaration came on the heels of 15 Maoists surrendering at a function held in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district, which borders Bargarh. Three senior Odisha police officers were present at the event.

"These cadres were active in



the Bargarh-Balangir-Mahasamund division. With this development, both Bargarh and Bolangir districts have now been declared free from Naxal activities," Khurania said, adding that the famous Gandhamardan hills spread over the two districts also become peaceful now.

The DGP informed that sustained joint operations conducted over a prolonged period, precise intelligence inputs, coordinated efforts of central and state security forces, and active cooperation from local residents have led to the complete elimination of Naxal activities from these two districts.

Khurania said this significant achievement has been

15 BBM committee Maoists, including 9 women, surrender

Raipur: In a major setback to Naxal operations in the region, 15 Maoists surrendered with weapons in Chhattisgarh's Mahasamund district Saturday. The group included nine women and six men linked to the Bolangir-Bargarh-Mahasamund (BBM) committee active along the Odisha-Chhattisgarh border. State Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister Vijay Sharma shared a photo on his X handle, stating: "Giving up arms, embracing the Constitution and the Tricolour." He said Vikas alias Babanna, a State Committee Member (SCM), along with 15 Maoists carrying a cumulative bounty of around ₹73 lakh, surrendered 14 weapons — including three AK-47 rifles — and opted for the path of development under the government's rehabilitation policy. The Maoists handed over a cache of sophisticated weapons to the police, including three AK-47 rifles, two Self-Loading Rifles (SLRs) and two INSAS (Indian Small Arms System) rifles.

made possible due to the courage, restraint, and unwavering commitment of the police force.

The DGP congratulated all officers and personnel involved in the operations and expressed gratitude to the people for their trust and continued support. He further said similar intensified operations will continue in other affected areas of the state to ensure the complete eradication of the Naxal problem at the earliest.

Of the 10 districts earlier identified as Maoist-affected in the state, only Kandhamal falls under the Security Relat-

ed Expenditure (SRE) scheme, while the remaining are categorised as "Other LWE Affected Districts". With the latest surrender, around 25 Maoists are believed to remain active in the state, mostly in splinter groups in Kandhamal district.

ADG (Anti-Naxal Operations) Sanjeeb Panda said a major operation has been launched in the forests under Daringbadi and Raikia police station areas of Kandhamal, where the state's most wanted Maoist leader Sukru is suspected to be hiding.

Iran strikes kill 3 in UAE; Indian, Sri Lankan among those injured

AGENCIES

Abu Dhabi, March 1: The UAE's Ministry of Defence Sunday announced that its air defences have so far dealt with 165 ballistic missiles, two cruise missiles, and 541 Iranian drones.

According to the ministry, one Pakistani, Nepali, and Bangladeshi were killed in airstrikes while there were 58 cases of minor injuries of Emirati, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Filipino, Pakistani, Iranian, Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan, Azerbaijani, Yemeni, Ugandan, Eritrean, Lebanese, and Afghan nationalities. The ministry stated that the UAE on the second day of the Iranian attack was successful in destroying 20 ballistic missiles and the downing of eight missiles into the sea, destroying two cruise missiles and 311 drones, while 21 drones hit civilian targets.

In a statement, it said: "The ministry clarified that since the start of the Iranian attack on Feb 28, 165 ballistic missiles launched from Iran toward the country were detected, of which 152 were destroyed, while 13 fell into the sea. Apart from that, two cruise missiles also were detected and destroyed, and 541 Iranian drones were detected, of which 506 were intercepted and destroyed, while 35 fell within the country's territory, causing material damage."

10 killed as Pak mob tries to storm US Consulate

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, March 1: At least 10 people were killed, and several were injured Sunday after clashes broke out between police and protesters as they tried to storm the gates of the US Consulate in Pakistan's port city of Karachi.

The clashes broke out following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei Saturday in a joint US-Israeli air strike.

Sumaiya Syed, spokesperson of the Civil Hospital, said so far 10 bodies have been brought to the hospital, and some appeared to have bullet wounds. The protesters began gathering on the road leading to the consulate building as soon as the death of Iran's Supreme Leader was confirmed in the ongoing Israeli and US strikes on Iran.

Syed said that around 30 injured persons are getting treatment at the hospital's trauma centre.

"The injured include four policemen," she said. Senior police official, SSP Asad Reza, said after the crowd started attacking the police, they had to use tear gas shells and rubber bullets to control the situation. The police also baton-charged the crowd, but one of them later claimed to a TV channel that the police also



fired upon them. A large number of demonstrators were gathered around the consulate, and police opened fire on them while they were attempting to break into the US Consulate. Sindh Minister for Interior Ziaul Hasan Langar has requested immediate details from the Additional IG Karachi, stressing that "No one will be allowed to take the law into their own hands."

He called for enhanced security at sensitive installations.

He further added that a judicial inquiry had been formed to ascertain the entire incident, but rebuked suggestions that those killed were hit by US Marines guarding the consulate.

The minister concluded that action will be taken against those disrupting law and order in accordance with the law.

"What we know is that protesters turned violent and tried to break through the security cordon around the consulate and clashed with the police, and some of them were very violent due to which police had to respond accordingly," he said Sunday.

Block employee collapses, dies outside office gate

POST NEWS NETWORK

Muniguda, March 1: An employee of the Muniguda block administration collapsed and died outside the block office gate in Rayagada district Sunday morning.

The deceased was identified as Sushant Gouda, a VB-GRAMG (Viksit Bharat—Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mission) assistant working under the Muniguda block.

According to sources, Sushant complained of stomach and chest pain early in the morning and visited the Muniguda Community Health Centre for treatment. After consulting a doctor, he was returning to his residence in the block

colony when he suddenly collapsed in front of the office gate. He died on the spot, eyewitnesses said.

On being informed, Muniguda police reached the scene, recovered the body and sent it to the Community Health Centre for post-mortem examination.

After the autopsy, the body was handed over to his family members. The family later took the body to his native place, Gunupur, where the last rites were performed.

The exact cause of death is yet to be ascertained. While a cardiac arrest is suspected, police said the exact reason will be known only after the post-mortem report is received.



Silver City dips into Dahibara delight

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 1: The historic city of Cuttack celebrated Dahibara Dibasa with enthusiasm Sunday, paying tribute to one of its most iconic traditional dishes. Several parts of the city turned festive as residents gathered to relish the beloved delicacy and soak in the celebratory spirit.

More than a popular street food, Dahibara is deeply rooted in the city's cultural identity. The soft lentil dumplings soaked in fresh curd and topped with spices reflect Cuttack's distinct culinary heritage and evoke memories of shared moments and local pride. The celebration once again highlighted the enduring bond between food, tradition and the spirit of the Silver City.

March 1 is observed every year as Dahibara Aloodum

Dibasa across Odisha, celebrating the tangy, chatpata bowl of happiness that holds a special place in the hearts of food lovers. The delicacy is best savoured in Cuttack — the city famed for its 52 bazaars and 53 gullies — where the distinctive flavours of Dahibara are considered unmatched.

The celebration was organised at Mahanadi Vihar and several other prominent locations, drawing residents and devotees into a vibrant, festive gathering. At Mahanadi Vihar, MDVA president Sanjay Jena welcomed guests at his residence, serving a generous spread of Dahibara accompanied by traditional favourites such as Aloodam and refreshing Dahi-Lassi. Local vendors and food enthusiasts also joined the festivities, presenting the rich variety and unique taste that make this



Young girls pose for selfies after relishing the mouthwatering Odia delicacy at the Bali Yatra Lower Ground in Cuttack, Sunday

OP PHOTO

iconic dish a symbol of Cuttack's culinary pride.

The event also featured home-to-home processions, during which the deities of

Radha-Krishna were ceremoniously taken around the locality, seamlessly blending devotion with the culinary festivities. The rhythmic chime of

bells, cymbals and drums filled the air, adding to the spiritual and celebratory ambience. Cultural programmes further enlivened the occasion, while specially arranged selfie zones ensured the event remained engaging and enjoyable for people of all age groups.

In parallel, the Cuttack District Administration organised a citywide Dahibara Aloodum Day celebration at the Bali Yatra Lower Ground, bringing together some of the city's most renowned vendors to showcase their specialties through vibrant stalls, food carts and creative displays. The festival attracted a large turnout of food enthusiasts, turning the venue into a bustling culinary hub. Beyond celebrating Cuttack's distinctive gastronomic legacy, the initiative also aimed at promoting local tourism and supporting traditional vendors.

BJD-Cong understanding will benefit us: Samal



ACCORDING TO THE TALLY IN THE 147-MEMBER ASSEMBLY, THE BJD IS CERTAIN OF ONE SEAT, WHILE THE RULING BJP IS SURE ABOUT TWO SEATS. NEITHER PARTY HAS THE REQUIRED 30 FIRST-PREFERENCE VOTES FOR THE FOURTH SEAT

quired 30 first-preference votes for the fourth seat.

The ruling BJP has 79 MLAs and the support of three Independents, totalling 82, which is eight short of the number required for electing three MPs.

The Opposition BJD has 48 MLAs after two of its members were suspended last month. After electing one MP, it will have 18 first-preference votes but will require another 12 to bag the second seat.

The Congress has 14 MLAs, and the CPI (M) has one.

The BJD Saturday named senior leader Santruip Misra and noted urologist Datteswar Hota as nominees. BJD chief Naveen Patnaik appealed to all parties to support Hota as a 'common candidate'.

State Congress president Bhakta Charan Das declared support for Hota. However, Congress legislature party leader Rama Chandra Kadam said a meeting of party MLAs is scheduled for Monday to reaffirm the decision.

Kadam said the state Congress leadership has already spoken to individual MLAs, and all of them have agreed to abide by the party's decision.

"Again, we will reaffirm the commitment at Monday's meeting. There is no possibility of any cross-voting," he said.

The Rajya Sabha elections will be held as the tenures of BJD's Niranjana Bishi and Munna Khan, and BJP's Sujat Kumar and Mamata Mohanta would end in April.

Samal said the BJD would soon finalise its candidates for the elections.

"The picture on candidates will be clear in two to three days," he added.

The Congress decision to back the BJD's 'common candidate' is being seen as politically significant in Odisha. BJD had ousted the Congress from power 26 years ago, and the two parties have long been rivals.

Both sides have now come together to prevent the BJD from winning three of the four Rajya Sabha seats falling vacant in the state.

According to the tally in the 147-member Assembly, the BJD is certain of one seat, while the ruling BJP is sure about two seats. Neither party has the re-



IN ACT: Artistes from Odisha Sanskritika Sansad, Berhampur perform 'Konark Akhira Luha' at Bhanja Kala Mandap in Bhubaneswar Sunday **OP PHOTO**

BJP govt rectifying 'historical blunder' by BJD: AG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Puri, March 1: Odisha's Advocate General (AG) Pitambar Acharya Sunday said the state's BJP government was taking measures to rectify the 'historical blunder' made by the previous BJD regime, which led to the Mahanadi water dispute with neighbouring Chhattisgarh.

Acharya made the statement while speaking to reporters in Puri on the sidelines of a visit of the members of the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDIT) to the state.

"The previous government committed a historic blunder by not opposing the construction of dams in Chhattisgarh. We are



taking corrective measures to bring things in favour of the people of Odisha," he said.

"When the neighbouring state was building reservoirs on the upper stream of the Mahanadi river, the previous government claimed that there

The previous government committed a historic blunder by not opposing the construction of dams in Chhattisgarh. We are taking corrective measures to bring things in favour of the people of Odisha

PITAMBAR ACHARYA | ADVOCATE GENERAL, ODISHA

would be no impact on the water flow even if 100 such dams were built," he added.

Members of the tribunal visited the Hirakud reservoir and Satkosia gorge, and would go to the Chilika Lake Monday.

"These places have been declared as Ramsar sites, and these areas are directly linked

with the natural flow of water in the Mahanadi," Acharya said.

"Tribunal members are visiting Odisha to assess the situation on the ground. They would also visit Chhattisgarh from March 7 to 11," he said.

As the tenure of the tribunal will end April 13, both Odisha and Chhattisgarh have requested a nine-month extension, which is now under examination by the Centre.

The tribunal was constituted in 2018 after Odisha alleged that the construction of barrages by Chhattisgarh in the upper reaches of the Mahanadi had obstructed its natural flow, adversely affecting farmers in downstream areas.

Two held with 20.7 kg ganja

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: In a late-night crackdown, Commissioner of Police arrested two youths from Bharatpur area and seized 20.7 kg of contraband ganja from their possession, the police said Sunday.

Acting on a tip off about illegal storage and sale of ganja behind Malima Temple at G A Colony under Bharatpur police limits Saturday night, a special team raided the spot and apprehended the accused along with the contraband and other incriminating materials.

The arrested persons have been identified as Santosh Kumar Jena (20) and Raja Behera (23), both residents of Ganjam.

Police said the accused had allegedly procured the ganja from Kandhamal with the intention of selling it to local dealers in here. Apart from the ganja, two mobile phones were also seized from their possession.

Based on sufficient prima facie evidence, a case has been registered and both the accused have been forwarded to the court. Further investigation into the case is underway to ascertain the involvement of other persons in the illegal trade.

HRAO proposes mega tourism, airport projects

PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, March 1: The Hotel and Restaurant Association of Odisha (HRAO) Sunday urged the state and Central governments to develop large-scale theme parks and integrated entertainment destinations, along with a Greenfield airport at Puri, to boost the hospitality and tourism sectors.

The proposals were made at the association's 40th annual celebration, inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida, who called on members of the hospitality industry to become 'Tourism Ambassadors' for the overall growth of the sector.

Taking to X, Parida said "HRAO has been playing a pivotal role in enriching Odisha's hospitality industry. Through their efforts, not only has the tourism sector flourished, but the impact has also contributed significantly to the development of other sectors, playing a major role in the state's economic progress. Alongside developing tourist sites as travel destinations, caravan tourism is now being emphasised to enhance tourists' experiences."



To take this process further, Parida urged the hotel owners, businesspeople, and workers associated with the hospitality industry to become 'Tourism Ambassadors'.

Puri MP Sambit Patra and local MLA Sunil Mahanty also attended the function.

Addressing the function, association chairman J K Mohanty highlighted Odisha's strong opportunity to develop large-scale theme parks and integrated entertainment destinations.

"Drawing inspiration from global leaders such as The Walt Disney Company and Universal Studios, the association urges the state government to explore signing a strategic MoU for establishing a world-class mega theme park in Odisha," Mohanty said.

HRAO, a tour and travel body operating in the state for four decades, proposed that an official study-tour delegation, including industry representatives, may visit the United

States to facilitate discussions.

In an effort to meet the goal, HRAO also appealed to BJP national spokesperson and MP Sambit Patra to take proactive steps in coordination with the Union Tourism Ministry to attract this transformational project to Odisha, leveraging the advantages of the present double-engine government.

The association further suggested Sipasarubali (Samuka) Beach in Puri as the preferred location for the mega tourism project, noting that land has already been identified for the proposed international airport.

The theme park and airport, HRAO observed, would create powerful synergies for high-value tourism growth.

The association also advocated for proper safeguarding of Srimandir while planning the proposed airport and observed that utmost care must be taken to protect the structural safety and sanctity of the 12th century shrine in Puri.

The association further recommended that the Mahaparinirvan Express train operating from New Delhi to Both Gaya be extended up to Puri to boost Buddhist tourist inflow into Odisha.

Outfit protests against US-Israel attacks on Iran

POST NEWS NETWORK



Cuttack, March 1: A nationwide protest against the military aggression on Iran by the imperialist powers—the United States and Israel—was organised at the Ravenshaw University Square here Sunday. The protest was part of a broader demonstration organised by Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) against the unprovoked attacks on Iran. Protesters strongly condemned the attacks, which are seen as a blatant act of aggression and also criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his inappropriate addressing of Israeli Prime Minister as 'brother.'

The speakers condemned the military actions against Iran as a direct result of America's imperialistic policies, which

have supported and instigated Israel's military aggression. They described this as part of the US effort to expand its influence in the region through such unprovoked and naked acts of war. The assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei was cited as a violation of international norms and Iran's sovereignty.

The protest was led by SUCI(C) district coordinator Khageshwar Sethi. Prominent leaders including Basanta Nayak, Babi Balabantra, Siddhartha Rath, Bhagyarabi Das, Saubhagya Samal, Binod Sethy, Deepak Das, Tarun Sen Nayak, Isha Dhar, Akshay Raul, Shibani Sahu, Swadhin Behera, Advocate Pratap Chandra Mishra, Shubhansmita Sahu Jotsarani Das, Sachinranjan Behera, and Sujata Mahapatra joined the protest.



INDIA SKILLS REGIONAL COMPETITION

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 1: The true strength of any nation lies in the potential of its youth. By strengthening our skilling ecosystem, we are not just preparing youth for livelihoods. We are empowering them to innovate, lead, and contribute to a stronger Odisha and a Viksit Bharat, said MSME Minister of State (I/C) Gokulananda Mallik, emphasising the importance of empowering youth through practical capability and innovation.

The minister was attending IndiaSkills Regional Competition 2025-26 (East Region) at Skill Development Institute, Taraboi. Regarded as the eastern India's largest celebration of skill, innovation and technical excellence, the four-day competition will culminate March 3.

Organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and supported by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the event

Empowering youth to contribute towards Viksit Bharat: Mallik



has brought together over 200 competitors from five eastern states and one Union Territory. Participants are competing across 59 skill domains, ranging from traditional crafts to advanced and emerging technologies, showcasing the region's diverse and evolving talent base.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Union Minister of State (I/C) Jayant Chaudhary highlighted the growing aspirational value of vocational excellence.

"India's growth story will be shaped by the immense potential of our youth and their

ability to translate talent into excellence. IndiaSkills is nurturing a culture where vocational mastery is aspirational, competitive, and aligned with global benchmarks. The determination we witness in the eastern region reflects a confident, future-ready generation—disciplined, ambitious, and prepared to measure itself against the highest standards. This collective commitment will power our journey towards a truly Viksit Bharat."

The IndiaSkills Competition 2025-26 has recorded one of its broadest participation footprints so far, with 3.65 lakh candidates registering from

35 States and Union Territories across 63 skill categories through the Skill India Digital Hub. The regional stage serves as a crucial pathway for top performers to advance to the national-level IndiaSkills Competition and potentially represent India at international platforms such as WorldSkills International.

The eastern regional competition features participants from Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, along with the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Of the 59 skill categories, 37 are being conducted onsite with live demonstrations of technical proficiency, while 22 are evaluated through offline formats to ensure comprehensive assessment.

The opening ceremony was attended by senior dignitaries including Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar Director Shreepad Karmalkar, Biju Patnaik University of Technology VC Amiya Kumar Rath and senior officials from the state government and MSDE.

WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	36.2°	34.4°	Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	23.2°	20.8°	
Humidity	92%	88%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

Encounter breaks out with Maoists in Saranda forest

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bonai, March 1: Several Maoists are reported to have been killed in an encounter between security forces and members of the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist) in the Saranda forest of Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district along Odisha border Sunday, officials said.

The exchange of fire began around 5am during a combing operation in the Chhotanagra and Jaraikela police station areas, according to state police headquarters.

Inspector General (Operations) Dr Michael Raj of Jharkhand Police said preliminary information suggests that several Maoists were killed in the gunfight, but no bodies had been recovered so far. Search operations were continuing in the forested area.

The encounter followed an improvised explosive device (IED) blast triggered earlier in the day by Maoists in the Timra forest area under the Chidiya outpost of Manoharpur police station, along the Odisha-Jharkhand border.

Officials said the IED had been planted in advance. Assistant Commandant Ajay Mallik of the CoBRA 209 Battalion sustained serious injuries in the blast. His left leg was severely damaged. Mallik was airlifted to Ranchi and later shifted to New Delhi for advanced medical treatment after his condition deteriorated.

Following the explosion, paramilitary forces launched extensive search operations



CoBRA Battalion Assistant Commandant critical in IED blast

Several Maoists reported killed; injured officers airlifted to Delhi

Maoists opened fire during search operation, 2 jawans injured

Maoist Anwesh's body handed over to family

Daringbadi: Police Sunday handed over the body of a Maoist cadre to his family after post-mortem, weeks after he was allegedly killed and buried by fellow cadres in a forest under Daringbadi police limits in Kandhamal district. The deceased, identified as Anwesh, was a divisional committee member of the KKBN (Kalahandi-Kandhamal-Boudh-Nayagarh) division of the banned CPI (Maoist) organisation. His body was exhumed from the Pakari forest area February 24, though the killing reportedly took place January 29. Inspector-in-Charge Sangram Keshari Jena said the body was sent to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur for post-mortem and was later handed over to the family. Anwesh's father, sister, nephew and niece received the body. According to police, Anwesh was allegedly killed by Shukru, a state committee member and one of the most wanted Maoist leaders in the district, along with other associates. Police said Shukru was opposed to Anwesh's alleged attempt to surrender before authorities along with a few other cadres. Following the incident, security forces have intensified combing operations in the Daringbadi forest area, suspecting that Shukru and his associates are hiding there. Additional security personnel, sniffer dogs and thermal sensor-equipped drones have been deployed to strengthen the search operation. Efforts are under way to trace and apprehend the accused, police added.



across the border areas. In the forest between Marang Ponga and Kinbir villages under Chhotanagra police station, Maoists opened fire on the security personnel, triggering a prolonged gun battle.

Head Constable Vikram Yadav suffered a gunshot wound to the abdomen and was critically injured. He was airlifted to Ranchi and later shifted to New Delhi for specialised treatment. Another jawan, Sanjeev Kumar, sustained minor injuries.

Senior officials, including Raj and the Inspector General of the

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), visited the injured personnel at the hospital.

Saranda forest is considered a stronghold of Maoist activity. Security forces launched the operation based on specific intelligence inputs, officials said. Sources added that weapons were recovered from the encounter site, though official confirmation was awaited.

The CPI (Maoist) has been engaged in a decades-long insurgency against the Indian state, with strongholds in parts of eastern and central India.

Man beaten to death on suspicion of child lifting

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, March 1: A 41-year-old man was beaten to death on suspicion of being a child lifter in the Kashia marine police station area under Basudevpur block of Bhadrak district, police said Sunday.

The deceased was identified as Sukul Bindhani of Manjuri village under Khunta police limits in Mayurbhanj district. As per reports, Bindhani was mentally unstable and addicted to intoxicants. He was reportedly roaming in Kashia area Saturday when locals suspected him of child lifting. The accused, identified as Shyamsundar Jena of Chandinapal village in Sanakrushanapur panchayat under this block, was arrested Sunday.

According to a complaint filed Sunday by the deceased's nephew, Rabindra Nath Mandal of Talachua Marine police limits, Sukul was assaulted by Jena and left unconscious Saturday afternoon, Kashia Marine police IIC Kuni Besra said. Sukul was rushed to the Basudevpur Community Health Centre, where doctors declared him dead.

On being informed, police seized the body lying in front of a shop near Chandimal Bazar on Basudevpur-Dhamra road and kept the body at Basudevpur hospital for identification.

Based on the complaint, Inspector Besra of Kashia Marine police station registered a murder case, got the body identified as family members (34/26) and arrested the accused Sunday. The accused will be produced in the court Monday, police said.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Tribal minor raped; accused held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paradip, March 1: Police Sunday arrested a 28-year-old man for the alleged repeated sexual assault of a 7-year-old girl over a period of three-days under the Paradip Model police station area of Jagatsinghpur district.

The suspect, identified as Sheikh Raja, was taken into custody after local residents intervened. Police have registered a case (57/26) and confirmed that both the victim and the accused have undergone medical examinations.

According to investigators, the victim is an orphaned member of a local tribal community who lives in a slum and often begs for food. Police said Raja, an employee at a nearby poul-



try meat shop, allegedly lured the girl to a cabin by offering her food. He is accused of spiking her drinks with sedatives before assaulting her.

The incident came to light Saturday evening when women residents intercepted the suspect as he allegedly attempted to take the child into a cabin. A group of local women reportedly restrained the man and tied him to a tree before notifying authorities.

The incident comes just six days after a separate report of a woman being killed following a sexual assault in the same district, leading to heightened tension in the community.

A local resident, Parvati Singh, detailed a series of alleged sexual assaults against an orphaned tribal minor in a neighbourhood slum, leading to the apprehension of a suspect by community members Saturday.

Elderly man held for rape attempt on minor relative

POST NEWS NETWORK

Phulbani, March 1: A 60-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly attempting to rape his 12-year-old relative in Kandhamal district, police said Sunday.

The incident occurred under Gochhapada police limits in Firingia block. The accused, identified as Bijay Digal of Kekerlinga village, was arrested and later produced before a local court.

According to police, the minor had gone to a temple in her village on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri when she met her relative. He allegedly told her that her mother was unwell and asked her to return home with him. Instead of taking the usual route, he reportedly led her through a forest path on the pretext of reaching home faster.

Police said the accused allegedly tore the girl's clothes and attempted to sexually assault her. The minor managed to resist and struck him, following which she escaped and informed her family members.

The girl's father has died and her mother is reportedly unwell. Her aunt lodged a complaint at Gochhapada police station Saturday.

A case (34/2026) has been registered at Gochhapada police station. After recording the minor's statement, police arrested the accused and forwarded him to court. Inspector-In-Charge Sanjit Kumar Behera said.



RESCUE OP: Rescue workers at an accident site after a tractor carrying cement poles overturned at Totaguda diversion while on its way to Abhimanyu in Tikiri of Rayagada district Sunday. A labourer died and four others were injured in the mishap

Odisha inter-university games conclude at FMU

Balasure: The Odisha Inter-University Competitions 2025-26 (Sports and Games), hosted by Fakir Mohan University (FMU), concluded successfully Saturday. Vice-Chancellor of Maa Manikeshwari University Nibedita Nath attended as chief guest. In her address, she congratulated FMU for efficiently hosting the state-level sports festival and appreciated the organising committee for its efforts. Presiding over the function, Vice-Chancellor Professor Santosh Kumar Tripathy lauded the discipline, sportsmanship and cooperation displayed by athletes and officials from participating universities. He thanked the state Higher Education department and the Odisha State Higher Education Council for entrusting FMU with organising the event. Chairman of the PG Council Professor Bhaskar Behera, Registrar Kukumina Das and Director of the Sports Council Professor Pabitra Mohan Nayak also addressed the gathering, highlighting the role of sports in promoting unity and holistic development. More than 2,500 athletes from 15 universities competed in 25 events across 11 disciplines, including cricket, football, kabaddi, hockey, kho-kho, basketball, volleyball, table tennis, chess, carrom and badminton in men's and women's categories. Utkal University emerged overall champion, followed by Sambalpur University. Fakir Mohan University finished third. The event was supervised by Deputy Director of Sports Amit Kumar Sharma and University PEO Sangram Bisoi. The valedictory session was coordinated by Assistant Professor Shashank Shekhar Gadnayak and Rajashree Dutta.

2 COPS CRITICAL IN MISHAP WHILE CHASING GANJA MAFIA

POST NEWS NETWORK

Boipariguda, March 1: Two police personnel were critically injured in a road accident Sunday while chasing suspected ganja smugglers under Boipariguda police station in Koraput district.

The injured have been identified as Assistant Sub-Inspector Bishnu Madkani, 45, and Constable Dambaru Challan, 40, attached to the Ramagiri police outpost under Boipariguda police limits. According to Inspector-In-Charge Dambarudhar Batria of Boipariguda police station, the two personnel were chasing two suspected ganja smugglers. The officers were riding separate motorcycles, while the suspects

District-level HPV vax drive launched in Chhatrapur SDH

POST NEWS NETWORK

Chhatrapur, March 1: A district-level National Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign was inaugurated Sunday at the Chhatrapur Sub-Divisional Hospital, marking a significant step towards protecting women's health in Ganjam district.

Organised by the Ganjam District Swasthya Samiti with support from the Government of India, the campaign aims to protect adolescent girls from HPV infections and prevent cervical cancer. The drive will continue through May 31 and targets girls aged 14 and 15. District data show 27,513 girls are eligible to receive the vaccine.

Chhatrapur MLA Krushna Chandra Nayak, the chief guest, said the HPV vaccine is safe and effective in preventing cervical cancer. He urged the public not to be misled by rumours and called on administrative officials and health workers to intensify awareness



efforts to ensure maximum coverage.

Nayak emphasised the importance of making the campaign a success so every eligible girl in the constituency is vaccinated. He also distributed digital vaccination certificates to beneficiaries and wished them good health.

Family Welfare Director Dr Santosh Kumar Padhy, District Health Officer Dr Bhabani Shankar Mishra, District Public Health Officer Dr Balunkeswar Sarangi and SDH Superintendent Dr Alekh Pradhan attended the event.

Dongria Kondhs conclude Niyamraja festival, renew vow to defend Niyamgiri

POST NEWS NETWORK

Lanjigarh, March 1: Members of the Dongria Kondh tribe concluded their annual Niyamraja festival Sunday atop the Niyamgiri Hills, reaffirming their pledge to protect the sacred mountain and its natural resources.

The three-day festival, held from February 27 to March 1 at Dhangarabhata near the hill summit along the border of Kalahandi district and Rayagada district, drew thousands of Dongria and Jharnia Kondh tribals as well as supporters from across the state and outside.



Niyamraja, the presiding deity of the Dongria Kondh, is worshipped as the protector of their land, forests and way

of life. During the festival, men and women in traditional attire offered prayers, performed rituals and staged cul-

tural dances with customary weapons. Animal sacrifices were also offered as part of the long-standing tradition.

Community leaders said the gathering reiterated their resolve to safeguard "jal (water), jangal (forest) and jameen (Land)" from mining and other commercial activities. Holding symbolic offerings, villagers from more than 100 hamlets took an oath to defend the hills at any cost.

The Dongria Kondh consider the Niyamgiri Hills central to their identity, livelihood and spiritual beliefs, cultivating crops such as millet, pulses and maize on its slopes.

EAST COAST RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. ST-OT-CCIP-EI-KUR-547, Dt. 23.02.2026
NAME OF WORK: REPLACEMENT OF CCIP IN EI WITH VDU AT RADHAKISHOREPUR AND NARAJ MARTHAPUR IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Tender Value in (₹) : 1,09,89,188.42, EMD (₹) : 2,05,000.00
Bidding Start Date : 03.03.2026
Date and Time of Closing of Tender : At 11:00 Hrs. of 17.03.2026.
No manual offers sent by Post / Courier / Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.
Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : <https://www.ireps.gov.in>
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / Corrigendum issued for this tender.
Divisional Railway Manager (S&T) / Khurda Road
PR-1173/25-26

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, BHADRAK
E-mail : ee_rwbdk@yahoo.com
"e" Procurement Notice for Building Works
Bid Identification No. Online Tender 20 of 2025-26
1. Name of the Work : Building, 2. Total No of Works : 01 No., 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.89.56 Lakh, 4. Class of Contractor : "B" Class, 5. Period of Completion : As per Annexure, 6. Type of Tender : Double Cover, 7. Other Details :

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Executive Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Bhadrak	Online-20 of 2025-26	10.03.2026 At- 11.00 A.M.	18.03.2026 At-4.00 P.M.	18.03.2026 At-2.00 P.M.	19.03.2026 At-11.00 A.M.	Will be intimated later

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in/>
N.B.-1. Transparent Lottery date will be intimated later.
2. Signed scan copy of Schedule "A", "E" & "F" are mandatory. Non submission of the same may cause rejection of the bid.
OIPR-25001/25060/1/25-26/0003
Sd/- Er.Ganesh Chandra Hembram
Executive Engineer, R.W. Division, Bhadrak

FOCUS ASSET MONETISATION

CITIZENS TO PAY MORE



By leasing infrastructure and assets to private operators and allowing them to recover investments through user charges, the state is effectively embedding a new layer of quasi-taxes into everyday life

Power tariff revisions raise industrial costs. Port and logistics charges inflate imports and retail goods. Mining costs affect steel, cement and housing. The impact is cumulative. This is classical cost-push inflation.

The Reserve Bank of India may attempt to manage inflation through monetary tightening, but interest rates cannot reduce tolls or cap port charges. Monetary policy cannot address monopoly pricing. The present rates are around 4.2%. If infrastructure becomes permanently expensive, inflation becomes structural. Structural inflation steadily erodes purchasing power.

The turn toward monetisation is puzzling given strong tax collections. GST accruals are about 40% of the revenues, averaging Rs 1.68 lakh crore a month. Indirect tax receipts have grown consistently and the tax base has expanded. The government is not facing a collapse of revenues. If additional funds are needed for capital expenditure, progressive direct taxation or better compliance could distribute the burden more fairly. Instead, the system becomes less equitable even as collections rise. Infrastructure is meant to lower the cost of doing business; when it raises costs, growth suffers.

There is also an institutional risk. As monetisation becomes routine, governments may rely on leasing assets to plug fiscal gaps, turning public wealth into recurring revenue streams — closer to mortgaging than recycling. Repeated monetisation turns public assets into fiscal crutches, encouraging more leasing instead of reform, raising user charges and costs for citizens. If the NMP lifts living expenses, it becomes a hidden long-term growth prospects.

INF A

The NMP-2 numbers alone explain why alarm bells should ring. In the Union Budget 2025-26, the government set a Rs 10 lakh crore target for NMP-2 covering FY26-30. It estimates a total monetisation potential of Rs 16.72 lakh crore — 2.6 times larger than the first phase.

Highways, power grids, railways, ports, mining blocks and pipelines — assets built with taxpayer money over decades — will be leased to private operators. Ownership remains public, we are told, but control, pricing power and revenue streams shift to profit-maximising entities. By leasing infrastructure and assets to private operators and allowing them to recover investments through user charges, the state is effectively embedding a new layer of quasi-taxes into everyday life.

When Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the monetisation plan, the rationale appeared straightforward: lease operational public assets, raise upfront resources and reinvest the proceeds into new infrastructure without expanding fiscal deficits or debt. In accounting terms, the approach seems prudent. Instead of borrowing, the government

“unlocks value” from existing assets. But economically, the distinction is less benign.

The government emphasises that ownership remains public and assets revert after concession periods. Legally, this may be accurate. For citizens, however, that distinction is immaterial. Once a private operator controls a highway or transmission line for decades, pricing decisions move beyond public accountability. The asset stops functioning as a public good and becomes a commercial revenue source. Users must pay each time they access it. Infrastructure built with taxpayer money begins charging taxpayers again.

Highways, railway stations, ports and power networks are natural monopolies. Consumers cannot easily choose alternatives. Once such assets are leased, pricing power becomes concentrated. Private concessionaires paying large fees must ensure returns. The simplest route is periodic increases in tolls and tariffs.

These higher charges ripple through the economy. Costlier highways raise freight expenses, which feed into food prices.



Shivaji Sarkar

THE GOVERNMENT CALLS IT “MONETISATION.” CITIZENS MAY SOON EXPERIENCE IT AS EXTRACTION

Indians may soon be paying more taxes — not through Parliament-approved hikes, but through toll gates, power bills and user fees. With the expansion of the National Monetisation Pipeline-2 (NMP-2), the government has effectively introduced a new asset-monetisation regime that risks raising the overall tax burden quietly and pervasively. What is presented as innovative financing could, in practice, function as an additional layer of indirect taxation embedded into everyday life. This marks more than a change in how infrastructure is funded. It signals a structural shift in taxation itself — away from transparent, legislated taxes toward charges that citizens pay daily without debate or scrutiny.

India already derives nearly 45% of its tax revenues, as per the Economic Survey, from indirect levies such as GST and excise, the most regressive form of taxation. Monetisation threatens to push that share even higher, to above 47%. For poorer households, nearly half of every rupee spent could carry some tax or fee component. For middle-class families paying both income tax and consumption taxes, the cumulative burden may absorb most of their incremental earnings. In practice, this feeds inflation, erodes disposable incomes and dampens growth.

The government calls it “monetisation.” Citizens may soon experience it as extraction. A tax that bypasses Parliament for raising revenues, which would be shown as fees.

Indirect tax collections for FY25 driven by robust GST revenue hit a record high of Rs 22.08 lakh crore (9.4% increase). Total indirect tax collections for FY25 are estimated at Rs 18.37 lakh crore, with the overall indirect tax-to-GDP ratio standing at 4.9%.

SPECTRUM WELFARE

Housing has a data problem

According to latest UN estimates, 2.8 billion people worldwide lack access to adequate housing, while 318 million are homeless. Despite investing billions of dollars in solutions, governments and philanthropies have been unable to make a dent in the crisis.

An underappreciated reason for this is the lack of basic infrastructure to track and understand baseline questions concerning housing. Major data gaps mean we often don't know which parcels of public land sit idle, how many units are vacant, and where development proposals stall. And without common definitions for fundamental terms, it becomes difficult to make comparisons across contexts — “affordable housing” means one thing in London, another in Lagos, and something else entirely in Los Angeles. Worse, the data that do exist are rarely accessible to policymakers and researchers.

In most cities, no single authority is responsible for tracking which public entity owns which parcel of land. Transit agencies, school districts, and planning departments each hold fragments of information that never connect. Zoning codes vary widely, not just between countries but also between neighboring municipalities.

This fragmentation produces bad policy. Without a full picture of the available resources and the factors that affect housing supply, policymakers cannot

reliably identify effective interventions. As a result, a city might invest heavily in subsidized construction while sitting on publicly owned land that could be developed more cheaply. Governments set ambitious housing targets but are unable to track progress or remove bottlenecks, which effectively shields them from any real accountability.

Many hope that AI will finally crack the housing challenge. Machine-learning models can now reconcile disparate databases, detect underutilized land through satellite imagery, and simulate how policy changes might affect housing supply. But these tools require structured, standardized inputs. Realizing the technology's potential therefore depends on the unglamorous work of data engineering. That makes building this infrastructure even more urgent.

For example, a pilot by the Urban Institute and the Legal Constructs Lab at Cornell University to automate National Zoning Atlas methodologies found that machine-learning models could not reliably interpret zoning documents, owing to inconsistent formatting, legal nuance, and local exceptions. Cities worldwide have experienced what practitioners call the “dashboard valley of death”: expensive visualization tools that fail because the underlying data infrastructure cannot sustain them.

The contrast with successful scientific infrastructure is in-

structural. The Human Genome Project helped transform the way scientists diagnose and treat disease in part by establishing the Bermuda Principles, which require participating laboratories to release DNA sequences within 24 hours. This ignited a wave of collaboration that later enabled breakthroughs like CRISPR and AlphaFold. After researchers shared SARS-CoV-2 genomes in early 2020, vaccines were developed at unprecedented speed.

A group of experts across housing policy, data infrastructure, and governance recently gathered as part of the 17 Rooms Initiative to discuss this problem. It was agreed that housing needs a similar mechanism: a “Home Genome Project” for standardizing and sharing housing data and AI models globally.

Such a mechanism will require, first, common taxonomies for parcels, zoning types, vacancy definitions, and development stages, designed for interoperability rather than vendor lock-in. Second, cities should share their models and datasets far and wide, enabling genuine comparison of what works across contexts. Third, standards and tools must be accompanied by a playbook for institutional capacity building, including data governance, cross-agency coordination, and the analytical capabilities needed to translate data into decisions.

To be sure, housing data presents challenges that genomics did not. DNA follows universal bio-

logical rules; by contrast, housing varies according to regulatory and political environments. While some variability is necessary to reflect local conditions, much more data can and should be standardized, which will require collaboration, not top-down mandates. Built for Zero has helped more than 150 communities make measurable progress on homelessness through shared data protocols and coordinated action, demonstrating that collective infrastructure can be built to address complex problems.

Philanthropists seeking to strengthen communities, policymakers pursuing housing targets, and technologists developing sector-specific AI models all face the same bottleneck: the data foundation does not exist. Building this infrastructure is not as exciting as funding an app or announcing a new initiative. But without it, allocating resources effectively and learning from experience is impossible.

The Human Genome Project was a 13-year global undertaking that created an industry worth trillions of dollars. A comparable investment in housing data infrastructure could finally let us see what works, fund what scales, and unlock solutions we cannot yet imagine.

Rosanne Haggerty is President and CEO of Community Solutions. Ruby Bolaria Shifrin is Chief Investment and Partnerships Officer at Terner Labs.

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Rosanne Haggerty & Ruby Bolaria Shifrin

IN MOST CITIES, NO SINGLE AUTHORITY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRACKING WHICH PUBLIC ENTITY OWNS WHICH PARCEL OF LAND

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



NCERT controversy

Sir, The recent inclusion of a section discussing “corruption in the judiciary” in a newly released NCERT Class-8 social science textbook has caused a significant national controversy, leading to strong reactions from the Supreme Court and public stakeholders. It has triggered a nationwide debate on how sensitive institutions should be discussed in school education. The incident raises questions about balancing educational transparency with institutional respect. Furthermore, it sends a strong message that special attention must be paid to reviewing and ensuring the quality of textbook content. Textbooks approved for national curriculum go through multiple layers of editorial and governmental scrutiny, making it difficult to attribute the inclusion of such a chapter to simple oversight. The line between critical education and contempt of court, this episode suggests, is one that will now be drawn firmly by the judiciary itself. Meanwhile, for now, millions of Class-8 students across India will be studying from a textbook with a chapter missing — a conspicuous blank that, in its own way, may prompt more questions than the original text ever intended to answer.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Grave escalation

Sir, The reported targeted killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei by US and Israeli forces represents a catastrophic breach of international norms. Regardless of one's geopolitical stance the extrajudicial assassination of a sovereign head of state is a reckless departure from civilized diplomacy that invites global anarchy. Such a blatant assault on sovereignty sets a dangerous precedent replacing established legal frameworks with raw military force. This escalation does not pave a path toward peace, on the contrary, it guarantees a cycle of retaliatory violence and massive regional instability. Responsible nations must condemn this violation of international law. One must demand an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to diplomatic dialogue before this spark ignites a global conflagration.

Vijaykumar HK, RAICHUR

Oil Trade Flames

Making a mockery of rule-based international order for one more time US President Donald Trump with the help of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has triggered a counter-revolution in Iran to replace the revolution of 1979 brought about by the clerics led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. In the process the Middle East is now engulfed in war and renewed instability with serious economic and political consequences for the rest of the world. The killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli airstrikes has set in motion leadership uncertainty, military escalation and fear of further repression in Iran where forces loyal to Khamenei are well entrenched to launch retaliatory strikes.

The death of the man who controlled Iran's decision-making for more than three decades has overnight changed power equations inside Tehran and raised urgent questions about who is now in charge of the country's vast military apparatus at a time of open confrontation with Washington and Tel Aviv. Speculations are rife that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's son Mojtaba Khamenei, an influential leader within Iran's power structure might take over leadership. Iranian state media announced Khamenei's death early March 1 while Trump confirmed American involvement in targeting the Iranian leader. Tehran responded within hours by launching missile attacks against Israel and several other countries in the region that host American military facilities.

The irony of the situation is that when negotiations for Iran's use of nuclear power were continuing the self-proclaimed votary of peace — Trump — launched the most vicious attack wiping off the top echelons of the Islamist regime of Iran. Within hours he warned Iran against escalating its military response in public messages posted on Truth Social. Referring to Iran's threat to retaliate “harder than they have ever hit before,” Trump wrote “they better not do that” and said if that happened US would hit them with a force “that has never been seen before.”

There is no doubt that Khamenei clamped a repressive regime oppressing the country's women population and silencing opposition voices ruthlessly. The regime is believed to be neck-deep in corruption and failed to tackle the economic crisis plaguing the people. This caused so much resentment among millions against the regime that the killing of the Supreme Leader was greeted by many who erupted with joy. Trump and Netanyahu urged the people of Iran to complete the task of regime change they had begun. But it appears more chaos and confusion will follow in the next few days with one of Iran's most powerful figures, Ali Larjani, Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, signaling Iran's defiance vowing to “stab” America in the heart in retaliation.

Question is why Trump abandoned the path of negotiations and chose to wage war against Iran, while all the time talking about peace and projecting himself as a peace-maker of the world. Experts believe he needed this war as much for himself as for safeguarding so-called American interests, which according to him, were under serious threat by Iran under Khamenei. He went on the military offensive when the apex court of his country struck down his global tariff war as illegal and violative of the country's Constitution, segregating the executive and the legislature. This defeat was crushing and he suffered a tremendous loss of face. Though Trump immediately chose a different legal route to impose tariff of a maximum of 15 per cent, he knew the laws give him an incredibly short period of six months to continue with his tariff regime. Trump's timing of war against Iran could be to divert global attention from his defeat inflicted on him by his country's judiciary.

More importantly, it is said that Trump was desperate to stop Iran from selling cheap oil to China, which it was doing, in spite of heavy sanctions against Iran. China and Iran had signed a 25 year agreement as strategic partners in 2021. China remains Iran's most trusted trade partner too. In 2025, China bought more than 80 percent of Iran's shipped oil, accounting for more than 13 percent all oil imported by China. Beijing has also granted membership to Iran in BRICS+ and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Friendship and oil trade with China is seen as one of the biggest reasons for the US attack on Iran.

Iran Crisis

With the announcement that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been killed in joint American and Israeli airstrikes, the 86-year-old Iranian supreme leader's reign has come to a violent close, cementing what many observers call a “lost half-century” for the Iranian nation. For decades, Khamenei governed with the paranoid vigilance of an autocrat convinced that his own people and the world's superpower sought to unseat him. In the end, they did. But as the Middle East confronts this sudden, unpredictable void, the celebration in Washington must be tempered by a chilling reality that President Donald Trump has decapitated a regime without offering a map for the terrain that follows, plunging the region into a state of unbridled spiral of chaos. From the sedition trials of reformers to the recent slaughter of thousands of protesters on Iranian streets, Khamenei's legacy is written in blood. He impoverished his citizens to bankroll an “axis of resistance” spanning Gaza, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen, prioritising a nuclear programme over the prosperity of his people.

The airstrikes opened a stunning new chapter in US intervention in Iran, marking the second time in eight months that the Trump administration has attacked the country during talks over its nuclear programme. Trump's “controlled chaos” doctrine of striking from the air while avoiding the “endless wars” loathed by his MAGA base is a high-wire act. His administration's current strategy of using massive strikes to tame the regime while calling for an unarmed populace to “bring the government down” is outright gamble. For, it ignores the fact that bare hands rarely topple a regime that still holds the guns. In fact, the US has been indulging in such sort of misadventures in the region for decades. In 1991, the US encouraged the Iraqi people to rise up, only to stop short of Baghdad and leave those who dared to resist to a gruesome fate. While Iranians may loathe their oppressors, the instinct to “rally around the flag” when American and Israeli bombs fall is a powerful deterrent to the very uprising Washington expects. By decapitating the Islamic Republic without a “day after” plan, Washington has traded a known enemy for a volatile, unpredictable void. Instead of a democratic dawn, the power vacuum is likely to be filled by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a cadre of “true believers” who may prove even more radical than their predecessors.

The consequences are already visible. Retaliatory ballistic missiles have crossed the Arabian Peninsula, striking targets in Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The Revolutionary Guard on 1 March threatened to launch its “most intense offensive operation” ever, targeting Israel and more US bases in the region.

The current war in West Asia has plunged the globe into a nightmare. With the Russia-Ukraine war entering its fifth year, the world is now caught between two massive fires, each capable of incinerating global economic stability and human security. The most immediate consequence is an unprecedented energy and inflation shock. As the Strait of Hormuz, the artery for 20 percent of the world's LNG and millions of barrels of oil, faces a de facto blockade, energy prices are surging toward \$100 per barrel. This compounding crisis mirrors the 2022 shock from Ukraine. Asian countries face a disproportionate threat to their industries, while Europe's hard-won energy independence from Russia is being undermined by the halt of Qatari gas.

By fighting two wars at once, one through proxies in Europe and one directly in the Middle East, the America-led West risks a systemic collapse of the liberal world order. If these two conflicts merge into a singular, globalised struggle for resources and influence, the “lost half-century” won't just belong to Iran, it will belong to the whole world.



BJP blames LDF govt for water crisis

Addressing a press conference here in connection with the joining of two new members to the BJP, Chandrasekhar said the water shortage in the state capital was a "gift" of the LDF government to people celebrating Attukal Pongala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 1: Kerala BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar Sunday blamed the state government for the water crisis in Thiruvananthapuram city, which is gearing up for the Attukal Pongala festival.

Addressing a press conference here in connection with the joining of two new members to the BJP, Chandrasekhar said the water shortage in the state capital was a "gift" of the LDF government to people celebrating Attukal Pongala.

The Attukal Pongala festival is March 3, when women from across the state will converge here for rituals.

He said Attukal Pongala is one of the largest festivals in the world, but the city is facing a severe water shortage. The party staged a protest Sunday over the issue.

Chandrasekhar alleged that the LDF government, which has ruled the state for 10 years and spent ₹22 lakh crore on development works, had failed to address the drinking water crisis in the capital city.



"They ruled after promising that everything would be made right. But even now, the common people in the state capital are not getting potable water," he said.

He said the BJP would expose the reasons behind the water crisis and any corruption involved.

"Why was the Jal Jeevan Mission fund not utilised? The negligence that happened here

will be exposed by the BJP-NDA in the coming days," he said.

The BJP leader said it was unfortunate that people had to face such a crisis during Attukal Pongala.

"When people are celebrating an auspicious day like Attukal Pongala, they don't have water. This is the gift of the CPI(M) government, which ruled for 10 years in the state," he alleged.

Regarding the ongoing conflict in Gulf countries, Chandrasekhar said the party has set up helpdesks at 30 locations in the state.

A toll-free number - 18002574357 - has also been activated to assist affected Non-Resident Keralites and their families by coordinating with the External Affairs Ministry, he said.

He further alleged that the CPI(M) and Congress were "po-

litical twins" deceiving the public by allying with Jamaat-e-Islami and the SDPI.

He claimed that earlier, both fronts in Kerala had secret alliances with communal forces, but now such tie-ups were being done openly.

"The CPI(M) and Congress, who are part of the same alliance at the national level, included SDPI in their front in Tamil Nadu. They have no shame in it," he said.

He alleged that while the CPI(M) and Congress speak of protecting the Constitution, they support "anti-secular, anti-democratic and anti-Constitution forces" such as Jamaat-e-Islami and the SDPI in politics.

"People should realise this. The election is nearing, and it will be decisive in determining the state's future. The Congress and CPI(M) are political twins in appeasement policy," he said.

Chandrasekhar welcomed CPI leader and former MLA K Ajith and social media influencer Robin Radhakrishnan, who joined the party. Both promised to actively work for the party in the coming days.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN WORKPLACE

Women's commission orders audit of panels

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 1: Maharashtra Women's Commission Chairperson Rupali Chakankar has directed all district collectors and divisional commissioners to audit internal committees against workplace sexual harassment in government and private offices across the state within a month.

The move aims to ensure proper implementation of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act), which makes it compulsory for all offices to have an internal committee to handle complaints of sexual harassment. At the district level, a local complaints committee must also be in place, an official release said.

The commission said that during visits and from complaints received, several problems were found.

Many offices do not have internal committees, some panels exist only on paper, there is little awareness about the law, members are not trained, annual reports are not submitted and required display boards are



All divisional commissioners and district collectors have been asked to submit the audit report to the Maharashtra State Commission for Women within 30 days

missing, it noted. Officials have been told to check whether internal committees are properly formed and working.

A detailed audit report must be prepared for each office, including details of committee structure, complaints received and pending, action taken, awareness activities, annual reports and display boards, the commission said.

WAYANAD LANDSLIDE

Survivors move into new homes



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the first phase of the Wayanad Model Township constructed at Elton Estate here, marking the end of a long period of displacement for the families who had been living in rented and temporary accommodation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Wayanad (Kerala), March 1: Survivors of the Mundakkai "Chooralmala landslide got a fresh lease of life Sunday as the Kerala government handed over new homes to 178 families among them."

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the first

phase of the Wayanad Model Township constructed at Elton Estate here, marking the end of a long period of displacement for the families who had been living in rented and temporary accommodation.

Vijayan dedicated the township, with all basic amenities, to the beneficiaries, describing it as a "testament to Kerala's resolve to build back better".

As part of the first phase, 178 houses were handed over to families whose homes were completely destroyed in the July 30, 2024 disaster.

The CM also distributed land titles to the beneficiaries.

He said five acres of land were acquired near Meppadi village to rehabilitate 13 Scheduled Tribe families who were left isolated after the disaster, and the land pattas for them were also handed over on the occasion.

Recalling the tragedy that claimed several lives, Vijayan

paid homage to those who died in the landslides and said the ceremony was marked by both relief and painful memories of loved ones lost.

The township, being developed on land acquired under the Disaster Management Act, envisages rehabilitation of 410 families, he said.

According to current estimates, 402 families comprising 1,662 people will reside there upon completion.

Spread across five zones with 35 clusters, each cluster comprises eight to 20 houses built around a central green courtyard, with a 5.5-metre-wide internal road. Each family is allotted seven cents of land with individual pattas.

The project has been conceived not merely as a housing scheme but as a comprehensive rehabilitation initiative aimed at providing improved living conditions compared to what was lost, in line with the 'Build Back Better' principle of disaster recovery, Vijayan explained.

The township includes facilities such as a community hall, disaster shelter, football ground, disaster memorial, shops, material collection facility, check dam and water body, underground power distribution network, drainage system, and a 9.5-lakh-litre overhead water tank.

Each house is equipped with a 2 kW solar power plant for electricity generation.



Vice President CP Radhakrishnan during the centenary celebrations of St. Stephen's Higher Secondary School, in Pathanapuram, Kollam, Kerala

Kerala: VACB steps up anti-corruption drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 1: The VACB has registered 818 corruption-related cases in the state over the past five years, officials said Saturday.

In a statement, the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) said it has recorded significant achievements in its anti-corruption drive during the period by strengthening surveillance, adopting advanced technology and enhancing public participation.

Of the 818 cases registered, 232 were trap cases in which officials were caught red-handed while accepting bribes - the highest ever in the bureau's



history, the statement said. "In 2025 alone, 57 trap cases were registered, marking the highest annual figure. In one of the biggest seizures, a panchayat overseer was caught while accepting a bribe of ₹15 lakh," the statement said.

The VACB said that, in addition, 421 vigilance investigations, 1,847 preliminary enquiries and 547 secret verifications were conducted over the last

five years. As many as 11,294 surprise inspections and 106 state-level surprise checks were carried out, and action was taken on 67,165 complaints, it said.

Vigilance courts in the state disposed of 136 cases during the period, resulting in the conviction of 227 accused persons.

To address pendency, a new Vigilance court was established in Kollam, and cases from Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts were shifted from the Thiruvananthapuram court to expedite trial proceedings, the VACB said. According to the bureau, operations were intensified to ensure that public services and benefits are delivered without corruption,

leveraging digital tools and scientific investigation methods.

As part of the digital transformation, a modern Cyber Forensic Lab was set up at the Vigilance headquarters to enable scientific analysis of evidence and real-time cyber investigations.

The bureau also developed a Crime and Enquiry Management Service portal in line with the government's paperless governance policy, and the process of digitising all case files is in its final stage. To make anti-corruption mechanisms more citizen-friendly, the bureau launched a toll-free number and a WhatsApp-based complaint registration system.

IHMCT's 'Fandango 2026' food, cultural fair draws thousands at Kovalam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 1: The annual food and cultural fair organised by the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology (IHMCT) drew thousands of visitors over three days at Kovalam here.

The three-day event, organised by IHMCT under the Union Ministry of Tourism, concluded Sunday, a government statement said. The statement said the festival showcased the culinary expertise and organisational skills of final-year students of IHMCT.

The fair, named Fandango 2026, featured an array of food counters curated and operated entirely by students.

"Among the most popular were Latitude 45, which served Mediterranean specialities, and Meenpuranam, dedicated

to Kerala's distinctive seafood cuisine. Visitors relished dishes ranging from Tamil Nadu's traditional Kaldosa to Kerala's famed Neemeen Pollichathu, alongside Chinese, North Indian and Arabic delicacies," the press release said.

Ananthakrishnan, Principal of IHMCT, said students managed every aspect of the event, from setting up stalls and preparing food to ensuring compliance with food safety standards.

They also handled procurement of ingredients, secured necessary permits and oversaw service operations, he said. "The fair offers an invaluable experiential learning opportunity," he said, noting that students navigate all stages that a new restaurant would typically encounter, extending their learning far beyond classroom instruction.

Maha: Tribal women lead residential school maintenance

As part of the Adisakhi: WASHMITRA initiative, the state Tribal Development Department, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA), trained 120 tribal women between September 2024 and November 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 1: Tribal women in Maharashtra are being trained to maintain residential schools, including hygiene and safe drinking water, under a state government initiative to boost rural entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods, officials said.

As part of the 'Adisakhi: WASHMITRA' initiative, the state Tribal Development Department, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Centre



for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA), trained 120 tribal women between September 2024 and November 2025.

They are actively delivering services, earning a steady income, and strengthening essential WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) infrastructure in their areas while becoming financially independent, despite facing challenges like irregular work demand and

travel and distance barriers, the officials said.

These women now act as frontline operation and maintenance (O&M) support for 'ashramshalas' (residential schools) and local communities, they said.

"Through this initiative with UNICEF and CYDA, we are maintaining school infrastructure, including hygiene and safe drinking water facil-

ities. Adisakhis have become skilled leaders in their own communities," Maharashtra Tribal Development Department Secretary Vijay Waghmare told PTI.

"By training and equipping local women to manage repair and maintenance work in ashramshalas, we have demonstrated that technical roles traditionally seen as male-dominated can be successfully handled by women when given the right support," he said.

Currently, 120 women have been skilled and are maintaining around 256 schools and have earned between ₹2,000 to ₹2 lakh so far, the official said.

The name Adisakhi literally means "friend of tribals," and these friends are transforming their communities in a remarkable way. "I have witnessed firsthand the energy, confidence and determination of young girls and women who are leading a woman-led multiskilling movement," UNICEF Maharashtra Chief Sanjay Singh said.

The Adishakhi workforce

has significantly improved WASH systems through timely repairs, reduced dependency on contractors, and faster issue resolution in ashramshalas.

The project not only provides an assured income to these young women while improving school infrastructure, but also gives them a chance to set up their own repair and maintenance business, empowering tribal women through sustainable livelihoods, as per officials.

The Tribal Development Department along with UNICEF and CYDA, has started this unique Adisakhi initiative. There are around 500 ashramshalas under the department where more than two lakh children are educated. It becomes difficult to get people to do repair work in tribal areas.

More than 100 Adisakhis have been trained as part of this initiative across four advanced training centres in Nagpur, Amravati, Nashik, and Thane. They visit the ashramshalas regularly for work and are also getting paid well for their services, she added.



More than 50 lakh infiltrators have been removed from the voter list. These infiltrators were not only violating the rights of legitimate citizens, but also jeopardising the security of the country

NITIN NABIN | BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT

VARANASI'S GREEN TRIUMPH

In a massive tree planting drive held in the Sujabad Domri area Sunday, Varanasi created a new world record by planting over 2.51 lakh trees in a single hour. The feat surpasses an eight-year-old record held by China, officials said



of the day quote

The remarks appeared to be made keeping in view (upcoming) elections in states like West Bengal and Kerala. The prime minister is not talking about his 11-year report card from any platform and avoiding important issues like unemployment and farmers' concerns

SACHIN PILOT | CONG LEADER

We hope that the Government of India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will play a role in stopping this war. The war should end. He has a huge responsibility to take it forward because if this spreads, there will be huge turmoil, uncertainty, and instability

ASADUDDIN OWAIISI | AIMIM PRESIDENT

As you are aware, the OBC community constitutes 31 per cent of Punjab's population, and together they can change the axis of Punjab politics. Now is the time for you to play a leading role in political leadership

NAYAB SINGH SAINI | HARYANA CM

SHORT TAKES

Three die in road mishap

Barabanki (UP): Three people were killed and five others were seriously injured when the car they were travelling in lost control on the Purvanchal Expressway in Barabanki district Sunday and met with an accident, police said. According to police, the accident took place in the afternoon when the rear tyre of the car, an SUV, burst on the expressway near Nera Kabulpur village in Loni Katra police station area, and the driver lost control of the vehicle, resulting in the accident.

PM Modi wishes Stalin on his b'day

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday conveyed birthday greetings to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin and wished him good health. Stalin turned 73 Sunday. "Best wishes to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Thiru MK Stalin on his birthday. May he be blessed with a long life and good health," Modi said in a post on X. Stalin heads Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK, which is a key member of the INDIA opposition bloc.

Two security personnel hurt in IED blast

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): Two CoBRA battalion personnel were seriously injured in an IED blast triggered by Maoists during an anti-Naxal operation in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district Sunday, a senior police officer said. The incident took place when security forces were conducting an operation in the Saranda forests when an IED, allegedly planted by the proscribed Communist Party of India (Maoist) beneath a forest track, went off.

Delhi Police arrests 27 for cyber fraud

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has arrested 27 men in connection with cyber fraud cases involving more than ₹1.5 crore, from 11 states, following a week-long pan-India operation, an official said Sunday. According to the police, the accused were involved in at least 10 major cyber fraud cases amounting to more than ₹1.5 crore, while scrutiny of their suspected bank accounts revealed transactions of over ₹13.91 crore.

INDIA, CANADA TO EXPAND TIES



The two prime ministers will hold wide-ranging talks as part of a "substantive agenda" amid efforts by both sides to reset the bilateral ties that came under severe strain following a diplomatic row over the killing of a Khalistani separatist in 2023

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney are set to roll out a broad framework Monday to deepen India-Canada ties in areas of trade, energy and critical technology in the face of increasing geopolitical upheavals.

The two prime ministers will hold wide-ranging talks as part of a "substantive agenda" amid efforts by both sides to reset the bilateral ties that came under severe strain following a diplomatic row over the killing of a Khalistani separatist in 2023. Carney landed in New Delhi Sunday after spending two days in Mumbai where he met several industry leaders.

As Modi and Carney are meeting against the backdrop of attack on Iran by Israel and the US, the two leaders are expected to exchange views on the overall situation in the Middle East. It is learnt that there could be some forward movement towards civil-nuclear cooperation between New Delhi and Ottawa. India is keen to seal a proposed deal that will allow it to procure uranium from Canada.

"There's a rapidly growing demand across India for more energy, technology, and services -- exactly what Canada has to offer," the Canadian prime minister said on social media after arriving in the na-

tional capital. "We're here to make sure our workers and businesses can seize these opportunities," he said.

The Canadian prime minister was received at the airport by Union Minister Jitin Prasad. Carney was also accorded a ceremonial reception.

"A substantive agenda awaits, including his official talks with PM @narendramodi tomorrow," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on social media.

It is learnt that following the Modi-Carney talks, the two sides may announce their resolve to soon conclude the proposed comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

In the face of its frosty trade ties with the Trump administration, Canada is looking at building a stronger, independent, and more resilient economy.

In the last few months, India and Canada have taken several steps to normalise the relations.

The India-Canada relations hit rock bottom following then prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in 2023 of a potential Indian link to the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

India had dismissed Trudeau's accusation as "absurd". In October 2024, India recalled its high commissioner and five other diplomats after Ottawa attempted to link them to the Nijjar case.

India also expelled an equal number of Canadian diplomats. However, Liberal Party leader Carney's victory in the parliamentary election in April last year helped in beginning the process to reset relations.

Subsequently, both sides have already posted their high commissioners in each other's capitals. In June last year, Prime Minister Modi travelled to Canada's Kananaskis to attend the G7 summit.

Modi and Carney held extensive talks on the margins of the summit with a focus on rebuilding the ties.

PM sounds poll bugle, slams DMK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Madurai (Tamil Nadu), March 1: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday aggressively targeted the ruling DMK on multiple fronts including corruption, scams, dynasty rule and "insensitivity" over people's sentiments on the Thirupparankundram lamp-lighting issue and asserted that the devotees would eventually win. Addressing a mega NDA election rally, Modi invoked the welfare-centric legacies of AIADMK icons MG Ramachandran and J Jayalalithaa and expressed confidence of NDA winning the upcoming Assembly polls and forming the government. The AIADMK leads NDA in Tamil Nadu.

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, AMMK founder TTV Dhinakaran and PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss were among the alliance party leaders who attended the mega event in this southern city and hailed the PM's leadership and lashed out at the DMK.

While Congress icon K Kamaraj was synonymous with honesty, the DMK, the grand old party's ally, stood for the 'exact opposite,' he said. PM Modi alleged the Congress party took "revenge" on Tamil Nadu by "giving away Katchatheevu," to Sri Lanka. Immediately following the conclusion of the rally, NDA leaders met



and discussed issues including the next meeting of PM in TN.

Earlier, the PM inaugurated infrastructure projects worth over ₹4,400 crore in the state and said, "Our collective goal is a developed Tamil Nadu for a developed India. Every Indian is inspired to build a developed nation by 2047. Tamil Nadu will play a decisive role in shaping the nation's destiny."

At the NDA rally, the PM asserted, "My heart felt heavy," referring to a devotee ending his life here recently seeking lamp-lighting right at the Deepathoon atop Thirupparankundram hill. The devotee, Poor-nachandran took the extreme step due to the "insensitivity" of the DMK government and, no matter what they do, the truth will win and devotees of Lord Murugan will win, the PM as-

serted. He further said that he met the deceased devotee's wife Indumathi as well as his sons. He offered prayers at the Thirupparankundram temple and later addressed the poll rally.

Targeting the DMK for allegedly looting the state, not delivering good governance and for dynasty politics, he alleged: "DMK brought mafia-style politics to Madurai. They gave bad roads, poor drainage and a lack of waste management. They took Madurai to the bottom of the national ranking in cleanliness." Usually ministers compete with each other in good work. In DMK, ministers compete with each other in scams, he alleged.

Further, Modi listed allegations including ₹365 crore cash for transfer scandal, ₹900 crore cash for job scam, ₹1000 crore

cash for contract scam, ₹4700 crore sand mining scam, ₹40,000 crore TASMAM scam, and so on. The PM said today the women of Tamil Nadu are in deep trouble as crime is increasing every other day and "we hear of some crimes against women." Women see their families destroyed by drug mafia and alcohol. Tamil Nadu kept Congress out of power in the state for six decades. "You were the first state to become Congress-mukt. For this, Congress took revenge against Tamil Nadu. It was Congress that gave away Katchatheevu, and then DMK didn't do anything." The Congress-DMK government at the centre banned Jallikattu and it was the BJP regime that lifted the ban showing respect to Tamil culture and by giving the 'Sengol' a place of pride in the Parliament. The PM completed his address by repeatedly chanting 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Vande Mataram.'

Interestingly, a popular melodious song 'Oru Koottu Kiliyaga,' from an old Sivaji Ganesan film was played at the end of the public meeting. The song's theme was broadly about unity and looking up to the 'elder brother' for guidance.

Social media was abuzz debating Modi choosing to address the people in English while he had for long, including at his Madurantakam meeting in January, used Hindi.

Countdown for BJP's exit has begun: Kejriwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Forty-eight hours after being discharged by a Delhi court in the liquor policy case, AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah Sunday, claiming that the countdown of the BJP's removal from power has begun.

Addressing the party's rally at Jantar Mantar here, Kejriwal accused the prime minister and Shah of conspiring to frame him in the excise policy case and said that the court in a recent "historic" judgement proved that he was "Kattar Imandar" (hardcore honest person).

The 140 crore Indians will unite to uproot "dictatorial government from country," said the AAP chief. A trial court Friday granted the relief to Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and 21 others in the case and criticised the CBI, saying the charge sheet "suffers from internal contradictions, striking at the root of conspiracy theory."

Addressing the gathering of party leaders and workers from several states, Kejriwal alleged that the prime minister feared everyone and asserted that when a "tyrant" is scared, it signals the end of his reign.

"He sent Sonam Wangchuk to jail, who is a big scientist and worked for the education of children. Modi ji did not go to Parliament one day, fearing women MPs would assault him. He is scared of Trump, too," Kejriwal stated.

WB SIR: Richa Ghosh 'under adjudication'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 1: The TMC Sunday charged the EC with carrying out a "silent invisible rigging" during SIR, claiming that the names of Indian cricketer Richa Ghosh, West Bengal minister Md Ghulam Rabbani and three other party MLAs have been placed "under adjudication" category in the final roll.

In posts on X, the party said Ghosh, a member of India's ICC Women's World Cup-winning squad, was marked "under adjudication" in the voter list published February 28.

"The farce of @BJP4India



and @ECISVEEP's silent invisible rigging reaches new lows of absurdity. A World Cup-winning star like Richa

Ghosh, Bengal's pride, India's hero, the wicketkeeper-batter who donned the blue jersey and brought glory to the na-

tion, has now been placed 'under adjudication' in the final electoral rolls," the party said in an X post. The TMC said Ghosh represented India overseas with distinction and earned every Bengali's admiration. The 22-year-old wicketkeeper-batter from Siliguri was a member of India's 2025 ICC Women's World Cup-winning team. It said she "is forced to endure this humiliating scrutiny, her name flagged, her voter status questioned, her democratic right dangling by a thread in this voter purge".

"When even celebrities and national icons can be arbitrarily targeted, questioned,

and subjected to this degrading process, what hope for the common Bengali voter?" the party asked, drawing parallels between prominent figures like Ghosh and common people also clubbed under the same category following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. "This is systematic humiliation engineered to disenfranchise, to silence, to erase Bengal's voice one name at a time," it said. The party said four sitting MLAs -- Rabbani, Rafiqur Rahaman, Toraf Hossain Mandal and Swati Khandoker -- have similarly been placed under the same category.

Experts urge schools to integrate AI education responsibly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Schools should integrate artificial intelligence education and awareness in an age-appropriate manner across classes, but access should be allowed to only vetted AI tools within secure school ecosystems. To effectively make AI usage safe for students, teachers have to be upskilled for a better understanding of the guardrails required," he told PTI.

Jaipuria noted that the implications of AI usage on schoolchildren can be manifold. "Too much dependence on AI for ready-made answers may lead to students suspending their own critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. This intellectual outsourcing has to be avoided."

"Secondly, there is a real

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"Secondly, there is a real



risk of misinformation as a result of incorrect AI-generated content. Deepfakes are hard to detect and may lead children

- SCHOOLS SHOULD INTEGRATE AGE-APPROPRIATE AI EDUCATION AND AWARENESS ACROSS ALL GRADES, FOCUSING ON DATA PRIVACY AND RESPONSIBLE USE
ACCESS TO AI TOOLS FOR STUDENTS SHOULD BE LIMITED TO VETTED PLATFORMS WITHIN SECURE SCHOOL ECOSYSTEMS TO MITIGATE RISKS
EDUCATORS NEED UPSKILLING TO UNDERSTAND THE NECESSARY GUARDRAILS FOR SAFE AND EFFECTIVE AI INTEGRATION IN EDUCATION

to believe false information as facts. Algorithmic bias can also reflect in AI responses in terms of gender, racial and cultural

biases," he added.

Alka Kapur, Principal of Modern Public School, Shalimar Bagh, said introducing age-appropriate digital literacy programmes is the most prudent way to open the world of AI to the students.

"These programmes enable students to learn about AI, its benefits, the potential risks involved in its usage and most importantly, the AI ethics. When introduced thoughtfully, AI becomes a powerful ally rather than a double-edged sword. The biggest contribution of schools and educators can be in setting clear guidelines for responsible AI use and monitoring digital activities.

"Teachers should be trained to guide students in using AI as a learning tool rather than a shortcut," he said. Kapur said while AI can be a valuable learning aid, it is not without its pitfalls for schoolchildren.

"One major risk is overdependence on artificial intelligence as excessive reliance on AI may prevent students from putting on their thinking caps and making independent efforts.

"Another risk is the exposure to misinformation since AI tools may sometimes provide inaccurate or misleading information without verifying its authenticity," Kapur said.



The mediation, all of you know, is something in our DNA and now mediation in India is not only in the discussion within the halls or within the elite clubs or in the urban areas. Mediation has entered the streets. Mediation has entered the households where unfortunate disputes are there

KISAN MAZDOOR MORCHA TO PROTEST IN AMRITSAR MAR 19 The Kisan Mazdoor Morcha Sunday announced a protest outside the office of the Amritsar deputy commissioner March 19 for various demands, including the disbursal of pending compensation for damage caused by floods last year



of the day uote

Infiltration in Bengal has reached its peak. The state is being turned into a safe hub for infiltrators. The original inhabitants of Bengal will become minorities as infiltrators are being given shelter

Next time, five lakh bighas will be cleared of evictions. This is the message we have given to the people. No Bangladeshi infiltrator will live in peace in Assam

The target of deleting over one crore voters in West Bengal was decided even before SIR commenced. BJP leaders have repeatedly said 1.2 crore names will be removed. If you add the deletions and those put under adjudication, the number corresponds closely to the figure of 1.2 crore

POST OF THE DAY

World War 1 happened because of Austria-Hungary World War 2 happened because of Hitler World War 3 is happening because pedophiles want to divert attention from the Epstein Files.

KHAMENEI'S DEATH Protests in several parts of India

Srinagar/Lucknow, March 1: From Kashmir to Karnataka, Shia mourners took to the streets in various parts of India to express outrage and grief over the death of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a US-Israel strike.



People protest against the alleged killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a reported US-Israel strike, in Srinagar

Kashmir - which has about 15 lakh Shias - witnessed major protests at Lal Chowk, Saida Kadal, Budgam, Bandipora, Anantnag and Pulwama, an official said. The protesters were seen beating their chests as they shouted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans.

PM CHAIRS CCS MEETING

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) upon his return to the national capital Sunday night, government sources said.

Many Muslim bodies and organisations across the country announced a multiple-day mourning period and scheduled their protests Monday as well in memory of the Iranian leader. In Uttar Pradesh's capital, Lucknow, scores of people gathered near the Bara Imambara mosque and shouted slogans during the protest, with women mourners clinging to the Iranian leader's photo and weeping.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will be burnt during the protest Monday. The Shia community has declared a three-day mourning, during which people will wear black, hoist black flags at their homes and organise special prayers, Abbas added.

national mourning. Rehmani urged Muslims worldwide to unite against such challenges, terming Khamenei a great martyr and condemning his killing in the strongest terms.

Oppn questions govt's silence

New Delhi: Opposition parties Sunday condemned the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israel strikes and questioned the Centre's "silence", with the Congress saying that it shows the Modi government's "abdication of moral leadership".

and Taragarh in Ajmer, where members of the community offered prayers and expressed grief over the incident. Meanwhile, several devotees from Jodhpur are stranded in Dubai after their return flights were cancelled following attacks near Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

Hundreds of Indians stranded in Dubai

New Delhi, March 1: As flight operations to and from West Asia remain disrupted after the US and Israel's attack on Iran, hundreds of Indians are stranded in Dubai and other key hub airports, with many of them taking to social media to appeal to the Indian government for assistance.

and is staying at a hotel," Sid daramaiah said. Two-time Olympic medalist P V Sindhu and her coach were left stranded at Dubai International Airport after flight operations were suspended.

He appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure the safe return of Indians stranded in Dubai. Indore MP Shankar Lalwani said several people from the city were stuck in the UAE, and the Ministry of External Affairs has been informed about this.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has issued an advisory to foreign nationals held up in India due to the ongoing developments in West Asia, asking them to contact their nearest Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) if they require assistance with visa extensions or need to regularise their stay.

SHORT TAKES

Septic tank cleaning turns fatal for four

Hajipur (Bihar): Four members of a family died after inhaling toxic gases while cleaning their house's septic tank in Bihar's Vaishali district Sunday, officials said.

British-era building gutted

Nainital: A massive fire Sunday gutted a British-era building in Uttarakhand's Nainital, though police said no casualty or injuries to anyone were reported in the incident.

BJP-TMC clash in south Kolkata

Kolkata: Supporters of the ruling TMC and opposition BJP clashed in south Kolkata's Netaji Nagar area Sunday over drawing graffiti on a wall for the upcoming assembly elections.



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma greets an elephant during the 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra', in Morigaon, Assam

EC to visit Kerala March 6, 7 to assess poll preparedness

New Delhi, March 1: The Election Commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, will visit Kerala this week to assess poll preparedness in the state where assembly elections are likely to be held next month.



before announcing the election schedule. The terms of the five assemblies end on different dates in May and June. While the five-year term of the Puducherry Assembly ends June 15, the terms of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal assemblies end May 20, 23, 10 and 7, respectively.

Budget allocation of ₹17,366cr for Gujarat in Rly sector: Vaishnaw

Gandhinagar, March 1: Honourable Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting, and Electronics & Information Technology, Ashwini Vaishnaw, visited Gujarat February 28 and March 1. During this visit, he addressed the media at the Gujarat Semiconductor Conference 2026 held in Gandhinagar.

Indian airlines cancel 350 flights Sunday

New Delhi/ Mumbai, March 1: Indian airlines cancelled 350 international flights Sunday as operational disruptions continued for the second day due to the escalating Middle East conflict.



over Iran and parts of the Middle East. On February 28, the ministry said 410 flights of domestic carriers were cancelled. Air India and SpiceJet shared details about the number of flights cancelled through X posts.

Life sentence for man in Kerala child sexual assault case

Kollam(Kerala), March 1: A court here has sentenced a man to imprisonment until death for torturing and sexually assaulting a four-year-old girl. Punalur Fast Track Court (POCSO Act Cases) Special Judge Aravind B Edayodi Friday awarded the sentence and a fine of Rs 5 lakh to Kalaivanan Kamaraj, a native of Nagapattinam currently residing in Kacheri here.



undertaken under the leadership of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel in this direction. Unprecedented investment in the Railway Sector Accelerating Development The Minister stated that Indian Railways has allocated a record Budget of RS 17,366 crore to Gujarat for the railway sector this year.

The court observed that the victim was below five years old at the time of the offence and that the accused had repeatedly inflicted physical harm. The court further noted that the accused manipulated the mother by claiming a spirit would enter her, harassing the victim under the guise of "deliverance" from an evil spirit.

End of Khamenei's iron rule

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei assembled theocratic power in Iran over the decades as its supreme leader and sought to turn it into a regional powerhouse, bringing it into confrontation with Israel and the United States over its nuclear programme while crushing pro-democracy protesters at home

HOW HE WAS KILLED

SUPREME LEADER WAS MEETING WITH TOP SECURITY AIDES | **US-ISRAELI OPERATION MOVED FORWARD WHEN MEETING DETECTED** | **STRIKES DESIGNED TO HIT KHAMENEI FIRST**

and indecisive, Khamenei seemed an unlikely choice for supreme leader after the death of the charismatic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Republic of Iran. But Khamenei's rise to the pinnacle of the country's power structure afforded him a tight grip over the nation's affairs.

Khamenei was "an accident of history" who went from a weak president to an initially weak supreme leader to one of the five most powerful Iranians of the last 100 years", Karim Sadjadpour at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace told Reuters.

The ayatollah criticised Washington throughout his rule, continuing to deploy barbs after the start of Donald Trump's second term as US president in 2025.

As a new wave of protests spread through Iran, with slogans such as "Death to the dictator", and as Trump threatened to intervene, Khamenei vowed in January that the country would not "yield to the enemy".

The comment was typical of the ferociously anti-Western

Khamenei, in office since 1989.

By maintaining the hardline stance of Khomeini, the Republic's first supreme leader, Khamenei quashed the ambitions of a succession of independent-minded elected presidents who sought more open policies at home and abroad.

In the process, he ensured Iran's isolation, critics say.

HIS WORD WAS LAW

Khamenei long denied that Iran's nuclear programme was aimed at producing an atomic weapon, as the West contended. In 2015 he cautiously supported a nuclear deal between world powers and the government of pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani that curbed the country's nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief. The hard-won accord resulted in a partial lifting of Iran's economic and political isolation.

But Khamenei's hostility toward the US was undimmed, intensifying in 2018 when Trump's first administration withdrew from the nuclear agreement and reimposed sanctions to choke Iran's oil

and shipping industries. Following the U.S. withdrawal, Khamenei sided with hardline supporters who criticised Rouhani's policy of appeasement towards the West.

As Trump pressed Iran to agree to a new nuclear deal in 2025, Khamenei condemned "the rude and arrogant leaders of America". "Who are you to decide whether Iran should have enrichment?" he asked.

Khamenei often denounced "the Great Satan" in speeches, reassuring hardliners for whom anti-US sentiment was at the heart of the 1979 revolution, which forced the last shah of Iran into exile.

Iran saw major student-led protests in 1999 and 2002. But Khamenei's authority was put to the test more profoundly in 2009, when the contested results of a presidential election that he had validated ignited violent street unrest, stoking a crisis of legitimacy that lingered until his death.

In 2022, Khamenei cracked down on protesters enraged by the death of Iranian-Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, 22, who died in the custody of morality police in September of that year.

Faced with some of the most intense turmoil since the revolution, Khamenei blamed Western enemies then resorted to the hanging of protesters

and the display of their bodies, suspended from cranes, after months of unrest.

As the final authority in Iran's complex system of clerical rule and limited democracy, Khamenei long sought to ensure that no group, even among his closest allies, mustered enough power to challenge him and his anti-US stance.



In polarised Iran, Supreme Leader's death triggers celebrations, grief

Some Iranians grieved while others celebrated the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, exposing a deep fault line in a country stunned by the sudden demise of the man who ruled for 36 years.

Iranian state TV announced his death in the early hours of Sunday, the voice of the broadcaster breaking with emotion as he confirmed Khamenei had been killed in the US-Israeli attack Saturday. Footage from Tehran showed mourners packed into a square, dressed in black and many of them weeping.

public in 1979, a video on social media showed.

"Am I dreaming? Hello to the new world!" a man can be heard shouting in the video, as fires burned on a traffic circle where the monument was toppled, prompting cheers and applause.

Another video showed people celebrating in the town of Lapuee in southern Iran outside the house of a 15-year-old teenager, Pooya Jafari, who was shot dead during anti-government protests in January.

Thousands of Iranians were killed during a crackdown on anti-government protests in

We must avenge the blood of the leader."

"We said last night until the morning that God willing, it is a lie. Unfortunately, it was the truth," said a woman mourning Khamenei's death, in a pool report via WANA.

Khamenei's rule faced numerous waves of unrest over the decades, including student-led protests in 1999 and 2002, unrest in 2009, and the more recent "Woman, Life, Freedom" protests of 2022, triggered by the death of a young woman while she was in the custody of the morality police.

A 33-year-old woman from Isfahan said she began crying from a mix of joy and disbelief when she heard Khamenei was dead.

Speaking to Reuters from Iran, she said she joined others dancing in the street to "share my happiness with my people", expressing hope that his death would mean the end of the Islamic Republic.

She declined to be named for fear of reprisal.

But Atousa Mirzade, a primary school teacher in the central city of Shiraz, said she could not be happy about the country's leader being killed by a foreign power.

"I also cannot be happy because I don't know what will happen to our country. We saw what happened in Iraq — chaos and bloodshed. I would prefer the Islamic Republic to that situation."

University student Hossein Dadbakhsh, 21, in Mashhad, said Iran would avenge its leader.

"I am ready to sacrifice my life for Islam and for my Imam Khamenei. The Zionist regime and Trump will pay a heavy price for the martyrdom of my leader," he said by phone, his voice trembling with emotion.



media showed joy and defiance elsewhere, with people cheering as a statue was toppled in the city of Dehloran in Ilam province, dancing in the streets of Karaj city, near Tehran in Alborz province, and celebrating in the streets of Izeh in Khuzestan province.

In the town of Galleh Dar in southern Iran, people knocked down a monument commemorating Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Repub-

January, the deadliest wave of unrest since the Islamic Revolution of 1979.

TRUMP, ISRAEL WILL PAY 'HEAVY PRICE'

Announcing the attack on Iran Saturday, US President Donald Trump urged Iranians to seize the moment to topple the government.

At a rally mourning Khamenei's death in Tehran, one man said the news had filled him with hatred "towards Israel and America.

Other developments

- Iran launches 97 ballistic missiles at Kuwait
- Czech government is ready to evacuate citizens via Egypt
- Saudi Arabia summons Iranian ambassador
- South Korea prepares plans to ensure safety of nationals in Mideast
- Turkiye's top diplomat holds call with Iranian counterpart
- Israel's state plane moved to Berlin airport
- Saudi Arabia strongly condemns Iranian attack on its capital
- US tells citizens in Middle East to take precautions

Retaliatory strikes target Gulf cities

Dubai: Debris from an intercepted drone damaged an Abu Dhabi complex housing the Israeli embassy and several other international missions, causing minor injuries to a woman and her child, Abu Dhabi's state media office said Sunday.

Debris from the drone fell against the facade of the Etihad Towers complex after an interception that caused loud sounds heard across the emirate, the media office said.

After the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran Saturday, Iran said it would target US bases in the region. But it has also hit a range of civilian and commercial areas across Gulf cities, widening the conflict's

- ABU DHABI COMPLEX HOUSING EMBASSIES DAMAGED
- LOUD BLASTS OVER DUBAI AND DOHA, OMAN HIT FOR FIRST
- CONFLICT AFFECTING GULF AVIATION AND TRADE HUBS

impact on key regional aviation and trade hubs.

As retaliatory strikes widened Sunday they reverberated across Gulf Arab states, with loud blasts heard in Dubai and the Qatari capital Doha and with Oman being hit for the first time.

In Dubai, two people were injured after shrapnel from drones fell over two houses when they were intercepted, a Dubai state media office statement said.

Dubai's international airport, its landmark Burj Al Arab hotel

and man-made Palm Jumeirah Island all suffered damage overnight, as did Abu Dhabi's international airport.

Thick black plumes of smoke continued to rise from the Jebel Ali port area, where one of the berths caught fire Sunday because of debris from an intercepted missile.

In neighbouring Oman, which was spared retaliation Saturday, Duqm commercial port was targeted by two drones, wounding one worker.

GLOBAL STRIKES MARK TRUMP 2.0 ERA

From Africa to the Middle East and Latin America, US president's second term has been marked by an expanded use of military force rather than restraint

IRAN Trump announced that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a US-Israeli strike, calling it a turning point for the Iranian people. He described the campaign as "major combat operations" aimed at regime change and warned that "heavy and pinpoint bombing" would continue. The escalation followed earlier US strikes in June 2025 targeting nuclear facilities in Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. Trump claimed those attacks "obliterated"

LATIN AMERICA Since September, US forces have conducted at least 45 strikes on suspected drug trafficking vessels across Latin America and the Caribbean, killing at least 151 people, according to Airwars. The administration calls the operations part of a broader war on narcotics, but UN officials and legal experts have labeled them illegal extrajudicial killings.

NIGERIA Trump deployed 100 US troops to Nigeria to train local forces and threatened further action over what he called a "genocide" of Christians — a claim disputed by Nigerian authorities. In December 2025, the US carried out strikes against alleged ISIL affiliates, though questions emerged about the group's presence in the targeted region.

SOMALIA The US intensified air operations in Somalia, conducting at least 111 strikes in 2025, according to the New America Foundation — surpassing totals under previous administrations.



YEMEN Between March and May 2025, US naval and air strikes targeted Houthi positions. A strike on Ras Isa port reportedly killed over 80 civilians, prompting war crime allegations. A ceasefire brokered by Oman followed in May.

SYRIA AND IRAQ US forces struck ISIL targets in Syria after an attack in Palmyra killed two American soldiers. In Iraq, a March 2025 strike killed ISIL's second-in-command in coordination with Iraqi authorities.

Kyiv says Russia accepted US plan for Ukraine security guarantees



Kyiv, March 1: Russia said at recent talks in Geneva it would accept the US proposal for Ukraine's post-war security guarantees, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff said Saturday.

"At the last talks, the Russian side said for example that they would accept the security guarantees offered to Ukraine by the United States," said top aide Kyrylo Budanov in an interview aired on Ukrainian television.

US President Donald Trump is urging Moscow and Kyiv

to strike an agreement to end Europe's biggest war since 1945, though Zelenskyy has complained that his country is facing more pressure to make concessions.

Ukraine is seeking iron-clad security guarantees which commit the US and its European allies to action if Russia attacks again after a peace deal is reached. The last round of peace talks, which took place in Geneva last week, did not achieve a breakthrough and was described as difficult by Kyiv and Moscow, although Washington said it saw "meaningful progress."

CONFLICT INTENSIFIES

Afghanistan fires at Pakistani jets

REUTERS

Kabul, March 1: Afghanistan said it was firing at Pakistani jets in Kabul after blasts and gunfire rocked the capital Sunday, compounding instability in a region rattled by US-Israeli strikes on Iran and retaliatory attacks on US targets in Gulf states.

The Taliban-ruled state has suffered Pakistani strikes against government installations over the past week following accusations, which it denies, that it harbours militants.

The heaviest fighting in years between the neighbours has raised fears of a protracted conflict along their 2,600-km (1,615-mile) border, with several countries including Qatar and Saudi Arabia calling for restraint and offering to help mediate a ceasefire.

Explosions echoed across parts of Kabul before sunrise, followed by bursts of gunfire, a Reuters witness said. It was not



- AFGHANISTAN SAYS IT FIRED AT PAKISTANI JETS
- BLASTS AND GUNFIRE ROCK KABUL BEFORE DAWN
- HEAVIEST FIGHTING IN YEARS RAISES FEAR OF PROTRACTED CONFLICT
- REGIONAL POWERS URGE RESTRAINT, OFFER MEDIATION

clear what had been targeted or whether there were casualties.

Taliban administration spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said the sounds were the result of Afghan forces targeting Pakistani aircraft over the capital.

"Air defence attacks were

carried out in Kabul against Pakistani aircraft. Kabul residents should not be concerned," Mujahid said.

The violence follows air strikes inside Afghanistan this week that Pakistan said targeted militant infrastructure. Af-

ghanistan described the strikes as a violation of sovereignty and announced retaliatory operations along their shared border.

Pakistan has said Afghanistan harbours Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants, which it said are waging an insurgency inside Pakistan.

Afghanistan has denied the accusation, saying it does not allow Afghan territory to be used against other countries and that Pakistan's security challenges are an internal matter.

Pakistani security sources have said operation "Ghazab Lil Haq", meaning "Wrath for the Truth", was ongoing and that Pakistani forces had destroyed Afghan posts and camps.

Both sides have reported heavy losses, issuing differing casualty figures for each other.

Diplomatic efforts have intensified, with Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, the European Union and United Nations urging restraint and calling for talks.

Death toll rises to 22 after plane carrying money crashes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

La Paz (Bolivia), March 1: The death toll rose to 22 Saturday from the crash of a military plane carrying 18 tons of new banknotes a day earlier near Bolivia's capital, damaging about a dozen vehicles and scattering bills on the ground, a police commander said Saturday.

Another 29 people were injured, mostly passengers travelling on public transportation where the plane crashed. Among the dead are 12 men, including one crew member, six women and four children, police commander Mirko Sokol said.

Forensic investigators were still recovering remains from the wreckage Saturday.

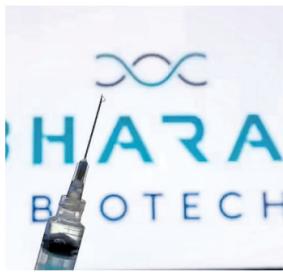
Defense Minister Marcelo Salinas said Friday that the Hercules C-130 plane was transporting newly printed Bolivian currency from the eastern city of Santa Cruz when it "landed and veered off the runway" at an airport in El Alto, a city adjacent to La Paz, before ending up in a nearby field.



The market continues to witness strong competitive pressure with no signs of a pullback
AMIT SYNGLE | MD AND CEO, ASIAN PAINTS

BHARAT BIOTECH MULLS IPO

The developer of Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin, Bharat Biotech is considering an initial public offering that could raise over \$500 million, according to sources cited by multiple reports. Discussions are underway including key aspects of the proposed share sale, including size and timing, they said. Bharat Biotech plans Rs 200-250 crore of capital expenditure in FY26 for a large vaccine manufacturing facility being developed under Sapigen Biologix Pvt Ltd in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, partly financed through debt raised from financial institutions



of the day quote

AI is ability for us to democratise expertise, to tackle problems that we have not been able to solve till now... democratising expertise, say, for high quality, reliable health care

PUSHMEET KOHLI | VICE PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH, GOOGLE DEEPMIND

We have now partnered with Google to extend customer protection beyond the telco domain and made the rich messaging platform safer and more secure

GOPAL VITTAL | EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN, BHARTI AIRTEL

Rotavator is a big area of focus for us because it's one of the main tillage equipment used in India. With the launch of the new rotavator, we are looking at further increasing our market share to 25 per cent. That is the goal

ANUSHA KOTHANDARAMAN | VICE PRESIDENT, MAHINDRA FARM EQUIPMENT BUSINESS

US-IRAN TENSIONS

Global oil route choked

Iran has reportedly closed traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and a large share of India's crude oil and LNG supplies from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar transit this narrow point

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Rising tensions in the Middle East following attacks by the US and Israel on Iran are expected to disrupt trade flows, push up freight and insurance costs, delay cargo shipments, and drive a surge in global oil prices, thereby increasing India's import bill, say experts.

Though India's trade with Iran has declined over the years due to Western sanctions, the country's two-way commerce with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE has registered healthy growth.

Experts and exporters are of the view that prolonged tensions in the region will have consequences for India on the trade front.

Iran has reportedly closed traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and a large share of India's crude oil and LNG supplies from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar transit this narrow choke point.

Estimates suggest roughly 35-50 per cent of India's crude imports and a significant portion of LNG shipments pass through the strait. In response, refiners may reroute cargoes via pipelines to Red Sea ports, source more oil from Russia, the US, West Africa and Latin America, and draw on strategic petroleum reserves to cushion short-term shocks, though these alternatives increase costs and transit times, it said.

"The impact would be global, not just Indian. Nearly one-fifth of the world's oil and a major share of LNG trade flows through the strait, and most shipments are destined for Asian economies, including China, Japan and South Korea," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

He added that the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz threat-



Any disruption would push up freight and insurance costs, delay cargoes, and trigger a spike in global oil prices -- directly raising India's import bill

AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

ens a major share of India's crude oil and LNG imports, raising freight costs, insurance premiums, and fuel prices, while a surge in global oil prices could widen the current account deficit and fuel inflation.

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow 33-kilometre passage connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea.

Sharing similar views, trade expert Biswajit Dhar said that shipping lines have been affected due to this war, and that will impact Indian exporters.

"Oil prices may rise to \$120-130 per barrel, and it would push our import bill, and may hurt inflation," he said, adding that if it continues for long, remittances could get hit.

It may also slow down free trade agreement (FTA) talks with the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council).

India has recently started FTA negotiations with the GCC bloc.

GCC is a union of six countries in the Gulf region -- Saudi

Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

About 10 million Indians are living and working in the GCC region.

India has already implemented a free trade pact with the UAE in May 2022. It has also signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with Oman.

India's exports to the GCC grew by about one per cent to about \$57 billion in 2024-25 against \$56.32 billion in 2023-24. Imports rose by 15.33 per cent to \$121.7 billion in 2024-25 from \$105.5 billion in 2023-24.

Bilateral trade has increased to \$178.7 billion in 2024-25 from \$161.82 billion in 2023-24.

The UAE was India's third-largest trading partner in the last fiscal.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President SC Ralhan said the ongoing conflict has already begun to disrupt established global logistics channels.

Air routes are being altered,

and maritime trade through the Red Sea and key Gulf straits face heightened uncertainty. If diversions become prolonged, shipments may increasingly have to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope, adding an estimated 15-20 days to transit time for Europe and the United States, Ralhan has said.

In 2024, the tensions in the Middle East region following the Israel-Hamas war had impacted the transportation of goods from India through the Red Sea route, as shippers had to take longer routes to reach destinations in the US and Europe.

The Bab-el-Mandeb Strait is a crucial shipping route for traders connecting the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean.

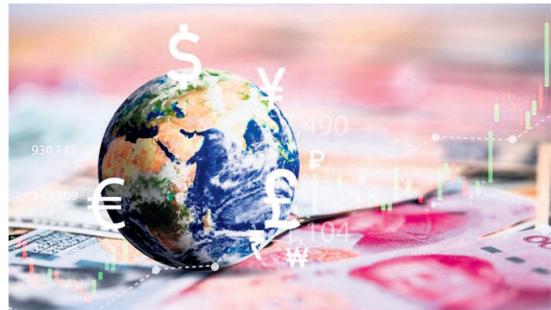
The route starts from major Indian ports like Mumbai, JNPT, or Chennai, heads westward through the Arabian Sea, enters the Red Sea, and navigates through the Suez Canal into the Mediterranean Sea. From there, ships can reach various European ports, depending on their destinations.

The Cape of Good Hope route is longer and slower, but it avoids the potential for delays or disruptions in the Suez Canal. It is typically used for bulk cargo shipments, where time is less critical or when political instability in the Middle East raises concerns about using the Suez Canal.

The country's exports rose marginally by 0.61 per cent to \$36.56 billion in January, while trade deficit widened to a three-month high of \$34.68 billion.

Imports rose 19.2 per cent - the highest so far this fiscal - to a three-month high of \$71.24 billion in January, driven by a sharp rise in inbound shipments of gold and silver due to higher prices.

FPIs inflow hit 17-month high



After three consecutive months of outflows, foreign investors pump in ₹22,615cr in Feb

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused Rs 22,615 crore into Indian equities, marking the highest monthly inflow in 17 months, driven by the interim India-US trade deal, correction in domestic market valuations and robust third-quarter corporate earnings.

The latest buying follows three consecutive months of heavy selling. FPIs pulled out Rs 35,962 crore in January, Rs 22,611 crore in December and Rs 3,765 crore in November, according to data from the depositories.

Overall, FPIs have withdrawn a net Rs 1.66 lakh crore (\$18.9 billion) from Indian equities in 2025, making it one of the worst periods for foreign flows. The outflows were triggered by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched equity valuations.

According to the data, FPIs invested Rs 22,615 crore in February. This was the highest monthly inflow since September 2024, when they had invested Rs 57,724 crore.

The inflow was driven by secondary market buying,

signalling renewed foreign confidence post-2025 outflows, said Vinit Bolinjar, Head of Research at Ventura.

Javed Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst at Angel One Ltd, said three key catalysts supported the inflow. These included India-US trade agreements and corrections in India's market valuation. Additionally, Q3 FY26 earnings grew 14.7 per cent, suggesting confidence in the growth narrative.

Echoing similar views, Varun Gupta, CEO of Groww Mutual Fund, attributed the renewed inflows to improving earnings momentum, moderation in valuations from peak levels and early signs of easing trade uncertainty, with India concluding multiple FTAs, including those with the EU and UK.

Sectorally, FPIs were aggressive buyers in financials and capital goods, while continuing to pare exposure to the IT sector. The segment saw outflows of Rs 10,956 crore amid concerns over AI-led disruption.

"FPIs had sold heavily in IT stocks due to the Anthropic shock and continued weakness in the segment. However, they turned buyers in financial services and capital goods," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Investments.

Meanwhile, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has triggered a risk-on sentiment in financial markets.

SILVER, GOLD LIKELY TO SURGE THIS WEEK

NEW DELHI: Precious metal prices are likely to see a fiery start to the week when trading resumes Monday, as investors would rush for safe-haven assets amid global uncertainties following the escalating Middle East tension, analysts said. Analysts said the extent of the impact on domestic silver and gold prices will depend on how long the conflict persists, as global investors recalibrate risk exposure amid

fears of a prolonged instability in the Middle East. Besides, they added that the geopolitical situation, macroeconomic data announcements (including manufacturing/services PMI from across regions), and US retail sales and non-farm payroll and employment data toward the end of the week will be factors. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, silver futures for the March contract surged Rs 22,054 or 8.72 per cent, while gold for April contract rose Rs 5,228, or 3.33 per cent, over the past week. In the international market, Comex silver futures gained \$10.34, or 12.55 per cent, and gold increased \$167 or 3.3 per cent, during the past week.

Mcop of 9 of top-10 companies declines

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms eroded by Rs 2,18,902.09 crore last week, with Bharti Airtel taking the biggest hit in line with a bearish trend in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,527.52 points or 1.84 per cent. From the top-10 pack, Hindustan Unilever emerged as the only gainer. The market valuation of Bharti Airtel tumbled Rs 55,852.12 crore to Rs 10,71,853.25 crore. HDFC Bank's valuation eroded by Rs 37,580.1 crore to Rs 13,65,659.38 crore. The market valuation of Reliance Industries dropped by Rs 34,846.12 crore to Rs 18,86,832.66 crore, and that of Bajaj Finance tanked by Rs 20,316.41 crore to Rs 6,20,070.59 crore. Tata Consultancy Services' market capitalisation (mcop) slumped Rs 18,180.89 crore to Rs 9,53,872.59 crore. The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) dived Rs 14,990.24 crore to Rs 5,37,213.68 crore, and that of Larsen & Toubro fell by Rs 13,714.85 crore to Rs 5,88,837.39 crore. Reliance Industries retained the title of the most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, TCS, Bajaj Finance, Larsen & Toubro, Hindustan Unilever and LIC.

FAST LANE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Leading automakers Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Mahindra & Mahindra and Hyundai reported an increase in vehicle dispatches to dealers in February, riding on sustained demand in the domestic market.

Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India said its domestic passenger vehicle sales rose to 1,61,000 units last month against 1,60,791 units in February 2025.

Sales of the mini car vertical, comprising Alto and S-Presso, increased slightly to 10,238 units from 10,226 units in the year-ago month.

However, the compact car segment, including Baleno, Celerio, Dzire, Ignis, Swift, and WagonR, witnessed a decline in sales to 66,386 units last month against 72,942

GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,527.52 points or 1.84%, and the Nifty declined 392.6 points or 1.53%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 1: Stock markets will react negatively Monday due to the escalating crisis in the Middle East, and the impact on equities will depend on how long the conflict lasts, analysts said.

Besides, geopolitical situation, macroeconomic data announcements, global market trends, and trading activity of foreign investors would also influence investors' sentiment in a holiday-shortened week ahead.

Markets brace for volatility

Equity markets would remain closed Tuesday for Holi. Sentiment has turned even more fragile after fresh geopolitical escalations over the weekend in the Middle East, Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

"For an oil-importing economy like India, sustained elevated crude prices pose risks to inflation, fiscal balance, and rate-cut expectations. This external shock has emerged at a technically vulnerable moment for the market," Meena said.

Looking ahead to Monday's trade, markets are likely to open with a cautious to negative bias amid geopolitical overhang and elevated crude prices, he noted.

"Investors will simultane-



ously react to Q3 GDP data and monthly auto sales figures, while upcoming IIP and PMI numbers will further shape domestic macro expectations.

"Globally, key economic releases from the US and China, along with the trajectory of crude prices, will influence risk appetite. The direction of FII flows will remain the primary driver for index movement in the near term," Meena added.

AUTO INDUSTRY RIDES DEMAND WAVE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



units in February 2025.

On the other hand, sales of utility vehicles, consisting of Brezza, Ertiga, e-Vitara, Fronx, Grand Vitara, Invicto, Jimny, Victoris and XL6, increased to 72,756 units compared to 65,033 units a year ago.

Maruti Suzuki's Senior Executive Officer for Marketing and Sales Partho Banerjee told reporters that the company has

been calibrating production to reduce the waiting period uniformly across models.

He noted that the auto major reported record sales of 2.14 lakhs in February, operating at over 100 per cent capacity with a new manufacturing line expected to get operational in April with additional volumes expected from May onwards.

"Domestic wholesalers

reached an all-time high of 1.64 lakh for the month of February, and retail sales grew by 12 per cent to 1.51 lakh units. Besides, the network stock is low at 12 days, with 7 days in transit," he said.

Banerjee noted that the company's mid-SUV sales have doubled from last year, increasing its market share in the segment from 12.8 per cent to 19 per cent.

Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles reported a 34 per cent rise in passenger vehicle dispatches at 62,329 units last month as against 46,435 units in the year-ago period.

Mahindra & Mahindra said its utility vehicle sales in the domestic market last month increased 19 per cent to 60,018 units compared to 50,420 units in the year-ago period.

M&M CEO, Automotive Division, Nalinikanth Gollagunta, said the February performance

reflected "robust customer demand across the portfolio".

Hyundai Motor India said its domestic sales grew 10 per cent year on year to 52,407 units in February.

The company's MD and CEO Tarun Garg said, "We kicked off 2026 on a high note, achieving our highest-ever monthly sales in January, and the momentum continues in February".

Toyota Kirloskar Motor said its domestic sales grew 16 per cent to 30,737 units last month against 26,414 units in February 2025.

The company's Executive Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business, Sabari Manohar, said there was sustained demand across the company's product portfolio.

Automaker Kia India reported a 10 per cent rise in sales to 27,610 units last month compared to 25,026 units sold in February 2025.

Reissue share in state bond issuances climbs to 7-year high of 18.5%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 1: The share of reissuances in total State Development Loan (SDL) borrowings rose to a seven-year high of 18.5 per cent in FY26, reflecting a sharp shift by states towards reopening existing securities amid elevated financing requirements.

According to the data compiled by PTI from Reserve Bank of India (RBI), states raised about Rs 1,90,970 crore through reissuances in FY26, out of total SDL issuances of around Rs 10,32,788.8 crore. The proportion is higher than 17.29 per cent recorded in FY20 and marks the highest level in at least seven financial years.

The reliance on reissuances has risen steadily over the past two years. In FY25, the share stood at 12.2 per cent, with states reissuing Rs 1,30,827.11 crore out of total borrowings of Rs 10,73,330.197 crore.

This compares with significantly lower levels in earlier years, 5.73 per cent in FY24 (Rs 56,300.01 crore of Rs 9,83,058.29 crore), 7.77 per cent in FY23 (Rs 58,948.517 crore of Rs 7,58,391.53 crore), 10.4 per cent in FY22 (Rs 72,925.748 crore of Rs 7,01,626.39 crore) and 9.72 per cent in FY21 (Rs 69,790 crore of Rs 7,17,811 crore), the data showed.

The sharp uptick comes at a time when state borrowings remain elevated.

According to a recent report by CARE Ratings, state governments' borrowing is estimated at Rs 12.5 trillion in FY26, up 16.6 per cent from Rs 10.7 trillion in FY25, reflecting sustained capital expenditure commitments and higher redemptions in the coming years.

Market participants said the increasing preference for reissuances reflects both liquidity management and cost considerations.

T20 WORLD CUP

Sensational Sanju steers India

The opener's 97 not out under Eden pressure seals India's semifinal berth



It means the whole world, actually to me. Right from the day I started playing, started dreaming to play for the country, I think this is the day I was waiting for

SANJU SAMSON

the chase on track. The decisive push came through a 42-run partnership off 26 balls with Tilak, which tilted the contest firmly India's way.

Suryakumar fell against the midway mark, slicing Joseph to deep point where Sherfane Rutherford held a fine catch.

From being 98/2 needing just as many from the back end, India then drifted into a brief lull eating up 15 deliveries without a boundary and was further pushed back by the loss of their well-set captain. But there was no sense of panic as the duo batted with composure. It has been a roller-coaster ride for Sanju who was sidelined more than once before regaining his place.

First, he was sidelined after Ishan Kishan's emphatic return in the preceding New Zealand series. He was recalled only af-

97*: Is the score of Sanju Samson which is the highest ever for India in a run chase in T20WCs surpassing 82* by Virat Kohli vs Australia in Mohali in 2016 and vs Pakistan in Melbourne in 2022

196: Was India's highest successful chase in the T20WCs. The previous highest for India was 173 vs South Africa in Mirpur in 2014

6: This is the 6th time when India entered the semifinal in the T20 WC. After Pakistan and England, India is now the 3rd team to make 6 semi final appearances in T20WCs

3: Sanju Samson (97*) became the third Indian batter to hit 90 plus score in T20WC innings. Suresh Raina (101) vs SA in Gros Islet in 2010 and Rohit Sharma (92) vs Australia in Gros Islet in 2024 are the other two Indian batters who scored 90 plus in a T20WC innings

5: Till date India have played 5 T20Is vs West Indies at Eden Garden. India have won all the five

ter Abhishek Sharma was indisposed for Namibia match.

But after Abhishek's comeback for the Pakistan clash, Sanju was again sidelined only to be recalled against Zimbabwe after the batting meltdown against South Africa.

OFC, Chennaiyin FC share spoils



Odisha FC are provisionally ninth in the standings with two points, while Chennaiyin FC are placed 11th with one point

RISHABH PAREKH, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 1: A second-half header from captain Carlos Delgado ensured Odisha FC earn a 1-1 draw against Chennaiyin FC in an Indian Super League match at the Kalinga Stadium, here Sunday.

Odisha left-back Saviour Gama was adjudged the Player of the Match.

Chennaiyin FC earned their first point of this season. The Marina Machans looked more alive in their away fixture and deservedly went ahead in first-half stoppage time with Elsinho netting his maiden ISL goal. However, the hosts fought back after the break, as Carlos Delgado rose to head home the equaliser midway through the second half.

Chennaiyin started on the front foot, buoyed by their unbeaten run against the Juggernauts last season. The breakthrough came just before halftime. Farukh's inswinging corner found Elsinho, who powered a header into the net, giving Chennaiyin a well-deserved 1-0 lead. Moments later, goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz

made a sharp save to keep the advantage intact as the visitors headed into the break.

Chennaiyin carried their attacking energy into the second half, keeping the hosts on the back foot and controlling possession. Despite their dominance, Odisha found a way back in the 68th minute when Delgado rose highest to perfectly delivered set piece to head the equaliser. Despite late pressure from both ends, neither could find the finishing touch.

Addressing the goalless first half and a late display of attacks from the opposition Odisha FC head coach Purushothaman said, "We had to convert the missed chances we had in the first half. Maybe it could have forced a different result. Chennaiyin had us on our toes in the closing stages, which perhaps reflected our fitness levels, given we've had only a few days of training. But in the end, we are content with securing a draw."

In view of the next game against table-toppers Mohun Bagan the coach added, "It is going to be a very tough one. Every duel, every attack, every tackle and every second ball is going to be a battle until the final whistle."

In another match played in Mumbai, a late equaliser by Lallanzuala Chhangte helped Mumbai City FC secure a 1-1 draw against NorthEast United FC.

SUPER 8s STANDINGS

Group-A							
TEAMS	M	W	L	N/R	PT	NRR	
South Africa	3	3	0	0	6	+2.25	
India	3	2	1	0	4	+0.10	
West Indies	3	1	2	0	2	+0.99	
Zimbabwe	3	0	3	0	0	-3.41	
Group-B							
TEAMS	M	W	L	N/R	PT	NRR	
England	3	3	0	0	6	+1.09	
New Zealand	3	1	1	1	3	+1.39	
Pakistan	3	1	1	1	3	-0.12	
Sri Lanka	3	0	3	0	0	-1.95	

batted through the chase with poise and authority to seal the win with four balls to spare.

Sanju brought the scores level in the 19th over by heaving Romario Shepherd's attempted yorker high over square leg for a towering six.

He then sealed the chase cleanly over a leaping mid-on for four to take India into the semifinals and end West Indies' campaign at the very venue where they lifted their second and last World Cup in 2016.

As "Maa Tujhe Salaam" echoed the stands, Sanju dropped to his knees, removed his helmet and said a quiet prayer in a moment of relief, gratitude and redemption while the BCCI top brass gave a standing ovation.

Sanju first steadied the innings in a 58-run third-wicket stand off 35 balls with Suryakumar, absorbing pressure before shifting gears.

After the captain's dismissal, India briefly stalled, but Sanju remained composed, shunning reckless strokeplay and keeping

SA march into SFs as lone unbeaten team

New Delhi: Sikandar Raza's all-round efforts went in vain as South Africa beat Zimbabwe by five wickets in their Group 1 tie of T20 World Cup's Super Eights stage here Sunday. Chasing 154, the Proteas were left in a spot of bother by Raza who claimed 3/29. South Africa eventually finished at 154/5 in 17.5 overs with Tristan Stubbs (21 not out) and George Linde (30 not out) at the crease. Ryan Rickelton (31) struck four sixes while Dewald Brevis made an 18-ball 42 with four sixes and two fours.



Earlier, skipper Sikandar Raza's brisk 43-ball 73 was instrumental in lifting Zimbabwe to 153/7. Raza hammered eight fours and four sixes to play the lone hand. Towards the end, Clive Madande struck a few crucial blows to make 26 off 20 balls (3 fours).

Prague Chess Festival: Gukesh held by Navara

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prague (Czech Republic), March 1: World champion D Gukesh's hunt for his first victory continued as he was held to a draw by David Navara of Czech Republic in the fourth round of the Prague International Chess Festival here.

On a day when Jorden van Foreest of Holland nosed ahead of the field with his third victory in four games, defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram went down fighting against Vincent Keymer of Germany.

Van Foreest defeated Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan while the other two games in the 10-player round-robin tournament ended in draws.

With five rounds still to come and the event knocking on the doors of crossing the half-way barrier, van Foreest, on three points, is now followed by Abdusattorov and Navara, who in turn are a half point ahead of Yakubboev, Keymer and Gujjarro. The



remaining four participants -- Chithambaram, Gukesh, Niemann and Maghsoodloo -- are all tied on the seventh spot on 1.5 points apiece.

Navara may be past his prime but, having played chess at a high level in the past, has helped him a great deal here.

The Czech number one had to defend a difficult position against Gukesh out of a Ruy Lopez Berlin but he denied the world champion any decisive advantage.

The end result was a level rook and pawns endgame wherein Gukesh had to split the point when bare kings remained on board after 72 moves.

WORLD OF FOOTBALL

Champions League: City close gap in title race

Manchester: Manchester City are breathing down Arsenal's necks in a Premier League title race that is heating up, pulling within two points of the leaders with a 1-0 win at Leeds United Saturday. Antoine Semenyo scored on the stroke of halftime to take Pep Guardiola's dogged City side to 59 points behind Arsenal on 61, with both teams having played 28 games. Liverpool pulled level on 48 points with fourth-placed Manchester United to stay firmly in the hunt for European qualification with a chaotic 5-2 victory over struggling visitors West Ham United. Manchester United host Crystal Palace Sunday. Seventh-placed Brentford edged Burnley 4-3 in a controversial thriller, Everton responded to a late goal by Newcastle en route to a 3-2 victory, while Sunderland snapped a three-game losing league run with a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth. Second-placed City's win was their fifth in six league games and eighth out of nine across all competitions.



La Liga: Yamal scores first hat-trick for Barca

Barcelona: Barcelona superstar Lamine Yamal scored the first hat-trick of his career in a 4-1 win over Villarreal that moved his team four points clear atop La Liga. At 18 years, 230 days, Yamal is the youngest player to score his first hat-trick in La Liga, according to Opta. His haul included a brilliant solo effort for his second goal, which saw him beat a player as he cut in from the right wing and curl a shot high into the far corner. "He's exceptional and he's here to make people happy," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said Saturday. "We need his goals to give him confidence. He's very young and he still has to improve, but everyone knows the quality he has." Opponents put two or three players on him and that makes it difficult. Today I'm very happy for him. When he enjoys his football, it's perfect for him and for us." Second-placed Real Madrid hosts Getafe on Monday with a chance to trim Barcelona's lead back to one point. Also Saturday, Julian Alvarez scored a late winner as Atletico Madrid won at Real Oviedo 1-0 and moved to third place, level on points with Villarreal.



Bundesliga: Kane's brace lights up Der Klassiker

Berlin: Harry Kane scored twice again and Bayern Munich opened an 11-point lead in the Bundesliga with a 3-2 win at Borussia Dortmund in Der Klassiker. Joshua Kimmich let fly with his left boot to score the winner with a volley in the 87th minute Saturday, just four minutes after Daniel Svensson equalized for Dortmund with a brilliant volley inside the left post. Nico Schlotterbeck put Dortmund 1-0 up at the break, but Serge Gnabry set up Kane's response and the England star got his second from the penalty spot - after a foul by Schlotterbeck on Josip Stanisic - to take his league tally to 30 goals this season. Kane has scored two goals or more for the fourth successive game and is threatening Robert Lewandowski's season record of 41.



WOMEN HOCKEY WC QUALIFIER

Savita opts out of India squad

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 1: Veteran goalkeeper and former skipper Savita Punia has opted out of Women World Cup Qualifiers due to personal reasons as Hockey India Sunday named a 20-member squad, to be led by mid-fielder Salima Tete.

The FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers is scheduled to be held in Hyderabad from March 8 to 14.

Hosts India, England, Scotland, Korea, Italy, Uruguay, Wales, and Austria will be competing for three qualification spots at the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026 set to be held in August.

The teams are divided into two pools, with England, Korea, Italy, and Austria in Pool A, while hosts India, Scotland, Uruguay, and Wales in Pool B.

According to sources, Savita has taken a break for family reasons.

Seasoned Salima will continue to lead the side. The squad comprises of Bansari Solanki and Bichu Devi Kharibam



sharing the goalkeeping responsibilities.

Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Nikki Pradhan, Manisha Chauhan, Udita, and Ishika Chaudhary form the defensive unit while captain Tete, Neha, Sunelita Toppo, Sakshi Rana, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, and Deepika Soreng will occupy the midfield.

In attack, the team boasts flair and finishing prowess with Navneet Kaur, Ishika, Lalremsiami, Beauty Dungleung, Baljeet Kaur, and Annu in the line up.

India will open their campaign against Uruguay March 8, followed by matches against

SQUAD

Goalkeepers: Bansari Solanki, Bichu Devi Kharibam.

Defenders: Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Nikki Pradhan, Manisha Chauhan, Udita, Ishika Chaudhary.

Midfielders: Neha, Salima Tete, Sunelita Toppo, Sakshi Rana, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, Deepika Soreng.

Forwards: Navneet Kaur, Ishika, Lalremsiami, Beauty Dungleung, Baljeet Kaur, Annu.

Scotland and Wales on March 9 and 11 March respectively.

HEALY QUILTS ODI CRICKET ON A HIGH

Australian captain in her last appearance in 50-over format leads her team to 185-run win and 3-0 series sweep over Women in Blue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hobart, March 1: Captain Alyssa Healy bid adieu to ODI cricket on a glorious note, smashing a rampaging 158 as Australia whitewashed India 3-0 in the series with a 185-run thrashing of the world champions in the third and final match here Sunday.

It was a fairytale ODI swansong for the 35-year-old Healy as her 158 and Beth Mooney's unbeaten 106 powered Australia to a mammoth 409 for seven after being asked to bat.

Chasing a massive target of 410, India were all out for 224 in



45.1 overs to lose the three-match series 0-3. Healy will draw curtains to her illustrious international career after playing the one-off pink-ball Test in Perth against India from March 6.

She has accumulated 3777 runs from 126 ODIs, hitting eight centuries and 19 half tons.

Playing in her 126th ODI, Healy decorated her eighth ODI century with as many 27 bound-

I've hated every milestone match, so today was just an opportunity to go out and enjoy it. And it was, one of the more enjoyable experiences I've had. So thanks for the cricket gods for that. And yeah, that's a nice way to sign off in the yellow

ALYSSA HEALY | SKIPPER, AUSTRALIA

aries and two maximums from the 98 balls she faced.

For India, Sneha Rana (2/66) picked up two wickets while and Shree Charani (2/106) be-

came only the third bowler to concede 100-plus runs in an ODI.

India never really got going in their run chase as they lost wickets at regular intervals.

BRIEF SCORES

Australia Women 409/7 in 50 overs (Alyssa Healy 158, Beth Mooney 106 not out, Georgia Vull 62; Sneha Rana 2-66, Shree Charani 2-106) beat **India** Women 224/10 in 45.1 overs (Sneha Rana 44, Jemimah Rodrigues 42; Alana King 4-33, Georgia Wareham 2-3) by 185 runs