

Aditi's admission
 Actor Aditi Rao Hydari feels the entertainment world has become tougher to navigate due to the rise of agenda-driven narratives
 LEISURE | P2

India, Canada seal deal
 India and Canada sign uranium and critical minerals pacts, pledging a trade deal and USD 50 billion annual trade by 2030
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Factory growth dips
 Industrial production growth decelerates to a three-month low of 4.8 per cent in January
 BUSINESS | P11

Atiqa's historic P3
 Racing prodigy Atiqa Mir becomes the first Indian to secure a podium finish in the European leg of the COTFA karting series
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MESSAGE OF HON'BLE GOVERNOR, ODISHA ON THE AUSPICIOUS OCCASION OF HOLI

Holi, the festival of colours is an occasion of joy, happiness and festivity. On this auspicious occasion, I convey my heartfelt greetings and good wishes to the people of Odisha. May this festival fill the life of all Odias staying in the State and outside with peace, joy and happiness.

(Signature)
 (Hari Babu Kambhampati)




ହୋଲି ଅବସରରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା

ରଜା ଓ ଆନନ୍ଦର ଉତ୍ସବ ହୋଲି ଅବସରରେ ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ଭାଇ ଓ ଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଆନ୍ତରିକ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଶୁଭକାମନା ଜଣାଉଛି । ରଜାର ପର୍ବ ହୋଲି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ସୁଖ, ଶାନ୍ତି ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ଭରିଦେଉ ଏବଂ ଭାଇଚାରା ଓ ସାମାଜିକ ସଦ୍‌ଭାବକୁ ଆହୁରି ସୁଦୃଢ଼ କରୁ, ଏହା ହିଁ ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ମୋର ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ।

(Signature)
 (ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ)
 ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

OIPR-15001/15001/2/25-26/0004






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 Bhubaneswar, Odisha

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leisure



ZENDAYA, HOLLAND HAVE TIED KNOT!

Zendaya and Tom Holland have reportedly tied the knot, claims the actress' stylist. Zendaya's stylist Law Roach broke the news of their marriage on the red carpet at the Actor Awards, telling Access Hollywood, "The wedding has already happened. You missed it."

CHER'S SON GETS ARRESTED OVER TRESPASSING, ASSAULT

Singer-songwriter Cher's son, Elijah Blue Allman has again come under the radar of the law. Her son has been arrested. The 49-year-old musician, Cher's son with late rock musician Gregg Allman, faces two counts of simple assault, a criminal trespassing charge, criminal threatening and disorderly conduct.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Your attractive personality is always at the disposal of others, and today you could benefit immensely through it. However, there is room for improvement and you could be drawn towards charity work. Ganesha says you will surely feel satisfied by helping the needy.

TAURUS
Ganesha finds this an excellent day for managers and administrators. If you are one, the results you will achieve by the end of the day will far exceed the efforts you put in. This is mainly because your subordinates will be enthusiastic, compliant and cooperative. You will be focusing on the elements of leadership and team work and will use them resourcefully.

GEMINI
You will want some change in your daily routine today. You are likely to be fed up of the rut of daily life and are looking for a refreshing change. You need to apply your inherent creativity to your work to get more satisfaction out of it and to ease the boredom of your daily schedule, says Ganesha.

CANCER
Your social prestige will go up. People will praise your personality traits and try to emulate you. You will be a role model, too. Ganesha feels that this will be highly profitable day for you.

LEO
You will try to take up new projects to the best of your abilities today. You will be able to successfully tackle all your tasks today. You will face a little instability in your personal relationships, but will be able to solve all issues successfully, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Today there will be a tug-of-war between your work and personal affairs. But being a Virgo, you know how to keep both well balanced. Ganesha says you may have loads of fun in whatever way you choose to make merry. Your will to succeed will be boosted today even as you enjoy yourself.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that you shall soon be able to travel or plan a trip, not for family or business matters, but for getting away from the mundane life. You will pay more importance to your professional matters as opposed to your personal matters. Today you will be able to attain success in every thing you do with the blessings of Ganesha.

SCORPIO
An electric wire of 440 volts is apt to describe you today. According to Ganesha, you are in a belligerent mood today and can burst like a fireball. Meditation and yoga is likely to improve the situation. Remember, treat others the way you want to be treated by them.

SAGITTARIUS
Keeping all the work aside, you may be painting the town red today. Falling in love is exciting, isn't it? However, for all those who are already in a relationship, Ganesha shows a red signal. Avoid arguments with your loved one, He suggests. Impress 'the special one' with a bouquet of red roses and make up for all the petty fights during the day.

CAPRICORN
Your interests are guarded by the Almighty, so don't worry about them. Not that you are not ambitious, but you are satisfied with what you have and gained. You have set some realistic goals for yourself and you are making sincere efforts to achieve them.

AQUARIUS
You have changed your approach towards life from materialism to mysticism. Your friends and family members are pleasantly surprised to see this change. Later on the day, you may plan to visit a temple or other religious places, foresees Ganesha. You are on the right track, keep on going, you'll find the solace you have been seeking.

PISCES
You will display kindness and generosity today and will do your best to help anyone in need. At work you will receive praise for the efforts that you've put in and your dedication will be validated. Even though you intend to give utmost importance to your family, this intention will trail in the shadow of pending work which will require long hours.

Aditi calls out misinformation

Mumbai: Aditi Rao Hydari, now nearly two decades into her acting career, feels the entertainment world has become tougher to navigate due to the rise of "paid negativity" and agenda-driven narratives.

Reflecting on the growing influence of digital media, Aditi highlights how online chatter often turns toxic. "Celebrity smear campaigns aren't new," she says, adding, "But I see it around me all the time. Occasionally, I come across random rubbish about myself. I ignore it because I know there's some agenda behind it." The actor points out that the flood of online content has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish verified information from speculation. "There's so much misinformation on platforms that are supposed to be factual," says Aditi, adding, "Add paid negativity and hidden agendas, and it becomes toxic. Sometimes, too much information is a burden. The mystery surrounding actors has faded."

Although Aditi admits that dealing with criticism isn't always easy, she refuses to let it disturb her peace of mind.

Having built a diverse career that spans several film industries and formats, Aditi continues to draw attention with her recent performances in *Gandhi Talks* and the 2024 web series *Heeramandi*. Both projects earned her critical recognition, yet she remains realistic about the nature of success in cinema.



AGENCIES

AGENCIES

Deepika's inner conflict

Mumbai: Deepika Padukone, also known as DP to her fans, has been making the most of motherhood and through a recent video, she has shared her actual feelings about being a mom.

The actress shared a reel on her Instagram stories that spoke about her inner conflict as a mother which also includes mom guilt. The actress shared that as a mother, she feels like taking a break sometimes but doesn't she cannot stand being without her child. The video said, "My toxic trait is loving my child so much that I don't want anyone else watching them... but I desperately need a break... but I can't stand being without them... but I also crave 24 hours of silence... but I still want to be with them 24/7."

Earlier, speaking at the WAVES 2025 summit, Deepika reflected on how dramatically her life has changed since becoming a mother.

"I'm discovering this new life post-embracing motherhood. The minute you've had a child, you're now responsible for another human being, and especially in the way I've led my life, it's been so much about me — leaving home, my ambition, my career, and everything has been about my life and everything that I wanted for myself. And now, suddenly, you're caring for this person who is dependent on you for everything."



'Being apolitical is a position of privilege'

Mumbai: Actress Akansha Ranjan Kapoor shared a powerful and thought-provoking note on social media, expressing her distress over the current state of the world. She wrote about feeling unsure how to process everything unfolding, adding that being apolitical is often a position of privilege because politics determines who gets safety, freedom, and dignity.

Sharing her empathy, Akansha wrote on her Instagram story, "I don't know how to feel about the world right now. I think being apolitical is a position of privilege, because politics shapes who gets safety, freedom, and dignity. This is history repeating itself. The world doesn't want unilateral wars. It doesn't want bombs falling on cities that once felt untouchable."

The note added, "I feel deep empathy for the Iranian people, who have long hoped for change. And I feel grief for civilians caught in the crossfire of men who seem to believe they are saviors. The hardest part is watching how fragile 'safe' really is. This isn't black and white. But it's heartbreaking. It's frightening. I don't have answers. Just a hope that human life becomes more important than the pride of 3 men..."

She ended her note by saying she doesn't have the answers, only a hope that human life becomes more important than the pride of a few men.

IANS

ANIL REVEALS HIS 1ST PAYCHECK AMOUNT

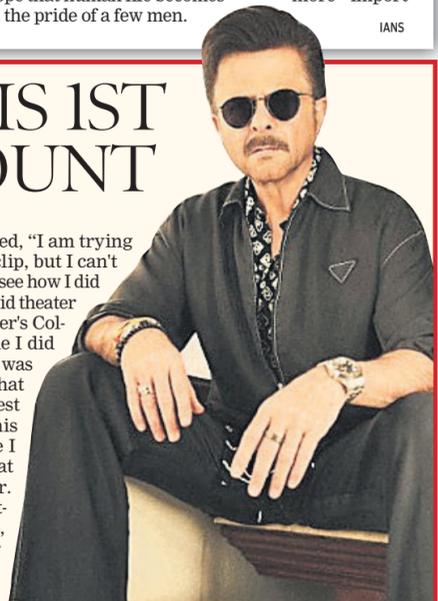
Mumbai: Actor Anil Kapoor, who graced the latest episode of the gaming reality show *Wheel of Fortune*, served a dash of nostalgia when he spoke about his first paycheck.

The actor told the show host, Akshay Kumar that he worked for the state broadcaster Doordarshan in 1976 effectively setting the stage for a long and fulfilling innings.

Talking about the same, he said, "There's an anecdote I would like to share, my first earnings were in 1976. It was from Doordarshan. There was a Doordarshan studio in Worli, and I performed there on television, for which I was paid INR 250. And from television, you could say I got that recognition, seeing myself on screen, my parents and friends saw me on the

small screen."

He further mentioned, "I am trying very hard to get that clip, but I can't find it so that I can also see how I did that. Then after that, I did theater when I was at St. Xavier's College. And the first time I did theater, Shashi Kapoor was the Chief Guest. For that play, I received the Best Actor trophy from his hands, and from there I got the motivation that I could become an actor. And from there, I started an acting course, and Shashi Kapoor sir played a significant role in my career." IANS



PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

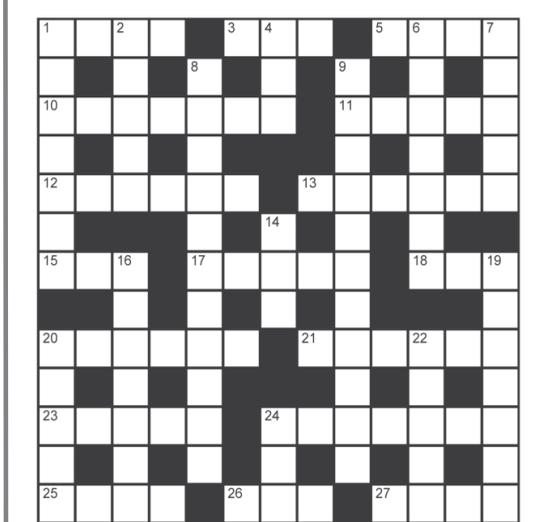


BREVITY



FUN post

CROSSWORD

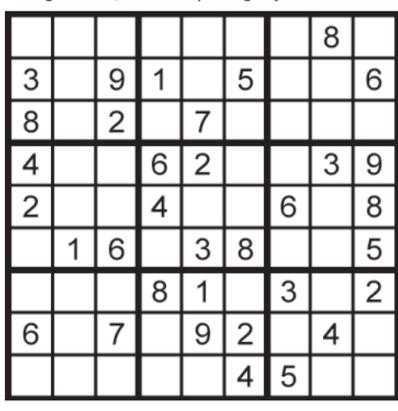


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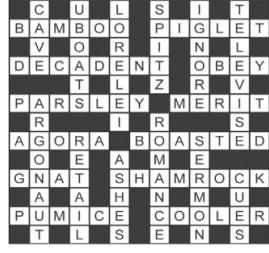
- Across**
- 1 Toast topping
 - 3 Bird-to-be
 - 5 Exchange
 - 10 Makes a phone call (5,2)
 - 11 Speculate
 - 12 Acquire
 - 13 Truant
 - 15 Defraud
 - 17 Sufficient
 - 18 Small pouch
 - 20 Tux adornment (3,3)
 - 21 The Thinker, e.g.
 - 23 Colossus
 - 24 Spelling bee, for one
 - 25 London district
 - 26 Caustic chemical
 - 27 Hankering
 - 4 Hiatus
 - 6 Sommeliers, e.g.
 - 7 Skirt fold
 - 8 Desires
 - 9 Like some rural streets
 - 14 Gibbon, for one
 - 16 Entrance
 - 19 Big cat
 - 20 Nibbles
 - 22 Pick up the tab
 - 24 Coquettish
- Down**
- 1 Sitting room
 - 2 Basic belief

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



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Iran-backed militias join war

■ KUWAIT MISTAKENLY SHOTS DOWN 3 AMERICAN JETS ■ IRAN ATTACKS REGIONAL OIL INFRA ■ INDIAN KILLED AS OIL TANKER HIT BY UNMANNED BOAT ■ TRUMP SAYS WAR LIKELY TO LAST 4-5 WEEKS OR LONGER



SPREADING CONFLAGRATION: Flames and smoke rise following Israeli airstrikes on Dahiyeh, a southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, Monday

AP PHOTO

AGENCIES

Dubai, March 2: Iran and allied armed groups fired missiles at Israel, Arab states and US military targets around the region Monday, while Israel and the United States pounded Iran as the war expanded to several fronts. Kuwait mistakenly shot down three American warplanes over its skies. The intensity of the attacks on both sides, the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the lack of any apparent exit plan indicated the conflict would not end any time soon. It already has far-reaching consequences

across the region and beyond: Previously safe havens in the Mideast like Dubai have seen incoming fire; hundreds of thousands of airline passengers are stranded around the globe; oil prices shot up; and US allies pledged to help stop Iranian missiles and drones. QatarEnergy, in fact, said it would stop its production of liquefied natural gas because of the conflict, taking one of the world's top suppliers off the market. It offered no timeline for restoring its production. The chaos of the conflict became apparent when the US military said Kuwait had "mistakenly shot down" three Amer-

OIL PRICES SURGE

Frankfurt: Oil prices rose sharply Monday as disruptions in tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint raised uncertainty about how US and Israeli attacks on Iran would affect supply to the world economy. US oil traded 7.4 per cent higher at USD 71.97 per barrel, while international standard Brent was up 7.7 per cent at USD 78.46 per barrel.

ican F-15E Strike Eagles during a combat mission while attacks from Iranian aircraft, ballistic missiles, and drones were underway. US Central Command

said all six pilots ejected safely and are in stable condition. At least 555 people have been killed in Iran so far by the US-Israeli campaign, the Iranian Red Crescent Society said, and more than 130 cities across the country have come under attack. Eleven people have been killed in Israel and 31 in Lebanon, according to authorities there. Lebanon's government said Hezbollah's overnight attack against Israel was "illegal" and demanded the group hand over its weapons. In Kuwait, fire and smoke rose from inside the US Embassy compound. On Monday afternoon, multi-

ple airstrikes hit Tehran, Iran's capital, while top Iranian security official Ali Larjani vowed on X that "we will not negotiate with the United States." Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura oil refinery came under a drone attack Monday, with defences downing the incoming aircraft. An Indian national was killed on Monday when an explosive-laden unmanned boat struck an oil tanker off the coast of Muscat Governorate. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump said Iran operations are likely to last 4 to 5 weeks but that he's prepared "to go far longer than that." **MORE P9, 10 & 11**

RS election: BJP to field 3 candidates

SUNIT MISHRA

Bhubaneswar, March 2: With the Rajya Sabha election approaching, political activity in Odisha has intensified. After the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) announced candidates for the third and fourth seats, attention has shifted to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its strategy. Though the BJP has yet to announce its nominees, MLA Santosh Khatua said his party would field candidates for three Rajya Sabha seats. After collecting signatures from party MLAs, state BJP president Manmohan Samal reportedly held a meeting with a few senior leaders. The last date for filing nominations is March 5, and MLAs have been informed that party candidates will file their papers on the final day. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi invited all BJP MLAs to his residence Monday, where discussions on the Rajya Sabha polls were held and signatures were obtained in advance. Earlier, five BJP MLAs purchased 16 sets of nomination forms. A candidate can file up to four sets. Questions are being raised over the delay in announcing nominees. The BJD's move to project Dr Dattaswar Hota as a common candidate has triggered political activity, including within the Congress. Hota attended a Congress Legislature Party meeting Monday seeking support. So far, no open dissent has surfaced among Congress MLAs. Meanwhile, Communist Party of India (Marxist) state secretary Suresh Panigrahi said the party would back Hota if he contests as an Independent against the BJP. The CPI(M) has one MLA in the Assembly. Ahead of the BJP Legislature Party meeting, MLA Santosh Khatua said his party would field candidates for three Rajya Sabha seats and win all of them, a claim BJP leaders have been repeatedly making. Reacting to the Opposition's



stand, BJP state spokesperson Sudipta Ray said the approach of the BJD and Congress was not in keeping with healthy democratic traditions. He said the Opposition should have held discussions with all political parties. Political observers say if BJD president Naveen Patnaik fields an Independent candidate with Congress support, the process — from selection of nominees to completion of voting — could be challenging for the ruling party. In the Rajya Sabha, the BJP-led NDA currently has 133 members, including 103 from the BJP. The INDIA bloc has 87 members. Central BJP leaders are unlikely to accept losing even a single seat in the Upper House. According to reliable sources, during the BJP meeting, some MLAs were informally asked to maintain and strengthen ties with legislators from other parties and to make all possible efforts at their respective levels. If the BJD and Congress jointly field a candidate, one BJD nominee is expected to win comfortably. For the fourth seat, Congress and CPI(M) together have 15 MLAs, while the BJD has 18, taking the combined tally to 33. A candidate needs 30 votes to win a Rajya Sabha seat. After ensuring victory for two candidates, the BJP would have 22 votes left for a third seat. How the BJP plans to secure a third victory has already become a subject of speculation. Meanwhile, Dattaswar Hota was scheduled to meet AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge Sunday. However, he reportedly cited personal reasons at the last minute and did not meet him, triggering speculation about possible pressure from unseen quarters.

HOLIDAY NOTICE
 The offices and press of **Orissa POST** will remain closed March 3 & 4 on the occasion of Dola Purnima and Holi. Hence, there will be no edition of the paper March 4 & 5.
 —EDITOR

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

If the judiciary is truly unbiased, clean and impartial, ban all our textbooks...not just Social Science

AI-generated fake verdicts amount to misconduct: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Artificial judgments will have real consequences, the Supreme Court has warned, coming down hard on a trial court relying on fake, AI-generated verdicts in its decision-making process. Orders based on fictitious judgments will not just be seen as an error in decision-making but will amount to judicial misconduct, the top court has said in a warning that comes at a time when the use of AI (artificial intelligence) is spreading to official work where it is not authorised. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe has said it will examine the matter

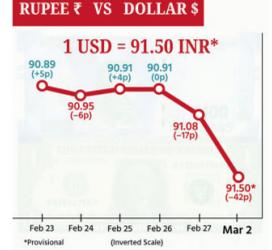
in detail and issued a notice to Attorney General R Venkataramani, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and the Bar Council of India. The court has also appointed senior advocate Shyam Divan to assist it in the matter. "We take cognisance of the trial court deploying AI-generated non-existing, fake or synthetic alleged judgments and seek to examine its consequences and accountability as it has a direct bearing on the integrity of the adjudicatory process," the bench said. "At the outset, we must declare that a decision based on such non-existent and fake alleged judgments is not an error in the decision making.

It would be a misconduct and legal consequence shall follow. It is compelling that we examine this issue in more detail," the bench said in its February 27 order. The issue cropped up before the apex court while it was hearing a plea challenging a January order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court that came on a suit filed for an injunction. The top court said the case assumes considerable institutional concern, not because of the decision that was taken on the merits of the case, but regarding the process of adjudication and determination. "Issue notice to the attorney general, solicitor general and the Bar Council of India," it said.

RUPEE CRASHES 41 PAISE TO 91.49 AGAINST DOLLAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 2: The rupee saw a steep loss of 41 paise to settle at 91.49 against the US dollar Monday after US and Israeli attacks on Iran intensified worldwide risk aversion, setting crude oil prices on fire and demand for the American currency soaring. Massive selling in domestic equity markets and withdrawal of foreign funds further dragged the Indian currency down, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 91.23 and touched the intraday low of 91.65 against the greenback. The currency ended the session at 91.49 against the dollar, registering a steep loss of 41 paise from the previous closing level. On Friday, the rupee lost 17 paise to settle at 91.08 against the dollar. "Triggered by spiking



oil prices in the wake of the Iran crisis, the Indian rupee saw its sharpest one-day drop since late January. The currency remains under pressure as investors move toward safe-haven assets, foreign capital outflow from the equities, and fears grow that expensive imports will hurt the trade balance," said Dilip Parmar, Senior Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

210 turtles rescued while being smuggled

PNN & AGENCIES

Malkangiri, March 2: Odisha forest department officers Monday rescued 210 live Indian flap shell turtles being allegedly smuggled in a vehicle in Malkangiri district, officials said. During a search operation, forest personnel intercepted an SUV inside a forest near MV-62 in the district and found the turtles packed in 10 gunny bags, Malkangiri Divisional Forest Officer Sai Karan told reporters.



On noticing forest staff approaching, the driver and other co-accused persons fled the spot, and could not be apprehended till evening, he said. The forest personnel seized the vehicle along with the gunny bags containing the turtles. A wildlife offence case has been registered, and an investigation is currently underway. Efforts are being made to identify and trace the accused, he said. The rescued turtles are being taken for safe custody and further necessary action as per provisions under the Wildlife Protection Act, he informed. The turtles were reportedly being transported from Andhra Pradesh to MV-62 village. The estimated value of the seized turtles is around ₹4 lakh, forest department sources said.

Rembrandt painting rediscovered after 65 years

REUTERS

Amsterdam, March 2: Researchers at the Netherlands' Rijksmuseum have authenticated as genuine a Rembrandt painting that will be on public display Wednesday for the first time in 65 years. Over a two year investigation, the researchers compared the "Vision of Zacharias in the Temple" with other Rembrandt works from the same period. It is on a long-term loan to the museum from an anonymous private collector. The painting depicts the biblical moment when the startled high priest Zacharias learns from archangel Gabriel that, despite their advanced age, he and his wife will have a son, John the Baptist. Rembrandt



did not paint Gabriel, instead using light entering from the upper right corner to signal his presence. Painting conservator Petria Noble said the depiction of light, using thick layers of paint, a technique known as impasto, was characteristic of Rembrandt in his later work as well as in this one. Until 1960, the painting was considered a Rembrandt but it was then removed from his oeuvre, which art specialists have said was a decision based on less advanced techniques than are now available. The current owner inherited the painting from his father who bought it in 1961 when it disappeared from public view. Apart from carrying out analysis of materials and as-

sessments of the work's overall quality, the museum's researchers confirmed the signature on the painting was original, and dendrochronological tests, used to date wood, verified that the 1633 date is accurate. Jonathan Bikker, curator at the Rijksmuseum, said the insurance policy will definitely increase now the painting is confirmed to be a Rembrandt, but did not specify how much it was worth. "It's wonderful that people can now learn more about the young Rembrandt - he created this very poignant work shortly after moving from Leiden to Amsterdam. It is a beautiful example of the unique way Rembrandt depicts stories," Taco Dibbits, director of the Rijksmuseum, said.

JHW's 13th trail stumbles upon tales of Buddhism

Jagatsinghpur: Heritage enthusiasts under the aegis of Jagatsinghpur Heritage Walks (JHW) set out on their 13th venture Sunday to explore the lesser-known and vibrant hot-spots which have deep-rooted links to the socio-religious fabrics of the region with references to Buddhism and Hinduism. While visiting the ancient Nagarjuna Temple and the Janardana Vishnu Temple in Kuduapada, located in Kalyanpur village on the outskirts of Jagatsinghpur town, more than 25 members of the JHW were overwhelmed to know that Buddhism has so much of influences but later it got amalgamated with the common Hindu shrines and the deities continue to get the attention as Hindu idols. At Nagarjuna Peeth in Kalyanpur village, local residents have traditionally worshiped two ancient idols as manifestations of Lord Vishnu. However, upon closer inspection, these figures are clearly not representations of eternal Hindu deities but are directly linked to Buddhism: One is Bodhisattva Manjushri, and the other depicts Gautama Buddha after his descent from the heavens (Devavratn). The presence of such Buddhist icons amid a region dominated by Shiva-Shakti worship is both remarkable and thought-provoking, inviting deeper inquiry into the site's layered historical narrative.

Heatwave SOP issued for colleges, varsities

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The Higher Education department has issued a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for heatwave management in all higher education institutions across the state ahead of the summer of 2026.

The directive aims to ensure preparedness and protect the health and safety of students, faculty and staff during extreme heat conditions.

According to the department, colleges and universities have been advised to conduct classes, internal assessments and examinations during morning hours as far as practicable to minimise exposure to peak afternoon heat. Institutions have also been asked to avoid outdoor academic, sports and co-curricular activities during the hottest part of the day. If unavoidable, such activities must be organised during relatively cooler hours with adequate precautionary measures.

The SOP directs all institutions to ensure uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water at multiple locations inside cam-



pus. Authorities have been asked to keep sufficient stock of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) in classrooms, hostels, common areas and examination centres. Inspection and repair of tube wells, hand pumps and other drinking water facilities must be completed in advance to prevent disruption during summer.

Colleges and universities have also been instructed to keep first-aid facilities ready to handle heat-related illnesses such as dehydration, dizziness and heat exhaustion. Responsible staff members must be designated to provide immediate assistance in case of medical emergencies.

Heads of institutions have

State ready to tackle heat emergencies: Min

Bhubaneswar: Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling Monday said the state's healthcare system is fully prepared to tackle heat-related emergencies as temperatures continue to climb steadily across Odisha. He said necessary measures have been put in place to ensure prompt medical response, adequate availability of essential medicines and preparedness of hospitals to handle any situation arising from the rising mercury levels. According to weather data, Bhubaneswar recorded 37.5°C Monday, while Jharsuguda emerged as the hottest place in the state at 38.0°C. Meteorological officials have cautioned that temperatures are likely to climb further, particularly in the western districts, increasing the likelihood of intense heatwave conditions in the coming days. Authorities have advised residents — especially children, the elderly and those engaged in outdoor work — to take necessary precautions as Odisha braces for a potentially harsh summer.

been asked to sensitise students, teachers and employees about precautionary measures during heat wave conditions, including proper hydration, recognising early symptoms of heat stress and following safety guidelines.

BJD to mark Biju Babu's birth anniversary Mar 5

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) will celebrate the 110th birth anniversary of legendary leader Biju Patnaik, fondly known as Biju Babu, across Odisha with enthusiasm March 5, the party announced Monday.

Speaking to the media, BJD Senior Vice-President Debi Prasad Mishra said that, following instructions from party president Naveen Patnaik, all district presidents and constituency leaders have been informed about the planned programmes.

On the occasion, floral tributes will be paid at statues of Biju Patnaik, patriotic songs will be performed, and meetings highlighting his contributions towards building a prosperous Odisha will be organised.

Blood donation camps are also scheduled at various places across the state. The main programme will be held at the headquarters of the Biju Janata Dal, where party president Patnaik will be present.

Bhubaneswar District President Ashok Chandra Panda said Biju Jayanti is observed across the state every year with great enthusiasm. He noted that the Biju Janata



Floral tributes at statues of Biju Patnaik; patriotic songs and meetings to highlight his contributions to Odisha's development

Blood donation camps across the state; main programme at BJD headquarters in presence of party president Naveen Patnaik

Dal, founded on the ideals and principles of Biju Patnaik, has consistently prioritised service-oriented activities. Party leaders and workers will pay tribute to his legacy and reaffirm their commitment to serving society.

Bhubaneswar North MLA Sushant Kumar Rout, Bhubaneswar Central MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, Youth BJD president Chinmaya Sahu and Student BJD president Ipsita Sahu also outlined the programmes planned for the occasion.

Mahanadi tribunal ends Odisha visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) Monday completed its five-day visit to Odisha, inspecting key sites linked to the river basin, amid the ongoing water-sharing dispute with neighbouring Chhattisgarh, officials said.

On the last day of the tour, the tribunal travelled to Satapada jetty in Puri district from where they visited the Chilika Lake, they said. Odisha Advocate General Pitambar Acharya, Puri Collector Dibya Jyoti Parida and SP Prateek Singh accompanied the tribunal during the visit.

Led by MWDT chairperson Justice Bela M Trivedi, the team arrived in Odisha Thursday and visited the Hirakud Dam, power channel at Burla, Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Satkosia, and the Chilika Lake, the officials said.

Int'l art camp held at Konark Sun Temple

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: A three-day international artists' camp 'Pratibimba 3' was recently organised by the Global Artist Forum at the Konark Sun Temple.

As many as 35 painters from different countries and various states of India participated in the camp, creatively capturing the architectural beauty of the temple on canvases in their unique styles.



On the occasion, former Secretary of the Odisha Lalit Kala Akademi and senior artist Panchanan Samal attended as chief guest. Senior advocate Narendra Kumar Das, actor Pradeep Kumar Sahu, Uddara Foundation founder Firdausi Tabassum and Padma Assets Pvt Ltd Managing Director Abhiseka Mishra were present as guests of honour.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Narsinghpur, dated 25.02.2026 I, Sibani Naik, Address : At - Barabati Stadium, P.O.- Baxi Bazar, P.S.- Cantonment Road, Dist.- Cuttack, Odisha, PIN-753001 declare that I have changed my name from Chandrakanti Naik to Sibani Naik. Henceforth, I shall be known as Sibani Naik for all purposes. (Sibani Naik)

I, Tanushree Das, W/o.- Ambika Prasad Das, Resident of House No. 69E-003, Sriram Nagar, Chandni Colony, Khordha, Odisha 752055 declare by this affidavit No.- 79AA390848, Dated 25.11.2025 before Executive Magistrate, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. That now onwards I shall be known as Tanushree Pattanaik for all future purpose.

LOST

I, Snehalata Bag, W/o.- Sitaram Bag, R/o. At- Ward No. 09, N.A.C, P.O./P.S.- Khariar, District- Nuapada (Odisha) have lost the original registered sale deed bearing document No. 11431701576 dated 28.07.2017 (Khata No.448/1171, Mouza-Gadramunda) on the way near Guru Nanak Chowk on 25.02.2026. Despite of my best efforts, I could not trace out the same.

It is hereby to inform that original registered sale deed No-11621202674 dated 07.12.2012 executed by Lalita Dash@ Tripathy in favour of Joseph Narayan Sahu has been lost by me on dated 28.02.2026 at 3.30 P.M. on the way to my son Biswakarma Subhansu Chandrasekher's house located AT-Shivom Colony, PO- Budharaja, PS- Ainthapali, Dist.- Sambalpur, PIN-768004 from my residence AT/PO Budharaja, PS-Ainthapali Dist.- Sambalpur, PIN-768004. If found I request you to handover me and not to misuse.

Asis Kumar Pattanaik, Mob:9438086775

AI CONCLAVE AT SOA

Machines may surpass human intelligence: Penn



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Machines are poised to become increasingly capable and could eventually surpass human intelligence, an internationally renowned Artificial Intelligence (AI) expert said here Monday.

"Machines will not only be able to learn, but they will learn how to learn," said Jonnie Penn, Professor of AI Ethics and Society at the University of Cambridge and Faculty Affiliate at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society, Harvard University. He was delivering the keynote address at an International AI Conclave organised at SOA Deemed to be University here.

Delivering the keynote address on the theme 'India's AI Future—Role of Academia, Industry, Research and Innovation', Prof Penn said AI did not command the kind of attention it does today 15 years ago, but

rapid advancements have now prompted serious reflection on its long-term impact.

Describing AI as part of an emerging "intention economy", he said the technology can maximise the likelihood of achieving specific goals. He also discussed its socio-technical implications and examined how AI could intersect with and influence efforts to address climate change.

The programme, presided over by SOA Vice-Chancellor Pradipta Kumar Nanda, was also addressed by Dharmakumar Seeraj, Ambassador of Guyana to India; Karlito Nunes, Ambassador of Timor-Leste to India; and Arlette Gabriela Bustamante Garcia, Counsellor at the Embassy of Bolivia in India.

SOA Pro-Vice Chancellor Prasanta Kumar Patra delivered the welcome address, while Dean (Students' Welfare) Jyoti Ranjan Das coordinated the event.

2 men, mother held for illegal liquor trade, attack on police

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Police have arrested two men and their mother in connection with illegal sale of country and foreign liquor in the City. They have also been accused of attacking a police patrol team under Chandaka Police Station limits here, officials said Monday.

The accused have been identified as Prakash Behera (34), Sridhar Behera (40) and their mother Kumari Behera (55), all residents of Simulipatana under Chandaka police limits.

Acting on reliable informa-

tion about illegal liquor sale at a variety store near a licensed foreign liquor outlet in the area, a patrolling team conducted a surprise raid Sunday evening.

On seeing the police team, shop owner Sridhar allegedly tried to flee but was apprehended. During inspection of the shop, Prakash and his mother reached the spot and allegedly threatened the police personnel with dire consequences with a sword. Police said the woman also instigated her sons and issued threats to the officers. Subsequently, Prakash and Sridhar allegedly wielded two swords and launched a sudden

attack on the police team. However, the personnel managed to evade the assault and overpowered all three accused.

During the search, police seized two iron swords, 72 bottles of foreign liquor, 50 litres of illicit country liquor and a scooter from their possession.

Police said Prakash is a habitual offender with six previous criminal cases registered against him at Chandaka police station, while Sridhar has one case. The accused were forwarded to the court and further investigation into the matter is underway, police added.

Odisha shines at IndiaSkills eastern region competition

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The four-day IndiaSkills Regional Competition 2025-26 for the eastern region concluded at the SDI Auditorium here Monday.

Organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) with support from the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the event saw over 200 youths from Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands compete in 59 skill categories.

The competition featured a wide range of skills, including



cloud computing, electronics, mobile app development and web technologies, as well as hospitality, beauty therapy, fashion technology and welding.

Odisha topped the winners' list, reflecting the state's focused investment in skill development, followed

by Bihar and West Bengal.

A total of 169 outstanding performers were awarded medals at the event, including 53 gold, 48 silver and 31 bronze medals, along with 37 Medallions for Excellence.

Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge)

for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education, Government of India, said the IndiaSkills Regional Competition 2025-26 in the eastern region reflected the rising aspirations and capabilities of the country's youth. Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education Minister Sampad Chandra Swain, said the Skill India Mission provides individuals with meaningful opportunities to showcase their skills on a global stage.

Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj congratulated the winners across diverse skill categories, praising their dedication, discipline and excellence

Capital promotes eco-friendly, sustainable Holi

ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 2: Holi celebrations in the Capital this year are set to go beyond the usual splash of vibrant colours and joyous gatherings, with a renewed focus on responsibility and sustainability.

Across the City — from residential colonies to community grounds — preparations are in full swing for a grand yet eco-friendly Holi. Markets are witnessing brisk business as buyers look for safe, herbal colours, traditional sweets and other festive essentials. What makes Holi 2026 distinct, however, is a visible shift towards natural, skin-friendly colours and locally produced goods, reflecting growing awareness about health, environment and support for indigenous products.

A major highlight of this year's festivities is 'Rangotsav-2026', organised by the Odisha Rural Development and Marketing Society (ORMAS) at the SIRD Campus in Unit-VIII here.

The fair seeks to promote safe and eco-friendly Holi celebrations while generating sustainable market opportunities for women self-help groups (SHGs). Visitors to Rangotsav are not only purchasing herbal



Girls shopping for herbal colours ahead of Holi in Bhubaneswar, Monday

gular and other natural products but also extending direct support to hundreds of rural women entrepreneurs from across Odisha.

"Rangotsav is a beautiful blend of safe colours and women empowerment. By using natural colours prepared by SHG women, we can protect the environment while supporting the rural economy," Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister Rabi Narayan Naik said, urging citizens to choose local and eco-friendly products.

ORMAS CEO Monica Priyadarshini highlighted that the initiative reflects the talent and hard work of rural wom-

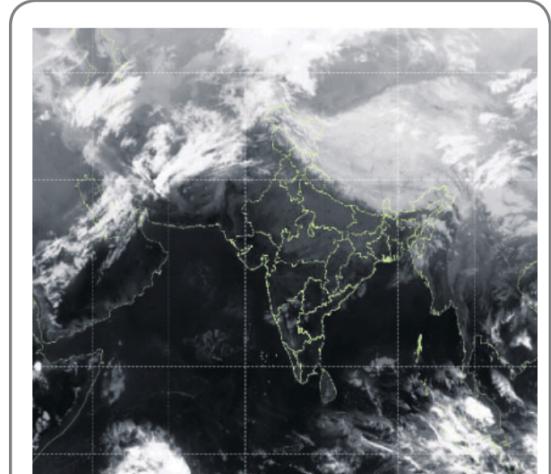
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en. She stated that ORMAS is committed to connecting them with modern markets through improved packaging, branding, and direct urban outreach.

One of the key attractions at Rangotsav is chemical-free herbal gular prepared by SHG women with support from RIPC in Ganjam district. Made from natural ingredients such as turmeric, beetroot, and flowers, these colours are safe for both skin and the environment.

The Rangotsav fair will continue till March 4, providing residents an opportunity to celebrate Holi in a safe, meaningful and socially responsible manner.

MARKET WATCH					
CURRENCY		BOURSES		COMMODITIES	
INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION	INDEX	VARIATION
DOLLAR	91.64 ▲ 0.48	SENSEX	80238.85 ▲ 644.64	GOLD	₹167,325 ▲ ₹5,221
EURO	107.70 ▼ 0.14	NIFTY	24865.70 ▼ 1,048.34	SILVER	₹277,000 ▲ ₹2,002



WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	36.2°	34.4°	Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	22.5°	21.6°	
Humidity	74%	79%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



MYRIAD HUES: People play with colours as part of Holi celebrations at Iskcon Temple in Amritsar, Punjab

PTI PHOTO

12 SIM boxes seized; 2 Kerala youths held

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The Twin City Commissionerate Police Monday seized 12 SIM boxes from a boys' mess under Chandrasekharpur police limits here and arrested two Kerala youths.

The accused were identified as Ummar M and Siyahul Haq, both residents of Kerala. They are B Tech dropouts, a police official, who was part of the joint team of Chandrasekharpur police and Cyber Squad that conducted the raid, said.

The senior police official said a SIM box can be used to route international and domestic calls without revealing the source to the receiver. He said the devices are often used in criminal activities, including terrorism.

He said that the police conducted the raid after receiving information about the youths' suspicious activities.

The official said the duo had been operating the illegal SIM box setup since October last year. "Through the devices, the accused were routing international calls to facilitate fraudulent communication. The setup also caused losses to the government and posed a risk to



national security," he said.

He said the two had procured hundreds of SIM cards from Assam and were using them in the setup. "Preliminary investigation has revealed that a Bangladesh-based application was used to operate the system and the hardware was of Chinese origin," the official said.

Police also recovered hundreds of active SIM cards and a few laptops from their possession during the raid.

"We are checking whether the latest seizure has any links with the Laxmisagar crackdown in 2024," the officer said.

Fire near Jharsuguda airport spreads panic

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jharsuguda, March 2: A major fire broke out in a small forest close to Veer Surendra Sai Airport here Monday morning triggered panic in the area, even as it took around two hours for the firefighters to extinguish the raging blaze.

According to officials, the fire was first noticed around 11am in bushes and dry vegetation located in front of the airport boundary. Fanned by dry conditions, the flames gradually assumed a severe proportion, raising concerns over its proximity to sensitive installations like the airport and an Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) depot.

Considering the potential risk, Jharsuguda tehsildar Sadakar Kumbhar reached the spot to take stock of the situation.

A total of five fire tenders were pressed into service — two from the state Fire Services department, one from the airport authority and two from Vedanta Limited. Their coordinated efforts helped douse the flames.

Kumbhar stated that while the cause of the fire remains unclear, such incidents often result from a lack of public awareness. He noted that had the fire not been contained in time, it could have posed a major threat to the airport and nearby installations, including the IOCL facility.

Ratna Bhandar inventory to begin March 25: SJTA

PNN & AGENCIES

Puri, March 2: The Srimandir authorities Monday decided to begin the much-awaited inventory of the Ratna Bhandar at the 12th-century shrine from March 25, after a gap of 48 years, a senior official said.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTMC), headed by Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb.

"It has been decided to start the inventory of Ratna Bhandar between 12:12pm and 1:45pm March 25," Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) Chief Administrator Arabinda Padhee told reporters.

He said the date and timing were decided based on the opinion of the scholars and religious experts. "They found Shukla Pakshya Saptami of Chaitra month as most auspicious for beginning inventory work of Ratna Bhandar," Padhee said.

He said that the inventory would not be conducted Saturdays, Sundays and festival days as large number of devotees throng the shrine. "Priority will be given to the darshan by devotees," he said, adding that people can witness the deities when the inventory goes on inside the Ratna Bhandar.

He said the ornaments used



by deities daily will also come under the exercise. The entire process will be digitised and an e-catalogue will be prepared for future reference.

Padhee said the state government had earlier approved the SOP for undertaking the exercise, which was last held in 1978. The inventory of the 'Bahar Ratna Bhandar' will be taken up first.

He said the previous inventory had taken 72 days.

"We cannot now say how many days are required, but the High Court has directed the state government to complete the exercise within 90 days," he added.

The HC had issued the direction January 27.

"We will inform the HC on the measures taken on the Ratna Bhandar inventory process. This is a very sensitive matter and needs to be handled with utmost care," he said. To ensure accuracy and transparency,

the inventory will be digitised through e-cataloguing, and a special monthly calendar will be prepared. Two dedicated teams - a supervisory team and a handling team - have been constituted to ensure smooth execution of the process, he said.

The supervisory team, to be chaired by the SJTA chief administrator, includes two members from the Ratna Bhandar supervision committee and one servitor member.

Similarly, the handling team will comprise one member of the SJTMC, Pattajoshi Mahapatra, Bhandar Mekap, Tadhaukarana, Deulakarana, a Bania servitor, two goldsmiths, two gemologists, and one officer from the RBI, among others.

Padhee emphasised that there will be no valuation of the ornaments. The exercise aims to ensure documentation, transparency, and security, and to compare current records with the 1978 inventory.

The inner chamber was unlocked July 14, 2024, after 46 years, for the inventory and repair of its structure.

"In order to maintain transparency and safety, the keys of the inner chamber will be deposited every day after inventory at the district treasury," Padhee said.

SAFETY OF ODISIA DIASPORA AMID MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

CS: Ensure readiness to respond to emergency

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 2: In view of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Chief Secretary Anu Garg Monday directed officers to remain alert, continuously monitor developments, and ensure readiness to respond to any emergency involving people from Odisha staying in the affected regions.

The Chief Secretary's direction came during a high-level meeting to assess the safety and security of the Odia diaspora in the evolving situation in Middle East, following directions from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

"The Chief Secretary has directed officers to stay alert, keep monitoring developments, and ensure readiness to respond to any emergency situation involving people from Odisha staying in the affected regions," an officer said after the meeting.

He informed that the Ministry of External Affairs has issued a 24-hour helpline number (800-46342) and a WhatsApp number (+971543090571) to assist Indians in the Middle East.

The state government has formed a working group in coordination with the Home department, Labour Directorate, Protector of Emigrants, and organisations working for the

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Prithish Panda, who has been appointed as the nodal officer for information and assistance, can be contacted at 9583321964

welfare of overseas Indians to track the situation and provide assistance, if required.

"Prithish Panda has been appointed as the nodal officer for information and assistance. He can be contacted at 9583321964," the officer said.

DGP YB Khurania, who attended the meeting, said the situation is being closely monitored and officials have been kept on alert. He added that social media posts related to the conflict are also under surveillance, and necessary action will be taken in case of any emergency.

Class X results likely by May second week

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 2: The results of the Class X examination conducted by state's Board of Secondary Education (BSE) are likely to be declared by the second week of May, an official said Monday. The Class X board examination, which started February 19, ended Monday.

"The examination was conducted smoothly without the occurrence of any incident such as question paper leak or malpractices at the centres," BSE president Srikant Tarai told reporters at Cuttack. Only some minor incidents were reported and were rectified immediately, he said.

The BSE president said the process for evaluation of OMR sheets (objective) has been initiated, while the evaluation of answers of subjective questions will start from March 19. Around 15,000 teachers will be engaged to evaluate the answer sheets at 51 centres, Tarai said.

"The results are likely to be declared by the second week of May," he added. More than 5.61 lakh students appeared for the board examination at 3,082 centres across Odisha.

EPFO HOLDS RATE AT 8.25% FOR 3RD YEAR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Retirement fund body Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), for the third year in a row, fixed the interest rate on fund deposits at 8.25 per cent for 2025-26, a Union Labour Ministry statement said Monday.

In February last year, the EPFO had retained the rate of interest at 8.25 per cent for 2024-25. In 2024, the EPFO increased the interest rate marginally to 8.25 per cent for 2023-24, from 8.15 per cent in 2022-23.

The Central Board of Trustees (CBT), in its meeting chaired by Union Minister for Labour & Employment Mansukh Mandaviya Monday, recommended an 8.25 per cent annual rate of interest to be credited on EPF accumulations in members' accounts for the financial year 2025-26, the ministry said.

The interest rate would be officially notified by the Government of India, following which the EPFO would credit the rate of interest to the subscribers' accounts.

The ministry stated that despite global uncertainties, the EPFO has maintained strong financial discipline, ensuring stable and competitive returns without straining the interest account.

FRENCH PREZ MACRON TO BOOST NUCLEAR ARSENAL

AGENCIES

Paris, March 2: France will increase the size of its nuclear arsenal and strengthen its deterrent, with an increasing risk of conflicts globally crossing the nuclear threshold, President Emmanuel Macron said Monday.

He said France will increase its number of nuclear warheads from the current level of below 300, but did not give a figure for the increase. It will be the first time France increases its nuclear arsenal since at least 1992.

"We are currently experiencing a period of geopolitical upheaval fraught with risk," Macron said in a speech delivered from a submarine base in Brittany, adding that a "hardening" of the French deterrence model was needed. Unveiling the update to France's nuclear doctrine at a nuclear base on

the Atlantic coast, Macron also said a "major" change would see more cooperation with European allies that have expressed interest, including Germany.

Germany but also Poland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Denmark would be able to take part in French nuclear wargames, Macron said, although he made clear decision-making on nuclear strikes will remain solely in the hands of the French president. The French leader added it would be possible to establish, under unspecified circumstances, strategic assets in other European countries that would be part of what he called a new "forward deterrence" doctrine.

Though France and Britain are both nuclear powers, most European countries rely primarily on US for deterring any potential adversaries — a decades-old pillar of transatlantic security.

Medal from first modern Olympics fetches 4 times estimate at auction

REUTERS

Mexico City, March 2: A medal awarded at the first modern Olympic Games smashed auction estimates, selling for about four times its expected high price at a Danish auction house Sunday.

The silver medal from the 1896 Athens Olympics was hammered down for DKK 900,000 (\$141,658.67) excluding buyer's premium, or DKK 1,152,000 (\$181,323.09) including fees, at Bruun Rasmussen Arts Auctioneers' online sale. The piece had been estimated to fetch between DKK 200,000-300,000 (\$31,480-\$47,220).

Engraved by French artist Jules-Clement Chaplain, the



The silver medal from the 1896 Athens Olympics was hammered down for DKK 900,000, excluding buyer's premium

REUTERS

medal features Zeus holding a globe topped by Nike, the Goddess of Victory, brandishing an olive branch. The

reverse shows the Acropolis and Parthenon with a Greek inscription that translates to International Olympic

FOCUS FISCAL BURDEN

FREEBIES DEVOUR FORESTS



A democracy that is cutting down forests for votes risks mortgaging its ecological future for an electoral present

There are moments in public life when a single news item captures the moral and fiscal drift of an entire political system. Last week, Maharashtra's forest minister reportedly said that teak plantations worth ₹12,000 crore may be monetised, including felling mature teak trees, to help raise funds and repay loans, partly necessitated by the mounting fiscal burden of welfare commitments such as the Ladki Bahin scheme. The annual outgo of that scheme alone is estimated between ₹36,000 and ₹46,000 crore, which is over 5% of the state's total expenditure.



Ajit Ranade

IF TREES ARE FELLED THIS YEAR TO FUND THIS YEAR'S FREEBIE BURDEN, WHAT WILL BE CUT NEXT YEAR?

For a moment, we may pause and reflect on the symbolism. Forests are not surplus inventory. They are ecological assets meant for future generations. They are carbon sinks in a climate-stressed world. They regulate water cycles, protect biodiversity and serve as natural insurance against environmental collapse. To cut them down in order to finance annual revenue expenditure, that too recurring cash transfers, is not merely a budgetary decision. It is inter-generational liquidation. If trees are felled this year to fund this year's freebie burden, what will be cut next year? Even if the teak plantation stock is being marketed as a "departmental asset," the political symbolism is unavoidable: the state is contemplating drawing down long-lived environmental capital to service recurring revenue commitments.

This is not an isolated case. Across India, competitive populism has acquired a new velocity. It has been enabled by technology. The JAM trinity — Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and mobile connectivity — has made direct benefit transfers seamless. More than 500 million no-frills bank accounts, Aadhaar-linked targeting, and instant transfers have allowed governments to move from distributing goods to transferring cash directly into bank accounts.

The shift is politically transformative. Cash transfers timed close to elections blur the line between governance and inducement. The Supreme Court, in recent hearings, has asked

pointedly: why are such schemes announced just ahead of polls? Will indiscriminate benefits, without distinguishing between those who can afford and those who cannot, not amount to an "appeasing policy"?

The Court has further warned that indiscriminate largesse hampers economic development and diverts resources away from roads, hospitals and schools. A pending PIL seeks regulation of such promises, arguing that "irrational freebies" may distort the level playing field and even violate constitutional provisions governing public funds.

The judiciary is of course cautious about stepping into political territory, but its anguish is visible. The real issue is not whether welfare spending is legitimate. Rights-based entitlements such as food security, rural employment guarantee (now diluted), primary education and public health are constitutional commitments. Targeted support for the poor is morally defensible and economically sound.

The problem is something else. It is the slippery slope and the steady transformation of voters into "beneficiaries". The language itself has shifted. Citizens with rights have become recipients of state generosity. It is worth reminding that freebie resources are drawn from taxes collected from the same citizens, or from deficits and debt that their children will repay.

In the freebie race, to retain political advantage, payouts have been escalating. What began as targeted support is becoming quasi-universal en-

titlement. The 2017 Economic Survey had floated the idea of Universal Basic Income as a rational consolidation of subsidies. Instead, we are drifting into fragmented, election-driven quasi-UBI, layered on top of existing schemes, with duplication or overlaps, and without fiscal consolidation.

Resultantly revenue deficits have widened. Capital expenditure has to be cut. States borrow to fund current consumption which is a violation of the most basic "golden rule" of public finance, which says borrowing should finance investment, not recurring consumption.

The SC's recent remarks capture the anxiety: "Even if you are revenue surplus, is it not your obligation to spend that amount for development i.e. roads, hospitals, schools?" When forests are monetised to fund revenue expenditure, we cross from imprudence to peril.

The phenomenon may not be unique to India, since democracies worldwide struggle with electoral populism. Latin America has seen debt crises triggered by unchecked subsidies. Advanced economies face entitlement pressures as populations age. But what is different in India is the combination of scale, technology, development needs and demography. We are not a saturated welfare state. We are still building basic infrastructure, including human capital. Every rupee spent on indiscriminate giveaways is a rupee denied to irrigation, railways, climate adaptation, urban drainage, or to education, skill-

ing and primary health. There is also a cultural cost. The Court has asked bluntly whether such schemes risk weakening work incentives. That concern should not be caricatured. Poor citizens are not lazy. Inflation and cost of living, unaffordable services are a real concern. However, when benefits are electorally driven, and when they expand rapidly without fiscal backing, the signal shifts from empowerment to appeasement.

Are voters becoming addicted to the freebie opium? Or are they so cynical about governance that they prefer immediate cash to long-term promises of infrastructure?

Reversing this race to the bottom requires political courage and institutional reform. First, fiscal transparency must be mandatory. Every manifesto promise should be accompanied by a publicly disclosed costing and funding source, whether taxes or borrowing. Second, adopt the golden rule formally: borrow only for capital expenditure, not for revenue giveaways. This principle could be embedded in State fiscal responsibility legislation.

Third, empower an independent fiscal council to publish pre-election fiscal impact assessments of major promises and describe the tradeoffs.

Fourth, distinguish clearly between rights-based welfare and electoral inducements timed for political gain.

Finally, voters must reclaim their role as citizens. Infrastructure decay, polluted rivers, failing schools and now felled forests are not disconnected from freebie politics. They are its consequence. A democracy that is cutting down forests for votes risks mortgaging its ecological future for an electoral present. Welfare is essential. Appeasement is corrosive. The difference lies in fiscal discipline, transparency and respect for citizens, who are not beneficiaries, but are owners of the republic.

If we do not draw that line now, next year's burden will demand another forest.

The writer is a noted economist.
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US & Drug Cartels

US President Donald Trump has made drug trafficked into his country a major reason for his policy of forcing illegal migrants out of the USA, sealing the borders, raiding neighbouring countries to flush out drug cartels and bombing boats with impunity in the Caribbean sea. But he has done precious little to destroy the network that drug cartels have built over the years within the US itself in which US arms sellers, fuel companies and real estate dealers are complicit. The elimination of Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes known as 'El Mencho', leader of the Jalisco Nueva Generacion drug cartel in Mexico by Mexican special forces, a heavy blow to the drug cartel indeed and the subsequent surge in violence have laid bare this nexus. The Mexican government and diplomats have joined the chorus of demanding immediate actions from the Trump administration to decapitate the cartels operating on its own soil. This is the real story that has remained buried in Trump's strident campaign against drug trafficking and illegal migration which, as experts say, cannot be dealt with in isolation till the US cleans up its own house where it is sheltering drug overlords in one form or the other.

The decision by Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum to step up her crackdown has prompted renewed calls for the US to do more on its side of the border. The ground reality is that the killing of El Mencho has done little to dismantle his cartel's critical US operations, which will continue unabated unless Washington takes measures to neutralize the drug mafia in its own territory. Tenacity of the Jalisco cartel, also known as CJNG, was evident after its gunmen went berserk, after El Mencho was shot and killed, when they attacked the police and military in retaliation. That was a measure of loyalty and togetherness he had inculcated in his followers. The immediate response of El Mencho's gang was to torch buildings and block roads across Mexico in a frightening display of its territorial reach that made headlines worldwide, demonstrating his organizing prowess even after his demise. Not surprisingly, the cartel has extensive networks on the US side of the border, but it has received far less attention even though it constitutes the lifeline of the cartel's power and profits. These enable it to source military-grade weapons, smuggle billions of dollars' worth of fuel procured illegally and in a clandestine manner from Mexico and launder billions more in cartel cash. Much of the wealth built in this fashion is being used for buying real estate properties in several states of the USA which has become an important haven for cartels, especially the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG), experts say.

White House spokesperson Anna Kelly said that the Trump administration "has worked closely with the Mexican government" to stop the scourge of drugs and criminals entering the US. She also emphasized that President Trump will continue to do everything in his power to keep America safe from these vicious criminals and the drugs they use to "poison our country."

Mouthing such pious platitudes and promises unmatched by concrete actions do not mitigate the problems in Mexico as they only trigger fresh waves of violence in a country where the drug war has already cost tens of thousands of lives.

A Mexican Congressman, Alfonso Ramirez, a close ally of Sheinbaum, has asserted the United States can no longer turn a blind eye to Mexico's demands for effective offensive on drug cartels in its own territory. According to him, the US needs to improve efforts to go after money laundering, fuel smuggling and, most importantly, weapons smuggled from the US into Mexico. Admittedly drug traffickers cannot be completely eliminated as long as there is strong demand within the US.

A chilling revelation is the fact that when Mexican Special Forces descended on a cabin in a picturesque mountain town where El Mencho was waiting for a visit from his girlfriend, his men fought back, armed predominantly with US weapons. This fact was disclosed by the Mexican Army chief Ricardo Trevilla at a Press conference. In fact, about 80 per cent of the 23,000 weapons the Mexican government has seized since Sheinbaum took office in late 2024 came from the US. The Jalisco cartel, in particular, has almost effortlessly procured heavy, military-grade artillery from US gun shops across the country, according to US and Mexican authorities.

Through one of its gun-running networks, the cartel obtained guns from more than a dozen US states, including .50 caliber rifles capable of downing helicopters and FN SCAR assault rifles designed for US Special Forces, according to an independent investigation. While such firepower can be bought legally in the US, the arms become illegal once they enter Mexico, which has tight gun regulations.

The US President will be doing colossal disservice to the fight against drug cartels if he gives tacit approval to US-based activities that are critical to the cartel's survival and profits.

The death of its leader is not going to have any impact on the noxious nexus of drug cartels since US companies and professionals — from fuel traders to cell phone retailers to stockbrokers — are believed to be complicit.

WISDOM CORNER

"The degree of freedom from unwanted thoughts and the degree of concentration on a single thought are the measures to gauge spiritual progress."
RAMANA MAHARSHI

"A mountain is composed of tiny grains of earth. The ocean is made up of tiny drops of water. Even so, life is but an endless series of little details, actions, speeches, and thoughts. And the consequences whether good or bad of even the least of them are far-reaching."
SWAMI SIVANANDA

"In oneself lies the whole world and if you know how to look and learn, the door is there and the key is in your hand. Nobody on earth can give you either the key or the door to open, except yourself."
JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1847: Scottish-born American inventor and scientist Alexander Graham Bell, whose foremost accomplishments were the invention of the telephone (1876) and the refinement of the phonograph (1886), was born in Edinburgh.

1861: The Russian emperor Alexander II issued the Emancipation Manifesto, which declared the freeing of the serfs.

1918: The second of two treaties of Brest-Litovsk concluded hostilities between the Central Powers and Soviet Russia during World War I.

SPECTRUM PRECIOUS METALS

Gold: A viable non-official currency



Satish Singh

IN THE LONG-HAUL PERSPECTIVE, GOLD IS INCREASINGLY PERCEIVED NOT JUST AS A HEDGE AGAINST RISK BUT ALSO AS A VITAL STRATEGIC ASSET

Gold has evolved beyond its traditional role as mere adornment; it is increasingly recognised as a significant non-official currency. In the international market, the price of gold has soared to an impressive \$5,190 per ounce. Meanwhile, in the domestic Indian market, its value has surged to over ₹1.59 lakh per 10 gram. Remarkably, since September 2024, gold prices have shown resilience, avoiding any substantial or sustained decline, signalling not just a temporary upturn but also profound structural changes within the global financial landscape.

This sustained price elevation can largely be attributed to increasing investment interest, particularly from traditional investors. After reaching new heights, gold prices have exhibited a stability lasting 8 to 9 months, hinting at a potential shift in market dynamics. Over the last two years, gold investing has become especially appealing. In September 2024, the price crossed the ₹75,000 mark

for the first time, and although it dipped slightly shortly thereafter, gold prices have consistently trended upward. As of January 29th, the valuation exceeded ₹1.75 lakh, and it currently hovers around ₹1.6 lakh. Given current trends, it's unlikely that gold prices will fall below ₹1.3 to ₹1.4 lakh in near future.

Traditionally, rising interest rates lower gold prices because gold doesn't pay interest. However, from 2023 to 2025, this trend has changed. Despite higher interest rates, gold prices are gaining momentum as investor sentiment shifts. Many investors are losing trust in government bonds amid rising interest in gold as a non-government currency. Gold's value is now influenced by market conditions, geopolitical factors, and economic indicators rather than government authority. Additionally, the depreciation of the rupee has made gold investments more appealing, leading to a rise in gold ETF investments.

In the long-haul perspective,

gold is increasingly perceived not just as a hedge against risk but also as a vital strategic asset. Concerns regarding instability across regions, including Western Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, are driving investors to withdraw from the dollar-centric financial system. In response, global central banks have collectively acquired an impressive 1,000 tons of gold over the past four years, attempting to diversify away from reliance on dollar assets. Compounding this situation, the supply of gold is currently constrained, as no new mines have been launched and the lead time to bring new mines online is considerable.

SEBI has allowed active equity schemes to invest in gold and silver, expanding their previous allocation of 20-35% to debt and non-equity instruments. This change aims to mitigate stock market losses by leveraging gains in gold and silver during equity downturns. Projections suggest gold prices might rise by 20% and silver by

about 14% by 2026-end.

Gold demand surged by 29% in 2024, the highest growth since 2013, largely driven by millennials. Around 65% prefer investing in digital gold, ETFs, and mutual funds over physical gold. In early 2025, gold ETFs saw a 60% increase in participation as consumers shifted to digital gold for wealth preservation and inflation protection. While digital gold is popular in urban areas, rural populations continue to favour physical gold or loans secured against it.

Current trends indicate that gold prices are rising, with minor fluctuations, and tend to stabilise following each peak, greatly enhancing the predictability of future trends. While it has not yet achieved official status for direct transactions, gold is steadily gaining acceptance as an alternative currency, with individuals increasingly embracing it as a viable non-official currency.

The writer is a senior banking and economic columnist based in Mumbai.

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

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

West Asia crisis

Sir, The killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, by the United States and Israel has plunged West Asia into a crisis with truly global ramifications. The large-scale strikes that targeted Iran's political leadership and strategic infrastructure represent an alarming escalation by Western powers against Tehran. The attacks also eliminated senior Iranian military commanders and damaged sensitive installations critical to national security. Retaliatory fire has already been reported across the Persian Gulf, intensifying fears of a prolonged and uncontrollable regional confrontation. For the region and the wider world, this is not another transient flare-up, but a structural geopolitical shock capable of reshaping alliances, energy flows and diplomatic alignments. Much now depends on how rapidly, and whether at all, the Iranian system can recover from this unprecedented decapitation strike. For India, the crisis is particularly delicate. New Delhi's long-standing engagement with Tehran makes its diplomatic balancing act far more complex. India's strategic autonomy now faces its sternest test, as Delhi must preserve partnerships.

N Sathasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Caught at epicentre

Sir, The escalating joint offensive by the US and Israel against Iran has forced a critical realignment of global diplomatic priorities, with India caught at the epicentre of the fallout. This military escalation, occurring just as India sought to deepen technological ties with Israel, has shattered the regional stability essential for New Delhi's 'Look West' policy. Economically, the stakes are existential — with nearly 50% of India's crude imports and 60% of its LNG transiting the Strait of Hormuz, the blockade has already pushed oil prices toward the \$90-\$100 range. Every dollar increase adds roughly \$2 billion to India's annual import bill, threatening to trigger a 'perfect storm' of imported inflation and a widening current account deficit. Beyond energy, the conflict endangers the safety of over 10 million Indian expatriates in the Gulf, whose remittances are a vital pillar of India's foreign exchange reserves. Strategically, the strikes have jeopardized the Chabahar Port project, India's gateway to Central Asia.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH

Fear, anxiety grip kin of Odia workers

Tension erupts over teacher's misconduct

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur/Kendrapara, March 2: The Israel-US strikes on Iran, and Tehran's retaliatory measures in several Gulf countries, have triggered anxiety and fear among families of Odia workers stranded in conflict-hit West Asia, with many appealing to authorities for safe evacuation.

Several workers from Odisha, particularly from Ganjam and Kendrapara districts, are reportedly stuck in countries such as the UAE, Qatar and Israel following flight cancellations and rising security tensions.

Sources said around 200 people from Ganjam district are working in the affected regions. Pitambar Behera and Krushna Charan Dakua of Kutharsingh and Bhaliagada villages in Ganjam's Rangelunda block, employed as welders in a private firm in Abu Dhabi, said they experienced tense moments after missile sirens blared out in the city.

"We heard at least three explosions between 12.30 and 1pm Saturday while working on the site. We saw big black clouds, and we are worried for our

WEST ASIA CRISIS



safety," Pitambar said through a message.

Pitambar lives with five others in shared accommodation near his workplace.

On Sunday, he did not report for duty after the company declared a holiday amid the tense situation. The UAE's Ministry of Interior also advised residents to remain indoors.

"After watching the news, I called my elder brother three to four times Saturday night to check on his safety and that of his relatives," said Lalatendu Behera, Pitambar's younger brother.

In Doha, Bhikari Charan Sethi of Kutharsingh village, who works as a plumber, said inmates in his accommodation were gripped by fear after alerts warned them not to step out.

Sudam Charan Bhuyan and Sunil Kumar Pahan of Ganjam, working in Dubai, said they have not reported to work for the past two days after their employer declared a holiday.

"We are safe but living in fear after repeated sirens," Bhuyan said.

In Kendrapara district, Binod Bihari Mishra of Patta-

mundai said his 30-year-old son Sibasambhu, who works with a plumbing company in Tel Aviv, has been confined indoors amid missile alerts.

He had migrated to Tel Aviv last year and got hired in a plumbing company.

"I have spoken to him thrice over the past two days. He says he is safe, but the situation is unpredictable. I have written to the District Collector and contacted the Ministry of External Affairs helpline," Mishra said.

Several Odia construction workers, including Sandeep Kumar Barik, Alok Chandra Pradhan, Prasanta Barik and Gyan Chand Behera, are also reported to be in Tel Aviv, where missile alerts and emergency shelter warnings have disrupted daily life.

Arup Sahoo from Kakatpur in Puri, a PhD student in Israel's Hyfa University, is facing a similar fate due to the conflict.

"I am deeply worried about my son. Though he is safe there, I appeal to the Union government to intervene for the safe return of Indians stuck in the Gulf countries," said Antaryami Sahoo, Anup's father.

"I have been actively coordinating between the workers

and their families in Odisha. The workers are apparently anxious, unfamiliar with local emergency response systems, and deeply concerned about their safety. I have received SOS from them and have taken up the matter with the authorities concerned," said Bhubaneswar-based Samar Sahoo, a West Asia immigration consultant.

Several Odia workers are also stuck in Abu Dhabi, the capital city of the UAE, which is currently in the line of fire with Iranian airstrikes.

"We have been shifted to safety by our employer. We feel unsafe here. Danger stares at us. We are now living in an underground structure, which appears like a bunker. Once normalcy is restored and flight services resume, I have made up my mind to head back to the village as my parents are worried a lot," said Tapan Gahana (32), a resident of Sansarpahla village in Pattamundi block of Kendrapara.

Around 40 people from his village and adjoining areas are working either in Abu Dhabi or Dubai. Gahana said he is in touch with all of them and they are stated to be safe.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, March 2: Tension flared Monday after an alleged incident of misconduct involving a Class VIII girl student at Kismat Krushnapur Upper Primary School under Basudevpur block in Bhadrak district.

Villagers, relatives of the student and fellow pupils locked the school gate and staged a road blockade at Krushnapur's Sandha Chhak on the Basudevpur-Dhamra road, demanding the immediate arrest and dismissal of the accused teacher.

According to sources, the incident took place Saturday when the teacher allegedly called the student to a room on the school premises and behaved inappropriately. The girl later informed her family about the alleged misconduct.

Though the accused teacher was on leave Monday, irate locals detained the in-charge headmaster and other teachers who had come to the school. The in-charge headmaster, identified as Abinash Pradhan, was reportedly assaulted and sustained injuries. He was first treated at Basudevpur hospital and later shifted to Bhadrak



District Headquarters Hospital for further treatment. Other teachers reportedly fled the scene fearing for their safety.

Police and administrative officials, including Nayakanidhi police station IIC Umashankar Nayak, Sadar SDPO Bichitrnanda Sethi and ABEO Tapan Dwivedi, reached the protest site and attempted to pacify the agitators. However, the protesters refused to withdraw the blockade.

Based on a complaint lodged by the student's mother, police registered a case (55/26) Monday and launched an investigation, Nayak said.

Block Education Officer Madhusmita Giri said the accused teacher, identified as Gautam Sahu, was placed under suspension Monday after the matter came to her notice. The road blockade was withdrawn around 4pm after protesters were informed about the suspension.

Ex-OECF engr gets 2-year RI for DA

Dhenkanal: A Special Judge for Vigilance in Dhenkanal Monday sentenced former Assistant Engineer of the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), Niranjan Panda, to two years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and imposed a fine of ₹ 50,000. Panda, who had retired from OECF, was charged under Odisha Vigilance under Section 13(2) read with 13(1)(e) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, for possessing disproportionate assets (DA). Sources from Odisha Vigilance confirmed that they will now approach the competent authority for stoppage of Panda's pension following his conviction.

Absconding ex-IIC surrenders in court

Jeyapore: Former police inspector-in-charge Rajesh Baliarsingh, who had been absconding for six months following his involvement in a case related to ganja smuggling, surrendered Monday before the district judge's court in Jeyapore of Koraput district. He was later released on bail on a bond of ₹50,000. Baliarsingh was earlier posted as IIC of Astaranga police station in Puri district. Sources said he allegedly assisted and provided shelter to ganja smugglers operating in Koraput district and Jeyapore. Following the allegations, a team led by then-Jeyapore SDPO Partha Kashyap launched an investigation in August and travelled to Bhubaneswar in connection with the case (6/25) registered in this connection. The police team had nabbed Baliarsingh in Bhubaneswar, but he later fled. Subsequently, the DGP placed him under suspension. While absconding, Baliarsingh moved the Orissa High Court seeking anticipatory bail. The court granted him bail and asked him to appear before the lower court and seek regular bail. The High Court also imposed conditions, including mandatory appearance on all hearing dates, refraining from contacting co-accused and extending full cooperation to the investigating officer.

Sambalpur district court gets fresh bomb threat

3rd such threat in a span of 2 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambalpur, March 2: Police searched the Sambalpur district court building after an email was received threatening to blast the premises, an officer said Monday.

The threatening email written in Odia language was received at about 10pm Sunday, following which local police engaged bomb disposal squad, sniffer dogs, metal detectors and other devices to search the court premises. Every nook and corner of the court premises was checked for bombs. But nothing was found, police said.

The exercise also continued during Monday morning, police said, adding that this is the third such threat received by authorities in a span of two months. On two earlier occasions, threatening messages also came through emails.

The court premises checking has been completed by Monday morning and nothing suspi-

cious was found. Security has been tightened in the area as a precautionary measure. Enhanced security is expected to remain in place until further notice, a senior police officer said. Earlier last month, several other courts in Odisha had also received similar bomb threats, but all of them turned out to be hoax.

Days after raid, poultry goes missing from Chitalpada islet

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nandapur, March 2: Days after a major drug seizure on Chitalpada islet in Jolaput reservoir here in Koraput district, over 100 Kadaknath and more than 150 Turkey varieties of fowls and hens as well as over 50 ducks have gone missing from the riverine settlement, residents said.

Notably, a joint team of Koraput police and Padua police raided Chitalpada islet under Parajabada-panchayat in Nandapur block and seized



1,800 litres of hashish oil (cannabis oil) and 1,000 kgs of ganja February 27. The haul had attracted statewide attention. People suspect that the police team during the raid might have taken away the poultry.

Following the raid, the eight families living on the island have been affected. Villagers said most

of the male members have fled their homes, leaving behind a "male-less village," while women remain in fear.

In this situation, residents reported that poultry reared collectively by some families has disappeared. The estimated value of the missing birds is around ₹2.5 lakh, villagers said. Chitalpada island is surrounded by the vast waters of the Jolaput reservoir, raising questions as to how the birds could vanish. The incident has become a topic of discussion in the area.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No. SNTPBSTELE-032026-CCTV
NAME OF WORK : PROVISION OF CCTV AT 45 (KHURDA ROAD - 32, SAMBALPUR - 10 AND WALTIRA - 03) D & E CATEGORY STATIONS INCLUDING YARD SURVEILLANCE OVER EAST COAST RAILWAY.
Approximate Advertised Value (₹) : 7,87,98,928.03, EMD (₹) : 5,44,000.00, Completion Period of the Work : 12 Months.
Tender Closing Date & Time : At 1530 Hrs. of 27.03.2026
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 <http://www.ireps.gov.in>
Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to visit the website 15 (Fifteen) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender.
Assistant Signal & Telecom Engineer (P-I), Bhubaneswar
PR-283/C/25-26

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RWS&S DIVISION, JAGATSIINGHPUR

Tel. No. 06724-223485, mail - nvsjsjpur@gmail.com
e-Procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. 53 of 2025-26
No.25001/26/12526 : The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Jagatsinghpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites P1 composite bids in Single Cover system in online mode for Execution of RPWS scheme, construction of building work on Percentage rate basis from eligible class of contractors.
1. Name of work : Repair of pipeline & Building work
2. No. of work : 9 Nos
3. Estimated Cost : Rs.7,04,812/- to Rs.32,85,070/-
4. Cost of Tender paper : Rs.4000/- to Rs.6000/- each
5. Class of contractor : "D" & "C" & "B"
6. Availability of Tender in website : 06.03.2026 to 13.03.2026
7. Submission of Bid in online : 06.03.2026 to 13.03.2026
8. Date of seeking clarification : 06.03.2026 to 11.03.2026
9. Date of opening of bids : 16.03.2026 (11.00 A.M)
10. Name and address of O.I.T : Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Jagatsinghpur
11. All other details can be seen : www.tendersorissa.gov.in from the website
12. Bid cost and Bid security should be submitted in online mode.
13. Subsequent corrigendum/addendum if required shall only be appeared in above website.
Sd./- Executive Engineer
RWS&S Divn., Jagatsinghpur
OIPR-25001/25024/1/25-26/0014

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, DHENKANAL (R&B) DIVISION, DHENKANAL

No.34001/136/2526
E-mail : eedklpwt@gmail.com
INVITATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
Bid Identification No. SE DKL (R&B) 40/2025-26
Invitation for Bids
1 The Superintending Engineer, Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in Single cover system in ONLINE MODE only for Construction of Building work as detailed below
2 Nature of work : Electrical Works
3 No. of work : 03 Nos.
4 Bid Cost : ₹ 6,000/- & ₹ 4,000/-
5 Class of Contractor : "HT" License
6 Availability of Bid : From 10.00 A.M. of 06.03.2026 to 5.00 P.M. of 19.03.2026
7 Date of Opening of Bid : Dt. 20.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
8 The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.
Sd./- Superintending Engineer,
Dhenkanal (R&B) Division
OIPR-34001/34016/1/25-26/0003

UCO BANK POSSESSION NOTICE For Immovable Property

(Under Section 13(4) of the Securitization & Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for Immovable Property)
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the UCO Bank, Concerned Branches under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices under section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon the Borrower/Partners/Guarantors to repay the amount with interest at the contractual rate together with incidental expenses and costs within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Partners/Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken POSSESSION of the properties described here-in below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules. The Borrower/Partners/Guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank, Concerned Branches for an amount plus interest, incidental expenses & charges thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

BRANCH/ Name and Address of the Borrower/Partners/Guarantors	Amount Outstanding as on Specified Date	Date of Demand / Possession Notice	Description of the Immovable Properties
GOPALPUR BRANCH/ Borrower: M/s. Sai Agencies, Prop.: Mr. Sashi Bhusan Mohanty, At: Narayanpur, PO/PS: Gopalpur, Dist.: Ganjam, Odisha, PIN-761002	₹ 33,28,743.04 as on 15.11.2025 + interest & other charges thereon	15.11.2025/ 26.02.2026	Property-1: All that parts and parcels of Vacant Land situated at Village/Mouza: Alipur, PO/PS: Gopalpur, Dist.: Ganjam having Plot No.: 1379 and 1385, Khata No.: 280/337, Area: Ac. 0.074 Dec. & Ac. 0.140Dec., Total Area: Ac.0.214Dec., The property is standing in the name of Mr. Sashi Bhusan Mohanty, Plot No.: 1379 is Bounded by East: Govt. Land, West: A Ramaya & Others, North: Road, South: Govt. Land, Plot No.: 1385 is Bounded by East: A. Narayana, West: A Kankaya, North: Road, South: Govt. Land, Property-2: All that parts and parcels of Vacant Land situated at Village/Mouza: Mansurkota, PO/PS: Gopalpur, Dist.: Ganjam-761002 having Plot No.: 525, Khata No.: 497/278, Area: Ac. 0.335 Dec., standing in the name of Mr. Sashi Bhusan Mohanty, Bounded by East: Land of Ganapati Gouda & Others, West: V.Hema Krushna Rao, North: Danda Das, South: Road
GOPALPUR BRANCH/ Borrower: M/s. Sri Rangam Aqua Marine, Partners: 1) Mr. Surukulu Jagannath, 2) Mr. Surendra Kumar Behera / Guarantors: 1) Bhagabati Behera, W/o.: Late Purna Chandra Behera, 2) Mrs. Sujata Behera, W/o.: Mr. Ram Krishna Behera, 3) Mr. Subhash Chandra Behera, All are At: Bandar, PO/PS: Gopalpur, Dist.: Ganjam, PIN-761002, Odisha	₹ 28,33,870.63 as on 31.03.2025 + interest & other charges thereon	24.09.2025/ 26.02.2026	Property-1: All that parts and parcels of Land & Building situated at Village/Mouza: Upulaputi, PO/PS: Gopalpur, Dist.: Ganjam-761002 having Plot No.: 1185, Khata No.: 263/252, Area: Ac.1.217Dec., standing in the name of 1) Bhagabati Behera, W/o.: Late Purna Chandra Behera, 2) Mr. Subhash Chandra Behera, 3) Mr. Surendra Kumar Behera, Both are S/o.: Late Purna Chandra Behera, Plot No.: 1185 is Bounded by North: Land of Trinath Behera, South: Land of Trinath Behera, East: Road, West: Land of Trinath Behera, Property-2: All that parts and parcels of Land & Building situated at Village/Mouza: Upulaputi, PO: Gopalpur, Sub-Registrar Office: Chatrapur, Dist.: Ganjam-761002 having Plot No.: 1065/1688, Khata No.: 263/573, Area: Ac.0.015Dec., standing in the name of 1) Bhagabati Behera, W/o.: Late Purna Chandra Behera, 2) Mr. Subhash Chandra Behera, 3) Mr. Surendra Kumar Behera, Both are S/o.: Late Purna Chandra Behera, East: House of Banamali Behera, West: House of Judhithira Behera, Property-3: All that parts and parcels of Land & Building situated at Village/Mouza: Upulaputi, PO: Gopalpur, PS: Chamakhandi, Dist.: Ganjam-761002 having Plot No.: 1054/2154, Khata No.: 263/811, Area: Ac.0.016Dec., standing in the name of Mr. Surukulu Jagannath, Plot No.: 1054/2154 is Bounded by North: Road, South: Road, East: House of K. Simeya, West: House of B. Kanthari
CHANDRASEKHARPUR BRANCH/ Borrower: M/s. Mahima Traders, At: Room No.: 17, Eastern Tower, Market Building, Unit-2, Bhubaneswar, Partners: 1) Mrs. Jayanti Nayak, At: Plot No.: 2402/4760, Buddha Nagar, Kalpana Square, Bhubaneswar-751016, 2) Mr. Pravat Kumar Mohanty, At: Plot No.: 2208, Near Badagada SBI, BJB Nagar, Bhubaneswar-751014, 3) Mr. Gouri Kishore Nayak, At: Plot No.: 2402/4760, Buddha Nagar, Kalpana Square, Bhubaneswar-751016	₹ 25,54,782.01 as on 27.02.2026 + interest & other charges thereon	15.12.2025/ 27.02.2026	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Plot No.: 747/2623 & 732/2622, Khata No.: 1494/2913, Mouza: Bhubaneswar Sahar Unit-35 Badagada within the Registration Sub-District, SRO: Bhubaneswar, Dist.: Khordha, Land with Building Total Land Area: 3310.56 Sqft., The property is standing in the name of Mr. Pravat Kumar Mohanty, Bounded by North: Govt. Road, South: Road, East: Plot No.: 744, 745, 746, 748, West: Plot No.: 731 & 733

Chola CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED

Corporate Office: "CHOLA CREST", C54 & 55, Super B-4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, India
Branch Office : 2nd Floor, Plot No. 394, Bomikhal, Near Santoshi Maa Temple Cuttack Road, Rasulgarh, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Pin - 751 010
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
Contact No. : B. Harikrishna (Mob. 99374 90975), Pinaki Dutta (Mob. 94374 79421), Suman Kalyan Satapathy (Mob. 79378 44193), Prakash Verma (Mob. 99813 43191)
E-auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower / Co-Borrower / Mortgagee(s) that the below-described Immovable Properties mortgaged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic / Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited the same shall be referred hereinafter as Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited. The Secured Assets will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "What ever there is" basis through E-Auction.
It is hereby informed to the General public that we are going to conduct a public E-Auction through the website <https://bankauctions.in/>.
Account No. and Name of the Borrower / Co-borrower / Mortgagee
1. Date of Demand Notice : 06.08.2025
2. Demand Notice Amount : Rs. 75,39,285.00 as on 06.08.2025
3. Total Loan Outstanding : Rs. 82,01,850.00 (Rupees Eighty Two Lakhs One Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty only) as on 27.02.2026 together with further interest, penal interest, costs and charges thereon till the date of payment.
4. Possession Date : 08.11.2025 (Symbolic Possession)
Descriptions of the Property / Properties
Reserve Price : Rs. 73,00,000.00
Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 7,30,000.00
Bid Increment Amount : Rs. 1,00,000.00
E-Auction Date and Time : 07.04.2026 (11.00 A.M. to 1.00 P.M.) (with unlimited extension of 3 Minutes)
EMD Submission Last Date : 06.04.2026 (up to 5.30 P.M.)
Inspection Date : 25.03.2026 & 26.03.2026 (10.00 A.M to 1.00. P.M.)
It is also notified that one of the Co-Borrower Smt. Sumitra Manna has filed one Civil Suit before Civil Judge Sr. Division, Balasore, bearing number C.S. No.1581/2638 of 2025(I) and I.A. No. 445/609 of 2025, between Sumitra Manna - Versus - The Authorised Officer Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. Whereas there is "No interim / permanent stay" regarding this Auction as on date.
Loan A/c. No. : HE01XB0000006875
1. Date of Demand Notice : 06.08.2025
2. Demand Notice Amount : Rs. 75,39,285.00 as on 06.08.2025
3. Total Loan Outstanding : Rs. 82,01,850.00 (Rupees Eighty Two Lakhs One Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty only) as on 27.02.2026 together with further interest, penal interest, costs and charges thereon till the date of payment.
4. Possession Date : 24.12.2025 (Physical Possession)
All that part and parcel of the property bearing Plot No. 547/2059 (Old No. 547/594), Plot No. 5560, Mouza - Sabilla, Area - 0.086 Decimil, Kisan- Gharabari, Near Jagannath Temple, Tahasil - Khalkote, District - Ganjam, Odisha, Pin - 761 028.
Reserve Price : Rs. 74,00,000.00
Earnest Money Deposit : Rs. 7,40,000.00
Bid Increment Amount : Rs. 1,00,000.00
E-Auction Date and Time : 07.04.2026 (11.00 A.M. to 1.00 P.M.) (with unlimited extension of 3 Minutes)
EMD Submission Last Date : 06.04.2026 (up to 5.30 P.M.)
Inspection Date : 25.03.2026 & 26.03.2026 (10.00 A.M to 1.00. P.M.)
1. All Interested participants / bidders are requested to visit the website <https://bankauctions.in> and www.cholamandalam.com/news/auction-notices. For details, help, procedure and online training on e-auction, prospective bidders may contact - Mr. Muhammed Maham - Ph. No. 81240 00030 / 63748 45616, M/s. 4 Closure; Rekha, Ph. No. 81420 00062, E-mail : CholaAuctionLP@chola.murugappa.com
2. For further details on terms and conditions please visit : <https://bankauctions.in> & www.cholamandalam.com/news/auction-notices to take part in e-auction.
THIS IS ALSO A STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT RULES 2002)
Date : 03.03.2026
Place : Cuttack (Odisha)
Authorised Officer
Cholamandalam Investment And Finance Company Limited



The Kerala CM has described Congress government in Telangana as 'bulldozer raj' without having a proper idea of what happened in Khammam district, and just keeping the upcoming elections in Kerala in mind

CHAMALA KIRAN KUMAR REDDY | CONGRESS MP

OFFICIALS: CHEETAHS BROUGHT FROM BOTSWANA DOING WELL

Nine cheetahs airlifted from Botswana were in good health in their quarantine enclosures in Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, where they served food for the first time Monday, officials said. This is the third batch of big cats from Africa that was brought Saturday on an Indian Air Force (IAF) aircraft as part of a four-year cheetah population revival plan in India



of the day quote

Whenever Kannadigas and other Indians face distress anywhere in the world, the Central Government has ensured their safe return. Earlier, we brought back those stranded in Ukraine. Wherever Indians are, their safety remains our first priority



With Palaniswami seated on the dais, the Prime Minister spoke of forming an NDA government. It is a coalition that does not even seem to know who leads whom. That is why, when I launched my poll campaign, I had said that the upcoming election would be NDA vs Tamil Nadu



M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM

The state government is constantly in touch with the Government of India to ensure the safe and prompt return of those stuck. Due to the conflicts in Arab countries, many Punjabis in these nations are facing serious difficulties. The Punjab government has set up a helpline. If any person or their family is stranded in these countries, they can call on these numbers



BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

India, Canada seal \$2.6bn uranium deal



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney witness an MoU exchange between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Canada Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand during a joint press meet, at Hyderabad House in New Delhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: India and Canada Monday inked landmark pacts on supplies of Uranium and critical minerals and vowed to seal a comprehensive economic partnership agreement this year with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney finalising an ambitious roadmap of cooperation to shore up ties including taking bilateral annual trade to over \$50 billion by 2030.

In their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also pledged to ramp up cooperation in defence, critical technologies, small and modular nuclear reactors, education, artificial intelligence and renewable energy, demonstrating that the relationship has moved beyond turbulence into a more stable and forward-looking phase.

The ties between the two countries hit rock bottom following then-PM Justin Trudeau's allegations in 2023 of a potential Indian link to the killing of Khalistani

terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada.

The two sides initiated a series of measures to rebuild the relations after Carney became the prime minister in March last year. To leverage their strengths as complementary economies, India and Canada announced a new strategic energy partnership, including in LNG, LPG, uranium, solar and hydrogen.

As the first step, a USD 2.6 billion agreement was signed between the government of India and Saskatoon-based Cameco to supply nearly 22 million pounds of uranium to India for nuclear energy generation from 2027 to 2035. Besides the pacts on uranium and critical minerals, India and Canada signed six other MoUs, including one on the terms of reference for the India-Canada Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

"Our goal is to reach USD 40 billion in trade by 2030. Unlocking the full potential of economic cooperation is our priority. Therefore, we have decided to finalise the Comprehensive

In their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also pledged to ramp up cooperation in defence, critical technologies, small and modular nuclear reactors, education, artificial intelligence and renewable energy, demonstrating that the relationship has moved beyond turbulence into a more stable and forward-looking phase

The ties between the two countries hit rock bottom following then-PM Justin Trudeau's allegations in 2023 of a potential Indian link to the killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in Canada

Economic Partnership Agreement soon."

"Canada's pension funds have invested USD 100 billion in India. This symbolises their deep belief in India's growth story," he said.

The volume of two-way annual trade at present is around USD 13 billion. The prime minister said the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on critical minerals will strengthen resilient supply chains. Canada is known for its significant reservoir of critical minerals and rare earth materials.

The prime minister said both sides agreed that terrorism, extremism, and radicalisation are common and serious challenges not only for India and Canada but for all humanity. "Our close cooperation against these is crucial for global peace and stability."

A Canadian readout said the two leaders agreed to advance bilateral cooperation on security and law enforcement and it includes issues of mutual concern to Canada and India, such as the illegal flow of drugs, particularly fentanyl precursors, and transnational organised criminal networks.

Excise policy case: CBI moves Delhi HC



In its 974-page petition before the high court, the CBI said the Special Judge essentially conducted a mini-trial and "spent 4 months' time reading only the file of the case", which shows appreciation of the evidence by the judge which "otherwise is not permitted at this stage"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Challenging the special court order discharging former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and others in the excise policy case, the CBI has submitted to the Delhi High Court that the order was based "on a selective reading of the prosecution case, disregarding the material showing the culpability of the accused", and was "patently illegal".

In its 974-page petition before the high court, the CBI said the Special Judge essentially conducted a mini-trial and "spent 4 months' time reading only the file of the case", which shows appreciation of the evidence by the judge which "otherwise is not permitted at this stage".

The special judge dealt with separate limbs of conspiracy in isolation rather than assessing the actions of the accused cumulatively, the agency also said. Terming the order "perverse", the agency said it suffers from "errors apparent on the face", is based on "misread-

ing" of facts and violates the Supreme Court's assertions related to the stage when charges are to be framed.

The special court had on Friday discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others in the liquor-policy case by refusing to take cognisance of the CBI chargesheet against them.

Among the 21 people given a clean chit in the case is Telangana Jagruthi president K Kavitha. Special Judge Jitendra Singh had rapped the CBI for lapses in the investigation, saying there was no cogent evidence against Kejriwal and no prima facie case against Sisodia and the other accused.

Within hours, the CBI had approached the high court challenging the order through an urgent revision petition. The hearing in the case will take place March 9.

"The Impugned Order is patently illegal, perverse and suffers from errors apparent on the face. Not only does it fail to appreciate the facts of the case in its correct perspective, such failure on the part of the Ld. Special Judge has further led to passing of adverse remarks against the investigating agency, as well as the investigating officer, all of which are unwarranted and incomprehensible, to say the least," the CBI contended.

The central probe agency went on to allege that the observations in the order bear testimony to the fact that the Special Judge "lacks the basic understanding of the prosecution case as a whole and the corresponding law at the stage of charge".

Bomb threats to 3 banks, 6 schools turn out to be hoax

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: At least three banks and six schools in the national capital received bomb threats via email Monday, which were later declared a hoax after exhaustive searches, officials said.

Delhi Fire Services said calls regarding bomb threats started coming in around 8.20 am after the institutions received emails warning of explosives on their premises. Among the banks that received the threats were the Axis Bank branch in Connaught Place, the State Bank of India AIIMS branch and the SBI branch in east Delhi's Shahdara.

The six schools that received similar emails included Army Public School in Delhi Cantt, Salwan Public School, Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, Mira Public School in Janakpuri, Ramjas Public School in Rajendra Nagar and Rabea Girls' Public School.

"Teams from the local police, bomb disposal squad, dog squad and fire department were immediately dispatched to all the locations. Every nook and corner was checked thoroughly. Nothing suspicious was found and all the calls were later declared hoax," the senior police officer said.

Students and staff at the schools were evacuated as a precautionary measure soon after the emails were received. School authorities informed parents through messages and asked them not to panic while security agencies sanitised the campuses.

At Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, the management sent a communication to parents stating that the school had received a security threat in the morning and that police teams were present to undertake necessary checks.

It added that all students had been evacuated safely. The message further stated that classes for junior school students would resume once the premises were declared safe, while examinations for senior school students would recommence after clearance from the security agencies.

India denies links to violence in Canada amid Nijjar case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: India Monday categorically rejected allegations of its links to transnational violence or organised crime in Canada after a fresh media report in that country sought to connect Indian officials to the killing of Sikh extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Canadian national-security officials were presented with evidence that Indian consular staff operating in Vancouver supplied information to assist in the assassination of Nijjar, The Globe and Mail reported quoting two unnamed sources.

India has been trashing Canada's allegations of an Indian link to the killing of the Sikh extremist in 2023.

The Canadian newspaper also named the Indian official while quoting the sources.

The report came on a day the prime ministers of Canada and India held wide-ranging talks that focused on significantly expanding the bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, energy, critical minerals, defence and security. Interestingly, a Canadian readout on the talks between the two prime ministers noted that PM Mark Carney underscored that Canada will continue to take measures to combat transnational repression.

"India categorically rejects allegations of involvement in transnational violence or organised crime.

These claims are baseless, politically motivated and unsupported by credible evidence despite repeated requests," Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs P Kumaran said at a media briefing.

He was responding to questions on the Canadian media report on the Nijjar killing as well as on Carney's remarks.

Toxic gas leaks from Palghar chemical unit; 2,600 evacuated

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Palghar, March 2: A massive leak of hazardous oleum gas at a chemical unit in Maharashtra's Palghar district Monday led to the evacuation of over 2,600 people, including 1,600 school students, while three persons complained of minor eye irritation, officials said.

The oleum (fuming sulphuric acid) gas leak affected areas in a five-kilometre radius of the unit in the Boisar MIDC locality on Mumbai's outskirts and led to the evacuation as a precautionary measure, they said.

The leak, which occurred around 2 pm at the unit of Bhageria Industries Ltd, created a dense cloud of white fumes that spread rapidly due to wind velocity, causing panic among

residents and workers in the industrial belt. The cause of the gas leak was not immediately known. Palghar District Collector Dr Indu Rani Jakhar, who is personally monitoring the situation, said disaster management plan was activated immediately. "The leakage occurred from a 2,500-litre capacity oleum day tank. Due to the wind direction, the smoke spread to surrounding areas, impacting a radius of approximately 5 kilometres," the administration stated in a press release.

As a precautionary measure, the authorities ordered the immediate evacuation of 1,600 students from a local school, Tarapur Vidyamandir. Additionally, more than 1,000 workers from Bhageria Industries and neighbouring firms were moved to safety, it informed.



Karnataka State Anganwadi workers stage a protest demanding an increase in honorarium, at Freedom Park in Bangalore

Mamata alleges 'EC-BJP nexus' behind voter deletions

In her first reaction since the publication of the final post-SIR rolls February 28, the TMC supremo termed the deletions "deliberate and inhumane," asserting that genuine voters were being struck off because the BJP "cannot win elections on its own merit"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 2: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Monday alleged an "EC-BJP nexus" behind the deletion of 63.66 lakh names from the state's electoral rolls following the SIR, claiming that the exercise was designed to help the saffron party ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls.

In her first reaction since the publication of the final post-SIR rolls February 28, the TMC supremo termed the deletions "deliberate and inhumane," asserting that genuine voters were being struck off because the BJP "cannot win elections on its own merit".

The CM also declared that she would emerge victorious in her Assembly constituency Bhabanipur, notwithstanding the deletions, and "even if there is one vote left".

"These deletions in voter rolls due to SIR have been done deliberately by the BJP and the EC. The EC has deliberately deleted genuine voters. I am shocked. This is a very sad and inhumane state of affairs," she said at a Holi programme here.

The post-SIR rolls recorded 63.66 lakh deletions, about 8.3 per cent of the electorate, reducing the voter base to a little over 7.04 crore. In addition, more than 60.06 lakh voters



have been placed in the "under adjudication" category, subject to scrutiny in the coming weeks, marking one of the most sweeping electoral revisions in the state since 2002.

With the state heading into a fiercely contested election likely in April, the scale of the revision has injected fresh volatility into Bengal's political battlefield, sharpening the narrative war between the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the BJP.

At the heart of the controversy lies Bhabanipur, widely regarded as Banerjee's pocket borough and the constituency she represents in the Assembly.

Banerjee claimed that "massive deletions" had taken place in her seat, but declared she would prevail regardless. "Bhabanipur is a small constituency. There were only about 2.6 lakh voters. Earlier, 44,000 were excluded. This time, 14,000 more were placed 'under adjudication', and also around 2,000 because of so-called logistical discrepancies. Where are these voters? Why are they missing?"

Official figures, however, show that Bhabanipur had 2.06 lakh voters when the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process began November 4 last year. The draft roll published on December 16 reflected 44,786 deletions.

In the final list released on Saturday, another 2,324 names were removed, taking the total

deletions to 47,094. Over 14,000 names in the constituency have been kept "under adjudication".

The figure of deletions is roughly 11,000 less than the margin of over 58,000 votes secured by Banerjee in the 2021 Bhabanipur bypoll, a statistical coincidence that has added a sharper political edge to the constituency's pre-election discourse.

Leader of Opposition Suven- du Adhikari had flashed a victory sign Saturday after the final list was published, remarking that "no one can save Mamata now".

Banerjee hit back Monday, alleging that names of TMC supporters were being selectively removed.

Accusing unnamed BJP leaders of orchestrating the deletions through "agencies", Banerjee alleged that between 10,000 and 30,000 names had been struck off in several TMC-held constituencies.

national



As a part of Gujarat SemiConnect Conference 2026 in Gandhinagar, held productive one-to-one meetings with leading global industry representatives to further strengthen Gujarat's semiconductor ecosystem

50 CENTRES FOR 'PINK SAHELI' CARDS The Delhi government has set up around 50 centres across the city to facilitate the issuance of the "Pink Saheli" cards and the distribution process will commence from Tuesday.



of the day uote

Gohpur was nothing short of grand. Progress is taking shape across the constituency, but the overwhelming energy today was something special. Your warmth and trust give this journey its true strength

Mamata Banerjee should be ashamed. Though Bengal has a female CM, cases of rape and torture of women continue

I urge the force to remain firm and uncompromising with criminals, while being courteous, humane, and empathetic towards citizens

POST OF THE DAY

There are 195 countries in the world. 10-12 countries are at WAR right now. The other 185 countries are safe and are not facing missile, bomb, or drone strikes.

But only one party's supporters are giving its credit to a FAILED compromised leader just to please him.

SHORT TAKES

Man hacks to death parents, two others

Bahraich (UP): A man allegedly hacked to death his parents, grandmother and sister following a dispute over money in a village here, police said Monday.

Man, son killed after car rams into garage

Chhindwara: A 61-year-old man and his son were charred to death after their CNG-fitted car rammed into a roadside garage and caught fire in Madhya Pradesh's Chhindwara district in the early hours of Monday, a police official said.

Minor 'raped'; two arrested

Muzaffarpur: A 17-year-old girl was allegedly raped in Bihar's Muzaffarpur district, police said Monday. The incident took place in the Mushahari police station area of Muzaffarpur around 11 pm Sunday.

KHAMENEI KILLING

14 hurt in J&K protests

75 rallies were held at various places in the Kashmir Valley, while a few demonstrations were held in the Jammu region as well. Security forces had to use mild force to disperse the protesters in some areas

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Srinagar, March 2: At least 14 people, including six security personnel, were injured on the second day of protests that erupted in Jammu and Kashmir following the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a joint US-Israeli attack, officials said.

Authorities have imposed restrictions to curb people's movement, shut down education institutes and throttled mobile internet speeds in the Union territory as precautionary measures.

Officials said that 75 rallies were held at various places in the Kashmir Valley, while a few demonstrations were held in the Jammu region as well. Security forces had to use mild force to disperse the protesters in some areas.

Protests broke out in Bemina, Gund Hassibhat, Saidakadal, Nigeen, Foreshore Road and Jehangir Chowk areas of Srinagar city, in the Pulwama town of south Kashmir, and Budgam in central Kashmir -- all of which have a large Shia population, as agitators marched through the streets, raising anti-US and anti-Israel slogans.

While most of the protests were by and large peaceful, clashes erupted at a few places, forcing the security forces personnel to use mild force to disperse the protesters, the officials said.

They said 14 persons -- eight protesters and six security forces personnel -- were injured during these clashes in the Kashmir valley.

Severe restrictions had been placed on the movement of people in parts of Kashmir. The curbs were imposed against the backdrop of a call for a one-day strike given by Mutahida Majlis-e-Uluma (MMU) chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq.

The authorities had sealed Ghanta Ghar at Lal Chowk with barricades erected all around it, while a large number of police and paramilitary CRPF



People from the Muslim community take out a protest march from Gangoo in Pulwama

Airlines cancel more than 300 international flights

NEW DELHI/ MUMBAI: Indian airlines cancelled 357 international flights Monday as the operational disruptions caused by the Middle East conflict continued for the third day. Over 300 flights, including arrivals and departures, were cancelled at the country's four main airports -- Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Chennai -- Monday, officials told PTI.

personnel were deployed across the city to prevent gatherings of protesters, officials said.

They added that concertina wires and barricades were placed at important intersections leading into the city while asserting that these were precautionary measures imposed to maintain law and order.

The authorities also closed all educational institutions for two days, as a precautionary measure for the safety of students and to maintain law and order. Similar curbs were imposed in Shia-dominated areas in other districts of the Kashmir valley. Mobile internet speeds were also throttled

PM Modi speaks to Saudi Crown Prince, Bahrain King

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday spoke to the King of Bahrain and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and condemned the recent attacks on the two countries, asserting that India stands in solidarity with their people in this difficult hour.

Govt: Ready to evacuate citizens stuck in Gulf

NEW DELHI: Amid escalating West Asia tensions, the Centre Monday said it is in touch with Indian missions in the Gulf region to ensure safe return of stranded Indian nationals as state governments across the country stepped up efforts to assist such residents.

protesters chanted slogans against the US and Israel before dispersing peacefully.

The Muslim community also held protests at different places in the Rajouri and Poonch districts. Several Muslim organisations have called for a Rajouri bandh Tuesday after a joint meeting at the local Jamia masjid.

Indian killed as oil tanker attacked off Oman coast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, March 2: An Indian national was killed Monday when an explosive-laden drone boat struck an oil tanker off the coast of Muscat Governorate, according to officials.

In a statement, Oman's Ministry of Defence said that the Maritime Security Centre reported that the oil tanker MKD VYOM was hit by an unmanned boat 52 nautical miles off the coast of Muscat Governorate.

It said that the attack resulted in a fire and explosion in the engine room and the death of one crew member. The remaining 21 crew members were evacuated.

The Embassy of India in Oman expressed its "deepest condolences" on the tragic demise of the Indian crew member on board MKD Vyom.

The mission said it is in close coordination with local authorities in Oman to facilitate the safe and early repatriation of our nationals on board the vessel. "We remain committed to extending all possible assistance in this matter," it said.

State-run Oman News Agency reported that the attack triggered a fire and explosion within the main engine room, resulting in the fatality of one crew member of Indian nationality.

A vessel from the Royal Navy of Oman is monitoring the condition of the stricken tanker and issuing the necessary navigational warnings to vessels transiting the same maritime zone, it added. The tanker,



AN INDIAN NATIONAL WAS KILLED WHEN AN EXPLOSIVE-LADEN UNMANNED BOAT ATTACKED THE OIL TANKER MKD VYOM OFF THE COAST OF OMAN

THE ATTACK CAUSED A FIRE AND EXPLOSION IN THE ENGINE ROOM OF THE OIL TANKER, RESULTING IN THE DEATH OF THE INDIAN CREW MEMBER

SIXTEEN INDIAN NATIONALS, FOUR BANGLADESHI NATIONALS, AND ONE UKRAINIAN NATIONAL WERE EVACUATED FROM THE OIL TANKER AFTER THE ATTACK

flagged to the Republic of the Marshall Islands, was carrying an estimated 59,463 metric tons of cargo.

A day earlier, another oil tanker came under attack in the Strait of Hormuz. The attack on the MV Skylight injured four crew members.

The state-run Oman News Agency said the crew were from India and Iran. On Monday, the Indian mission in Oman said it was in constant touch with local authorities who are carrying out search operations for missing crew members following the incident involving MV Skylight.

The Strait of Hormuz is located between Oman and Iran and connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It is one of the world's most important oil chokepoints.

Focus on rural growth, Haryana Budget proposes 'Agri Discom'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 2: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini Monday presented the Budget for 2026-27 with an outlay of Rs 2.23 lakh crore, with several initiatives including a new electricity distribution company for the agriculture sector, a Rs 100 crore green climate resilience fund and 20 per cent reservation for Agniveers in the state police force.

A slew of announcements have also been made in the Budget for women. Saini also announced setting up of 'Adarsh Pariksha Kendra' on a public-private partnership model, Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) under IG rank police officer, 'Wedding City' each

in Gurugram, Kharkhoda and Pinjore on the concept of 'Wed in India', a modern film city at Pinjore, besides stating that Rajiv Gandhi Sports Complex, Daulatabad, will be upgraded to the state's first Para Sports Stadium.

Sporting a saffron turban, Saini said 5,000 suggestions were received from various quarters, and these have been incorporated in the Budget, which he described as "people's budget".

Haryana remains committed to serving as an uninterrupted and tireless engine of development in the journey towards fulfilment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat' @ 2047, he said.

2 Indore workers cleaning sewerage chamber die after inhaling toxic gas

INDORE: Two municipal workers died from asphyxiation due to toxic gas while cleaning a sewerage chamber Monday in Indore in Madhya Pradesh, a police official said.

The two were cleaning a sewerage chamber in front of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar fruit and vegetable market, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police Sumit Kerkatta said. "While cleaning it, a part of the pipe from the sewer suction machine broke and fell into the chamber. One of the workers, who went down to remove the pipe, fell unconscious after being exposed to toxic gas. Later, another municipal worker, who went down to rescue him, also fell unconscious," Kerkatta said.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA PANCHAYAT SAMITI, GUDARI E-Mail - ori-gudari@od.gov.in IDENTIFICATION NO. 02/2025-26 OF PANCHAYAT SAMITI, GUDARI CORRIGENDUM - 01 No. 344 /2026, (GPLF) Dev Dated 20.02.2026 No.19001/60/2526 : It is to inform all concerned that, due to some unavoidable circumstances the date of commencement of the Tender Call Notice No.02/2025-26 published vide this office Letter No.344 dated 20.02.2026 has been rescheduled from 12.03.2026 to 26.03.2026 in place of 02.03.2026 to 16.03.2026 and the date of opening of tenders has also been rescheduled to be held on 30.03.2026 at 11.00 AM in place of 18.03.2026 at 11.00 AM.

PUBLIC NOTICE JSW STEEL LIMITED, ODISHA Notice is hereby given that the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, has accorded Environmental Clearance (EC) on 28th February 2026 to M/s JSW Steel Limited for enhancement of production capacity of the Narayanposhi Iron & Manganese Ore Mine located in Sundargarh, Odisha, as recommended by the Expert Appraisal Committee (Non-Coal Mining) during its 38th and 46th meetings, subject to specific and standard conditions stipulated under the provisions of the EIA Notification, 2006 and subsequent amendments thereto; the approval includes enhancement of Iron Ore (ROM) production from 6.0 MTPA to 10.0 MTPA with 4.216 MTPA of overburden involving total excavation of 14.216 MTPA, continuation of existing Manganese Ore (ROM) production of 0.036 MTPA with 0.223 MTPA of overburden involving total excavation of 0.259 MTPA, along with installation and operation of Mobile Crushing & Screening Plants (400 TPH x 10 Nos. and 250 TPH x 7 Nos.), a 2000 TPH CPU, a 6.0 MTPA Grinding & Beneficiation Plant for mineral processing and a Slurry Pumping Station for transportation of iron ore concentrate.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE CHILIKA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY PLOT NO- 493(P), PALASAPALI, KHURDA, BHUBANESWAR-751020 Tender Call NOTICE NO. 347/CDA/2026, DT. 23.02.2026 No.8001/109/2526 : The Chief Executive of the Chilika Development Authority, Plot No. 493(P), Palasapali, Khurda, Bhubaneswar-751020, invites tenders from renowned farms for the supply of CTD for monitoring Water Quality. The specification and other details will be found on the Official Website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. The last date for submission of quotations is 5th March 2026.

Government of Odisha "e" procurement Notice Bid Identification No. TENDER ONLINE SBPR-22 OF 2025-26 e-mail ID : rv_sambalpur@yahoo.co.in, Phone No. 0663-2401850 No.25001/279/2526 No.1773 dated. 27.02.2026 1. Name of the work : Road Works as per DTCN available in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in or (One) No. 2. Total No. of Work : Varies from Rs.27.59 lakhs 3. Estimated Cost : 15 (Fifteen) Days 4. Period of Completion : 05.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 10.03.2026 up to 5.00 P.M. 5. Date and time of opening of Tender : 11.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M. 6. Name and address of the officer inviting bid : S.E.R.W. Divn. Sambalpur (1) Other details can be seen from detailed notice inviting tenders, available in website www.tendersodisha.gov.in (2) Corrigendum if any shall only be published in the website : www.tenderodisha.gov.in

केन्द्रीय पेट्रोसायन अभियांत्रिकी एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (सिपेट) CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PETROCHEMICALS ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY (CIPET) SCHOOL FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH IN PETROCHEMICALS (SARP)-LARPM (Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Govt. of India) B-25, C.N.I. Complex, Patia, Bhubaneswar - 751 024 (Odisha) Tel: 0674-2740173/27 42852, Fax: 0674-2740463 Website : www.cipet.gov.in, Email: larpm@cipet.gov.in Date:- 03-03-2026 CIPET-SARP-LARPM/BBSR/FPSCS/2025-26/08 INVITATION FOR QUOTATION (IFQ) Sealed quotations are invited from reputed Contractors/Vendors/Firms/Agencies for "Facilitation Of Plywood Cabinet Storage" at 3rd Floor of Annex Building of CIPET: SARP-LARPM, Bhubaneswar. Interested bidders may submit their sealed quotations as per the format before 12.03.2026 by 12.00 PM at the above address. For more information pertaining to work, IFQ forms and other terms and conditions please visit CIPET-SARP-LARPM, Bhubaneswar, B/25, C.N.I Complex, Patia, 751024, Bhubaneswar, Khurda, Odisha, India. CIPET-SARP-LARPM, Bhubaneswar reserves the right to accept or reject any application form or cancel the entire Invitation for Quotation (IFQ) process without assigning any reasons thereof. Purchase Officer CIPET-SARP-LARPM, Bhubaneswar

S. E. RAILWAY - TENDER Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (G)/Santragachi, South Eastern Railway, Kharagpur Division acting on behalf of the President of India invites open tender, through e-Tendering in www.ireps.gov.in website as per details mention below : Tender Notice No. : Elect-Chg-OT-25-26-RMPU4; Name of work : Comprehensive annual maintenance contract (CAMC) of Roof mounted Package units (RMPUs) of LHB/SG AC Coaches for a period of three (3) years at the Coaching Maintenance Depots (Santragachi, Shalimar and Padmapukur); Tender Value : ₹ 15,08,49,741.07; EMD/Bid Security : ₹ 9,04,300.00; Tender Document Cost : Nil; Tender Closing Date & Time : 23/03/2026 at 11:00 hrs.; Eligible contractors are requested to apply for the same through online only, in www.ireps.gov.in website. No offline tender will be accepted for this tender. Please read the tender document carefully uploaded in the document section for details. Tender Notice, tender document and other details are given in the www.ireps.gov.in. (PR-1255) For on behalf of President of India, the General Manager (Engg.), South Eastern Railway, Garden Reach Kolkata-700043 invites e-tender for the following works: Tender No. : BR-HQ-CKP-25-26-17; Description of the work : "Bridge Zonal Works for maintaining and repairing of bridges including new addition & alteration in the jurisdiction of SSE/BR/SINI under ADEN-Br-Line/CKP in Chakradharpur Division period ending up to 30.09.2027 (For Period of Two Years i.e. from 01.10.2025 to 30.09.2027). (3rd Call)"; Tender Value : ₹ 2,33,47,031.60; Earnest Money : ₹ 2,66,700.00; Tender Document Cost : Nil; Tender Closing Date Time : 19.03.2026 at 11:30 hrs.; Period of Completion : 24 (Twenty four) Months; interested Tenderer's may visit website www.ireps.gov.in for full details/ description of the tenders and to know the status of this tender so as to submit their bids online. Physical/manual tender for this work will not be accepted. (PR-1248)

Iran conflict widens to Lebanon

REUTERS

Dubai/Washington, March 2: The US and Israeli air war against Iran widened Monday, with no end in sight as Israel attacked Lebanon in response to strikes by Hezbollah and Tehran kept up its missile and drone attacks on Gulf states.

President Donald Trump said a "big wave" of further attacks was imminent, without giving details, and said it was unclear who was in charge in Iran, following the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei at the weekend.

The attack on Iran has pitched the Gulf into war, thrown global air transport into chaos and shut down shipping traffic through the vital Strait of Hormuz, sending oil prices surging.

Underlining the risks, Kuwait mistakenly shot down three American F-15E fighter jets during an Iranian attack, US Central Command said. All six crew members ejected and were safely recovered. Video, filmed at a location verified by Reuters, showed one of the planes spiralling out of the sky, an engine on fire.

For Trump, facing growing discontent at home over bread-and-butter economic issues, the weekend strikes against a

foe that had tormented the US and its allies for generations amount to the biggest US foreign policy gamble in decades.

Trump urged Americans to gripe the four US service personnel killed so far. The campaign could pose a major political risk for Trump's Republican Party in this year's midterm elections, with only one in four Americans supporting the operation, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll at the weekend.

"WE HAVEN'T EVEN STARTED", TRUMP SAYS

Trump said he had ordered the attack to thwart Tehran's nuclear program and a ballistic missile program that he said was growing rapidly. He said the war could go on past a four-to-five-week projection he made earlier.

"We haven't even started hitting them hard," he told CNN in an interview.

"The big wave hasn't even happened. The big one is coming soon."

In the first formal Pentagon briefing since the cam-

paign began, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, described a campaign that included hitting more than 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours. He said more forces were still on their way to the region.

"This is not a single overnight operation. The military objectives that CENTCOM and the Joint Force have been tasked with will take some time to achieve, and in some cases will be difficult and gritty work," Caine said.

Iran denies seeking a nuclear weapon and says it was offering to curb its nuclear programme at talks when the United States launched an unprovoked assault.

Trump repeated his call to Iranians to rise up and

Hezbollah joins conflict, Israel hits back

Senior security official says Iran will fight on

US defence secretary declines to set out time frame

overthrow their leaders. With in Iran, where residents have jammed high-ways to flee the bombing, there was

uncertainty about the future and emotion ranging from euphoria to apprehension and rage.

Many have openly celebrated the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 86, who had ruled since 1989 and directed security forces that killed thousands of anti-government protesters at the start of this year.

WAR SPREADS TO LEBANON

In a sign that Iran's rulers are still reaching out to the outside world, a senior Iranian security official contacted Reuters to say Iran was defending itself against aggressors

and would continue to do so.

A new front in the war opened Monday when the Lebanese armed movement Hezbollah, one of Tehran's principal allies in the Middle East, launched missiles and drones towards Israel.

Israel responded with sweeping airstrikes, which it said targeted the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut and struck senior militants. The Lebanese state news agency NNA said an initial tally showed 31 people had been killed and 149 injured.

An Iranian Shahed missile that Cypriot officials said was most likely fired by Hezbollah from Lebanon also hit the British air force base at Akrotiri in Cyprus, the first strike to reach US allies in Europe. Israel declared Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem a "target for elimination". Officials said they were not for now considering a ground invasion of Lebanon, whose government on Monday banned military activities by Hezbollah.



Hundreds of Iranians cross border into Turkey, witness says



REUTERS

Kapikoy, Turkey, March 2: Hundreds of Iranians crossed the border into Turkey Monday afternoon as the US-Israeli war against Iran expanded, a Reuters witness said, with those arriving speaking of fear in Tehran and queues at petrol stations.

In the morning, Turkey had said day-trip passenger crossings at the three Turkish-Iranian border gates had been mutually suspended, with Turkey only allowing its own citizens and third-country nationals to enter. Travellers told Reuters Sunday, that some Iranian citizens were being stopped from crossing into Turkey.

However, by Monday afternoon Iranians started crossing into Turkey at the Kapikoy border gate, against the backdrop of snow-covered hills in Iran.

"The situation in Tehran is already difficult," said a man from the Iranian capital, who declined to give his name but said his wife and children were in Istanbul. "There are difficult things in Tehran, bombings. Everyone is scared. But for example, normal people, nothing happened to them."

He said he had bought household goods on the first day of the war in Tehran but that shops were very crowded.

China denies deal to sell supersonic missiles to Iran

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 2: China Monday denied reports of finalising a deal with Iran to sell CM-302 supersonic anti-ship missiles before the joint US-Israeli airstrikes on the country.

If delivered, the missiles would be among the most advanced military hardware to be transferred to Iran by China in recent years, according to media reports.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that the report of the deal is part of a disinformation campaign.

"The report is not true. As a responsible major country, China always abides by its international obligations. China opposes ill-intentioned association and the spread of disinformation, and hopes relevant sides will choose the course of action conducive to de-escalating the tense situation," she said.

The report is significant as the US has assembled a flotilla of naval groups, including aircraft carriers, close to Iranian waters to carry out the current military campaign against Iran.

Chinese official media Monday reported that the US planes crashed after being hit by Iranian missiles. The origin of the missiles is not known. Iran is one of the biggest oil suppliers to China and shares close defence and strategic ties with Beijing.

QATAR HALTS LNG OUTPUT, SAUDI REFINERY, ISRAELI OIL, GAS FIELDS SHUT



Qatar: Qatar halted its production of liquefied natural gas Monday as Israeli and US strikes against Iran and Tehran's retaliation prompted precautionary shutdowns of oil and gas facilities across the Middle East. Saudi Arabia shut its biggest domestic oil refinery after a drone strike, a source with knowledge of the matter said. Qatari LNG production is equivalent to about 20% of global supply. The Gulf country is the world's second largest LNG exporter after the US and plays a major role in balancing Asian and European LNG market needs. Asian clients represent 82% of state-owned QatarEnergy's customers. A wave of attacks in the Middle East stretched into a third day, also resulting in the suspension of most oil production in Iraqi Kurdistan and several major Israeli gas fields, throttling exports to Egypt. Oil prices surged as much as 13% intraday to above \$82 a barrel, the highest since January 2025, as the conflict ground shipping to a near halt in the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil supply flows. State oil giant Saudi Aramco's 550,000 barrels per day (bpd) Ras Tanura refinery, which was shut as a precautionary measure, is part of an energy complex on the kingdom's Gulf coast which also serves as a critical export terminal for Saudi crude oil. Meanwhile, gas giant QatarEnergy said it was also ceasing production of products associated with LNG. In Iraqi Kurdistan, which exported 200,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd) via pipeline to Turkey's Ceyhan port in February, companies including DNO, Gulf Keystone Petroleum, Dana Gas and HKN Energy have stopped output at their fields as a precaution, with no damage reported. Offshore Israel, the Israeli government instructed Chevron to temporarily shut down the giant Leviathan gas field where it is in the process of expanding capacity to around 21 billion cubic metres a year as part of a \$35 billion export deal to Egypt.

GLOBAL AIR TRAVEL CHAOS DEEPENS



London: Global air travel chaos intensified Monday as the US and Israel continued to bombard Iran, which struck back at targets across the Middle East, leaving airports closed and stranding travellers including those in faraway areas who were scheduled to transit through the region. Governments were scrambling to help their citizens get home after the conflict erupted Saturday, throwing travel plans into turmoil. Tourists, business travellers and religious pilgrims found themselves stuck unexpectedly in hotels, airports and on cruise ships, with no word on when many airports would reopen or when flights to and through the Middle East would resume. Governments told stranded citizens to shelter in place. Airports in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha, which are important hubs for travel between Europe, Africa and the West to Asia, remained closed after they were all directly hit by Iranian strikes. The flight turmoil stretched even farther, with Jordan announcing a partial closure of its airspace. More than 58,000 Indonesians were stranded in Saudi Arabia, where they were visiting Islam's holy sites of Mecca and Medina on an Umrah pilgrimage during Ramadan. About 30,000 German tourists are currently stranded on cruise ships, in hotels or at closed airports in the Middle East and cannot get back home because of the conflict. The Czech Republic is sending two planes to Egypt and Jordan to bring home Czech nationals, Prime Minister Andrej Babis said. One will pick up 79 Czechs in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm El Sheikh who want to return from Israel. They are travelling from Israel to Egypt by bus.

Khamenei's death brings Khomeini's grandson into focus

REUTERS

A grandson of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is likely to figure prominently in the deliberations of the clerics who will determine who replaces Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as Supreme Leader.

The killing of Khamenei, 86, in a US-Israeli attack has brought new urgency to the question of who will be the next Supreme Leader, a long-simmering issue over which there had been no clarity despite his age.

Hassan Khomeini is the most visible of the late Ayatollah's 15 grandchildren and is seen as a relative moderate within Iran's clerical establishment. He enjoys close ties to reformists including former presidents Mohammed Khatami and Hassan Rouhani, who both pursued policies of engagement with the West when in office.

Khomeini, 53, holds a symbolically important role in public life as custodian of his grandfather's mausoleum in southern Tehran. He has never



Hassan Khomeini has a track record of urging reform

Founder's grandson has never served in government

Khomeini is a mid-ranking cleric with ceremonial role

Some politicians see him as a rival to hardline candidates

served in government.

Some politicians inside Iran have seen him as a rival to hardliners who gained sway under Khamenei, notably his son, Mojtaba.

The case for installing a moderate successor to Khamenei

gained momentum among some Iranian politicians in the wake of unrest that swept Iran in January as a means of shoring up the Islamic Republic in the face of widening dissent.

KHOMEINI DEMANDED ACCOUNTABILITY FOR AMINI'S DEATH

While loyal to the Islamic Republic established after the Shah was toppled in 1979, Khomeini has a track record of urging reform and has occasionally voiced dissent against authorities.

In 2021, he criticised the Guardian Council - the branch of Iran's theocracy responsible

Iran conflict disrupts global shipping

REUTERS

London/Singapore, March 2: Insurance companies are cancelling war risk coverage for vessels in the Gulf as the widening Iran conflict disrupted shipping, leaving at least four tankers damaged, two seafarers killed and 150 ships stranded around the Strait of Hormuz.

Shipping through the strait between Iran and Oman, which carries around one-fifth of oil consumed globally as well as large quantities of gas, has ground to a near halt after vessels in the area



were hit as Iran retaliated to US and Israeli strikes.

The disruption and fears of prolonged closure have caused oil and European natural gas prices to jump, with Brent crude futures up more than 8% as the conflict triggered multiple oil

- Shipping disruption in Gulf sparks oil and gas price jump
- Mideast-China oil shipping rate at over six-year high
- Oil and gas market fears prolonged disruption

and gas shutdowns in the Middle East. At least 150 vessels including oil and liquefied natural gas tankers had dropped anchor in the Strait of Hormuz and surrounding waters, shipping data showed Sunday.

Iran has said it closed navigation through the critical waterway, prompting Asian

governments and refiners - key buyers - to assess oil stockpiles.

In the latest incident, the US-flagged products tanker Stena Imperative was damaged by "aerial impacts" while berthed in the Middle East Gulf, the vessel's owner Stena Bulk and its US manager Crowley said in a statement, and a shipyard worker was killed as a consequence of the impact.

As a result of the incidents, marine insurers are cancelling war risk coverage for vessels and oil shipping rates are set to surge further.

Last total lunar eclipse until 2029 is coming today

AGENCIES

Melbourne, March 2: On Tuesday March 3, the Moon will pass directly through Earth's shadow, creating a total lunar eclipse. Best of all, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand are in a prime position to watch the show.

This time, the eclipse even occurs at a reasonable hour no need to set an alarm and crawl out of bed at a ridiculous time.

A dark shadow will begin to sweep across the bright and round full Moon Tuesday evening. Once the Moon becomes fully immersed in shadow, it will take on a reddish glow.

Astronomers call this "totality". But with the ominous appearance of a red Moon hanging large in the sky, it's no wonder

that throughout history and across cultures it was seen as a portent of evil. In today's world, the name "blood moon" has readily captured public imagination.

Watching a lunar eclipse is a reminder that we are part of a fascinating universe. No special equipment is needed and it's usually not hard to find the Moon in the sky. Tomorrow's eclipse will be our last chance to see a blood moon until 2029, when it will ring in the New Year in the early hours of January 1.

WHEN CAN I SEE THE LUNAR ECLIPSE?

Lunar eclipses are leisurely events that take a few hours to unfold. In this case, it'll take 75 minutes for the Moon to enter Earth's shadow what's known as the partial eclipse phase.



This will be followed by an hour of totality when the Moon turns red, and then another 75 minutes as the Moon emerges out of the shadow and returns to full brightness.

Since Earth's shadow is so large compared to the Moon, everyone on our planet's night side experiences a lunar eclipse at exactly the same time. To

know when to see the totality, we only need to make adjustments for different time zones.

Across most of Western Australia the eclipse begins with the Moon below the horizon. As the Moon rises it will be partially in shadow, making it hard to spot, especially against the bright twilight sky (noting that the Moon is rising as the Sun

is setting). However, just give it some time and the eclipsed Moon will become easier to see as it climbs higher in the east and twilight gives way to night.

The eclipse will start later in the evening across the rest of Australia, with the Moon in the eastern sky. In New Zealand the eclipse will begin much later at 10:50pm local time. That will provide the best views, as the sky will be well and truly dark, and the Moon will be high in the north.

Against the bright Moon, Earth's shadow appears black at first. It's only when the Moon is fully immersed in shadow that the reddish "blood moon" glow becomes apparent. How red the Moon appears depends entirely on the condition of Earth's atmosphere at the time.



The export to Middle East is on hold now. As the conflict continues, the risk also increases and shipping companies may impose insurance surcharges, making imports costlier

RAJIB CHAKRABORTY | SOLUBLE FERTILIZER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (SFIA) PRESIDENT

RBI: 98.44% OF WITHDRAWN RS 2,000 BANKNOTES RETURNED

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Monday said 98.44 per cent of the ₹2,000 banknotes in circulation have been returned. The central bank announced the withdrawal of ₹2,000 denomination banknotes from circulation May 19, 2023



of the day **note**

Imposition of demurrage in such cases would place an undue financial burden on exporters who are already facing shipment delays, contractual uncertainties, and market-related challenges

A SAKTHIVEL | APPAREL EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL (APEC) CHAIRMAN

While elevated gold prices over the past year have further strengthened collateral buffers, structural safeguards such as prudent loan-to-value norms and timely auctions should support recoveries in case of correction in gold prices

PRASHANT MANE | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR AT CRISIL RATINGS

Now we are going with RBI. We are working together to credit bond indexes and the derivatives around it. This will also deepen the market. So the bond market has a big future

TUHN KANTA PANDEY | CHAIRMAN OF SEBI

MIDDLE EAST MAELSTROM

₹6.59L-cr wiped out

Shares nosedive as Middle East war dents investor confidence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Equity investors became poorer by Rs 6.59 lakh crore Monday as markets faced a massive drubbing amid rising tensions in West Asia that weighed heavily on sentiments.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 2,743.46 points or 3.37 per cent to 78,543.73 in early trade. It later ended at 80,238.85, down 1,048.34 points or 1.29 per cent.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 6,59,978.08 crore to Rs 4,56,90,693.19 crore (\$5 trillion).

The 50-share NSE Nifty tumbled 575.15 points or 2.28 per cent to 24,603.50 in intra-day trade. The benchmark later settled 312.95 points or 1.24 per cent down at 24,865.70.

"Indian equities witnessed a sharp decline as escalating tensions in West Asia triggered a pronounced risk-off response. Markets reacted to US and Israeli strikes on Iran and subsequent regional retaliation, prompting a flight to safe-haven assets," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

"Investor sentiment deteriorated sharply after escalating tensions in the Middle East

BSE SENSEX	TOP LOSERS	POINTS
-8.25	IndiGo	4521.40
-5.00	LT	4066.45
-3.33	Adani Ports	1470.20
-3.29	Maruti	14380.60
-2.89	Asian Paints	2307.60
-2.58	Reliance	1358.35
-2.45	Bajaj Finserv	1943.95
-1.92	M&M	3334.75
-1.87	Bajaj Finance	977.80
-1.40	HCL Tech	1370.75

NSE NIFTY	TOP LOSERS	POINTS
-6.09	IndiGo	4,533.00
-5.24	LT	4,054.00
-3.43	Adani Ports	1,468.90
-3.29	Maruti	14,368.00
-3.08	Asian Paints	2,303.00
-2.97	TMPV	371.30
-2.93	Bajaj Finserv	1,935.00
-2.90	Shriram Finance	1,048.10
-2.52	Eicher Motors	7,809.00
-2.47	Jio Financial	249.10

Rising crude oil prices and a weakening INR reflect concerns over potential disruptions to oil supply, which could increase inflationary pressures in India and impact fiscals and strain margins for energy and chemical-dependent sectors

VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEJOIT INVESTMENTS

in a coordinated US-Israeli airstrike on Tehran early Saturday, with the Iranian state media confirming the death on Sunday.

From the Sensex pack, InterGlobe Aviation, Larsen & Toubro, Adani Ports, Maruti, Asian Paints, and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards.

Bharat Electronics, Sun Pharma and ITC were the only gainers.

The BSE smallcap select index tanked 1.81 per cent, and the midcap select index dropped 1.67 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, services tumbled 3.81 per cent, consumer durables (2.30 per cent), auto (2.23 per cent), consumer discretionary (2.16 per cent), oil & gas (2.15 per cent), industrials (2.14 per cent) and energy (2.06 per cent).

A total of 3,561 stocks declined, while 821 advanced and 146 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Silver zooms to ₹3L/kg, gold nears ₹1.73L/10g

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: Precious metal prices skyrocketed up to 12 per cent in the national capital on Monday, with silver surging to Rs 3 lakh per kilogram, while gold nearing Rs 1.73 lakh per 10 grams as investors flocked to safe-haven assets following an escalation of hostilities in the Middle East.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal surged by Rs 32,000, or 11.94 per cent, to Rs 3,00,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Friday's closing level of Rs 2,68,000 per kg.

In the bullion market, price of gold of 99.9 per cent purity climbed Rs 8,100, or 4.92 per cent, to Rs 1,72,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had settled at Rs 1,64,700 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

"Gold and silver prices witnessed a sharp surge on Monday, as rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East triggered aggressive safe-haven buying.

"The escalation followed co-ordinated military strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran over the weekend, resulting in the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, rattling global financial markets and prompting a swift shift towards bullion," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

In the international market, spot gold gained \$116.38, or 2.21



per cent to \$5,394.28 per ounce, while silver was trading 1.43 per cent higher at \$95.19 per ounce.

"Spot gold rallied more than 2 per cent on Monday, climbing around the \$5,400 per ounce mark to reach its highest level in two months, as a sharp escalation in Middle East tensions fuelled strong safe-haven demand," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Meanwhile, Iran launched retaliatory strikes targeting US military and strategic assets across several neighbouring countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria.

Gandhi said the widening geographic scope of the conflict has raised concerns about potential disruptions to regional stability, energy infrastructure, and key global trade routes.

"The escalation has triggered a broad risk-off move across global financial markets, with equities facing pressure and investors rotating capital towards traditional defensive assets such as gold," he added.

GLOBAL MARKETS RATTLED

- US:** S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average futures fell about 1%
- Germany:** DAX index dropped 1.9% to 24,817.42
- France:** CAC 40 fell 1.7% to 8,435.80
- United Kingdom:** FTSE 100 slipped 1% to 10,808.53
- China:** Shanghai Composite rose 0.5% to 4,182.59
- Hong Kong:** Hang Seng Index declined 2.1% to 26,059.85
- Japan:** Nikkei 225 initially fell over 2%, closing 1.4% lower at 58,057.24
- Pakistan:** Pak registers largest-ever single-day fall, crashes by 16,089.17 pts

triggered a surge in crude oil prices and heightened global uncertainty. The spike in oil raised concerns about inflation, currency pressure and India's import bill, which weighed on equities. Volatility also in-

creased as participants reduced exposure amid fears of further geopolitical escalation," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed

TOUGH TIMES

Ministry reviews fuel supplies

As military conflict in the Middle East escalates, India's Oil Ministry Monday said it is continuously monitoring the evolving situation and will take all necessary steps to ensure availability and affordability of key petroleum products in the country. Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri reviewed the supply situation for crude oil, LPG, and other petroleum products with senior officials from the ministry and public sector companies. "We are continuously monitoring the evolving situation and all steps will be taken in order to ensure availability and affordability of major petroleum products in the country," the ministry said in a post on X.

Exporters seek support measures

With tensions escalating in the West Asian region amid the ongoing conflict, the government Monday held inter-ministerial deliberations with exporters and logistics players to assess the impact on India's trade, with industry representatives seeking higher RoDTEP rates and urging the ECGC not to raise insurance premiums. Exporters urged the government to restore high rates under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme as it was halved recently. They asked the commerce ministry to direct Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC) not to raise insurance premiums and include more goods under the insurance cover. The ministry said ensuring continuity of EXIM logistics and mitigating any disruptions to India's trade flows is a priority of the government.

IT majors halt travel to Middle East

Indian IT majors, including Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Wipro, have suspended travel to the Middle East and issued urgent safety advisories for their staff amid expanding conflict in West Asia. Industry body Nasscom has also stepped in, urging member companies to enable work-from-home (WFH) protocols for employees stationed in the affected areas. The move comes as airspace across several Gulf countries remains closed following a sharp escalation in geopolitical developments. In a statement, TCS, India's largest software services exporter, said it has suspended all incoming and outgoing travel to and from the Middle East region, including transit.

HORMUZ BLOCKADE TO HIT ASIA HARD

Roughly a third of global seaborne crude oil exports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, with most volumes destined for large Asian economies such as China, India, Japan and South Korea. Around 20% of global liquefied natural gas shipments also transit the strait



New Delhi, March 2: Asian countries are the most at risk from oil and gas supply disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, with Japan facing the highest risk, followed by South Korea and India, according to international research group Zero Carbon Analytics.

The Strait of Hormuz lies between Iran and Oman on the Arabian Peninsula and connects the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea. The shipping lanes in the strait are only two miles wide in each direction, but around 20 per cent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) flows through them.

The narrow chokepoint is the main route for oil export from major Middle-East producers, including Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran, and the only route for LNG from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to enter global markets.

"Around 20 per cent of the

world's oil and LNG passes through the two-mile-wide shipping lanes in the Strait of Hormuz, making it a major chokepoint in global energy supply. Iran may disrupt or block the shipping route. Four Asian countries - China, India, Japan and South Korea - account for 75 per cent of oil and 59 per cent of LNG flows through the strait. China and India are the largest single destinations for oil and LNG travelling through the strait," the research group said.

"Of the top countries that im-

- BRENT CRUDE, THE GLOBAL OIL BENCHMARK, JUMPED 7.29 PER CENT TO \$77.85 PER BARREL
- INDIA IMPORTS ROUGHLY HALF OF ITS OIL NEEDS THROUGH THE NARROW STRAIT
- WOOD MACKENZIE SAID OIL PRICES COULD EXCEED \$100 PER BARREL IF TANKER TRAFFIC THROUGH THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ IS NOT SWIFTLY RESTORED

port oil and gas via the Strait of Hormuz, Japan faces the most direct risk of disruption, due to its high share of oil and gas trade through the shipping route and its reliance on imported oil and gas. South Korea ranks second most at risk, India third and China fourth," it added.

While China and India are the largest single destinations for the oil and LNG travelling through the strait, Japan and South Korea are far more vulnerable to supply shocks.

Q3: Higher trade deficit pushes CAD to \$13.2bn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 2: India's current account deficit (CAD) rose to \$13.2 billion, or 1.3 per cent of GDP, in the December quarter from \$11.3 billion in the year-ago period, mainly due to a higher trade deficit caused by a decline in exports to the US, according to RBI data released Monday.

However, the current account deficit moderated to \$30.1 billion (1 per cent of GDP) in April-December 2025, from \$36.6 billion (1.3 per cent of GDP) in the same period a year ago.

"India's current account deficit increased to \$13.2 billion (1.3 per cent of GDP) in Q3:2025-26 from \$11.3 billion (1.1 per cent of GDP) in Q3:2024-25," the RBI's data on Developments in India's Balance of Payments said.

Merchandise trade deficit at \$93.6 billion in the quarter was higher than \$79.3 billion in the same period a year ago.

Net services receipts increased to \$57.5 billion during the period from \$51.2 billion a



year ago, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

Services exports have risen on an annual basis in major categories such as computer services and other business services.

It further said that net outgo on the primary income account, mainly reflecting payments of investment income, decreased to \$12.2 billion from \$16.4 billion in the third quarter of the previous financial year.

Subdued mfg pulls down IIP growth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 2: India's industrial production growth decelerated to a three-month low of 4.8 per cent in January, pulled down by subdued performance in the manufacturing and mining sectors, according to official data released Monday.

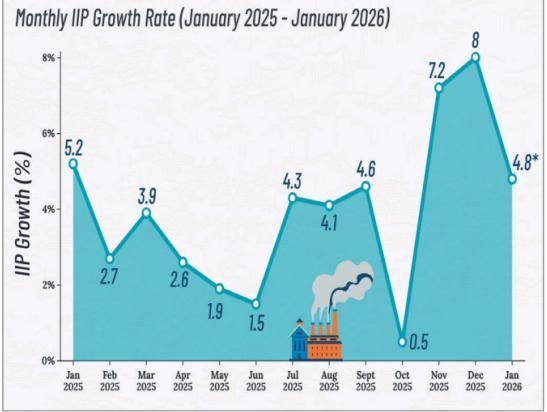
The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), expanded by 5.2 per cent in January 2025.

The previous low was witnessed in October 2025 at 0.5 per cent. The IIP growth was 7.2 per cent in November 2025, an official statement said.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) revised the industrial production growth for December 2025 to 8 per cent from the provisional estimate of 7.8 per cent released in January 2026.

The NSO data further showed that the manufacturing sector's output growth decelerated to 4.8 per cent in January 2025, compared to 5.8 per cent in the year-ago month.

Industrial output growth slows to 3-month low of 4.8% in January



Mining production growth also slowed marginally to 4.3 per cent compared to a growth of 4.4 per cent recorded a year ago.

Power generation grew by 5.1 per cent in January 2025,

compared to 2.4 per cent expansion in the year-ago period. During the April-January period of FY26, the country's industrial production growth also slowed slightly to 4 per cent, compared to 4.2 per cent

in the same period a year ago.

The corresponding growth rates of IIP as per use-based classification in January 2026 over January 2025 are 3.1 per cent in primary goods, 4.3 per cent in capital goods, 6.0 per cent in intermediate goods, 13.7 per cent in infrastructure/ construction goods, 6.3 per cent in consumer durables and (-) 2.7 per cent in consumer non-durables.

Based on use-based classification, top three positive contributors to the growth of IIP for the month of January 2026 are infrastructure/ construction goods, intermediate goods and primary goods.

Within the manufacturing sector, 14 out of 23 industry groups have recorded a positive growth in January 2026 over January 2025.

The top three positive contributors for January 2026 are: manufacture of basic metals (13.2 per cent), manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (10.9 per cent) and manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products (9.9 per cent).

Bol, NALCO sign employee salary pact



Bhubaneswar: Bank of India (BoI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO) for opening of the salary accounts of their employees. The ceremony was graced by AK Behuria (Director Finance), PK Tripathy (CGM), SK Sahoo (CGM), Alok Tripathy (DGM), A Padhi (DGM), Gagan Pradhan (DGM) from NALCO. On this occasion, Vikash Krishna (GM, FGMO Bhubaneswar), BK Malik (ZM, Bhubaneswar), AK Jena (AGM-Resource FGMO Bhubaneswar), SK Das (DZM Bhubaneswar), Resource and Marketing team from ZO, Bhubaneswar were present from Bank of India. A presentation of the bank salary account scheme was made to the employees present on the occasion. The special customized government salary account scheme will provide free accidental death insurance and free term insurance benefits to the NALCO employees. Apart from this salary account package will provide a bundle of benefits to the NALCO employees.

TRADING TOYS FOR TROPHIES

The 11-year-old becomes the first Indian to secure a podium finish in the European leg of the COTFA karting series

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Valencia, Mar 2: Racing prodigy Atiqa Mir has created history by becoming the first Indian to secure a podium finish in the highly-competitive European leg of the COTFA karting series.

The 11-year-old finished third in the final of the opening round in the Champions of the Future

Whizz-kid Atiqa conquers European tracks

Academy (COTFA) series. The result over the weekend was also Atiqa's biggest success since moving from the mini to the OKNJ (junior) category.

Atiqa is the first Indian to be supported by the F1 Academy, a testament to her special talent. Throughout the weekend, Atiqa was in top form and also recorded the fastest lap in the final.

She was on course to get pole position but encountered a slow driver in the last corner on her flying lap, pushing her down to ninth on the grid. Determined to get back to the front, Atiqa stormed to P3 in Race 1 and P2 in Race 2, setting her up for a third place start in

the Final Race.

The 15-lap race in the final was a true test of strength and stamina on the super fast Lucas Guerrero Circuit. Atiqa held second place at the start and had a long battle with the leading pack.

On the final lap, Atiqa made an audacious move on the second-placed driver around the outside of the infamous chicane at the last corner. She held off the challenge to secure a second place on track, a record finish for an Indian in the Europe leg of the series.

A post-race penalty dropped her to the third spot on the podium.



I'm happy to have the India flag at the podium and a proud moment for me and the country

ATIQA MIR

On day two of the weekend, Atiqa was again held back by a slow driver on her flying lap during qualifying. Her theoretical time was good enough for pole position but she had to settle for seventh on the grid.

In Race 1, Atiqa was pushed off the circuit before recovering to finish 9th. In Race 2, she zoomed to a special victory, only to be denied by a post race penalty for contact with

another driver.

Despite her fair share of bad luck, Atiqa was able to produce head-turning performances through the weekend.

"That was a great race. Really tough pace at the front and I could manage to fight till the last corner. I took a risk in the last corner going for the move as I didn't want to settle for a third place finish.

"Like the great Ayrtton Senna said if you no longer go for a gap that exists you are no longer a racing driver. It was risky but it paid off. I'm happy to have the India flag at the podium and a proud moment for me and the country," said Atiqa.

SHORT TAKES

PCB mulls penalties for T20WC debacle

Karachi: Livid with the Pakistan team's early elimination from the T20 World Cup, the country's cricket board has decided to impose financial penalties on the players for their below-par show, with some sources saying that the amount could be as high as PKR 5 million (approximately \$18000) per member. The action follows a string of poor results in major tournaments. A reliable source said that appropriate action is being considered by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in the wake of the team's exit from the Super Eight stage of the event co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka. "No final decision has been taken on this as yet. But yes it is under consideration to financially penalise the players," he confirmed to PTI without revealing the details. He said it is being debated whether it would be the right step to hit the players financially. However, other sources in the PCB claimed that the board will impose a fine of PKR 5 million each on the players who returned home on Sunday night following their dismal outing. Pakistan failed to qualify for the semifinals and lost to big teams like arch-foes India and England while their Super Eight game against New Zealand was washed out. They beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eight game but couldn't qualify for the semi-finals. The performance of the players, according to the source, has not only upset the PCB but also influential figures in the government. "The feeling is enough is enough and these players despite so much backing let down the nation in big events," the source added. The Pakistan players also returned home quietly in small groups from Sri Lanka with captain, Salman Ali Agha and star batter Babar Azam along with some other players landing in Lahore last night. Players, who have central contracts, get monthly retainers plus match fees and win bonuses and shares in the Board's team sponsorship deals.

Gukesh's blunder hands Abdusattorov victory

Prague (Czech Republic): The fortunes of World Champion D Gukesh did not change for the fifth day running as the Indian blundered from a position of strength to lose to nemesis Nodirbek Abdusattorov at Prague International Chess Festival here. Just a month back Gukesh had lost to Abdusattorov through a blunder from a decent position during the Tata Steel Masters but the fifth round here was even more heart-breaking as the Indian did everything right for the major part of the middle game and seemed like cruising through to an easy victory. Employing a new strategy as black, Gukesh tormented the white's king early in the opening and created enough weaknesses for the computer to volunteer that he was closing in on his first victory in Masters section of the tournament. However, the ticking of the clock had its final say as the Indian faltered in the closing stages of the first time-control. Abdusattorov almost returned the favour but this was simply not Gukesh's day as another blunder saw white advancing his pawn to glory. Gukesh, Aravindh and Niemann occupy the last three spots on just 1.5 points. In the challengers' section World Women's cup winner Divya Deshmukh scored her first victory in the tournament at the expense of fellow Indian Surya Shekhar Ganguly. To move to a fifty percent score. Finek Vanclav of Czech Republic continues to lead the tables here with four points.

T20 WORLD CUP SEMIFINALS

Old rivals battle again

This is the third consecutive edition in which the two heavyweights India, England will meet in the last four



In the last two editions, the winner of the India-England semi-final has gone on to become world champion, a statistical trend that adds further weight to Thursday's contest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Birmingham, March 2: Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu is set to miss the All England Championships starting here Tuesday after being stranded in Dubai amid the US bombing of Iran and the resultant air space closure in the Gulf region.

Travel disruptions have marred the build-up to the Super 1000 event, with Sindhu stuck in Dubai since Saturday after flights were suspended amid following US and Israeli strikes on Iran and the subsequent retaliation by Tehran.

Sindhu and her team, including Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama, had a narrow escape after an explosion near their place of stay. They were subsequently moved to a secure location as tensions flared across the Gulf.

The Indian ace was scheduled to face Thailand's Supanida Katethong in the opening round but with Dubai airspace and airport continuing to be closed, she will be forced to pull out of the tournament. BWF is also keeping a close watch, maintaining "real-time oversight of the situation and stand ready to assist delegations experiencing delays or route changes."

"This includes reviewing and preparing potential contingencies within the competition schedule should any players experience delayed arrival," it said. While Sindhu's participation remains uncertain, some of her fellow shuttlers have managed to reach Birmingham via alternate routes of Singapore and Africa. However, it remains to be seen how the long

MIDDLE EAST TURMOIL

Stranded Sindhu set to miss All England C'ships



More affected fixtures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

■ The "Finalissima" match between Spain and Argentina in Doha is in doubt after the Qatar Football Association suspended soccer tournaments.

■ The Bahrain FA postponed all its matches until further notice, while the Asian Football Confederation Sunday announced it was delaying Champions League Elite fixtures in the region.

■ The Asian Champions League Two, which is at the quarter-final stage, has also been affected, along with games in the Challenge League - Asia's third-tier continental club competition.

■ Beyond soccer, Euroleague Basketball announced the cancellation of the NextGen EuroLeague qualifying tournament in Abu Dhabi, citing safety and security concerns for participants.

■ The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) also called off four games in the region Monday ahead of the second window of the 2027 World Cup Asian Qualifiers.

■ The postponed games include Iraq v Jordan, Iran v Syria and Lebanon v India in Beirut, and Qatar v Saudi Arabia in Doha.

and taxing travel will impact their preparations.

India's top men's singles contender Lakshya Sen and rising youngster Ayush Shetty, have reached without any travel issues. While Lakshya has drawn world No. 1 Shi Yu Qi of China, Ayush is up against Indonesia's Alwi Farhan in the opening round.

INDIA VS ENGLAND HEAD-TO-HEAD

T20 WC	
Played	: 5
India won	: 3
England won	: 2
T20 WC SEMIS	
Played	: 2
India won	: 1
England won	: 1

lost a T20I at the venue since

December 2017.

Their two losses in Mumbai came against the West Indies in 2016 and vs England in 2012. India and England have met twice in the shortest format at the Wankhede, with each side winning one game.

India and England have met five times in the T20 World Cup. The head-to-head ledger marginally favours India, who have won three of those encounters, while England have claimed two victories. The numbers reflect a closely fought rivalry, with little separating the sides on the global stage.

The rivalry's most iconic

SA, NZ LOCK HORNS IN SEMIS FOR FIRST TIME

South Africa and New Zealand head into the semi-finals of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 following impressive yet contrasting campaigns and gear up to face each other Wednesday at Eden Gardens in Kolkata. South Africa are heading into the semifinals on the back of a flawless campaign, having remained unbeaten through the group stage and Super Eights. The Proteas topped their Super Eight group with commanding performances that underlined both their batting depth and bowling discipline. Having finished as runners-up in the previous edition, the Proteas appear determined to go one step further this time. New Zealand, meanwhile, began strongly with convincing wins over the United Arab Emirates, Afghanistan and Canada. A key Super Eight triumph over Sri Lanka strengthened their semi-final push, although a narrow defeat to England in their final Super Eights match meant qualification depended on net run rate. Despite that setback, the BlackCaps advanced and now bring a well-balanced unit into a high-stakes clash for a place in the final. This will be the first time South Africa and New Zealand meet in a T20 World Cup semi-final. They have competed four times in the group stage of the tournament, but never in the knockout rounds, making this upcoming match a historic first. The two heavyweights first met in a T20 World Cup match in 2007, with the Proteas emerging victorious. They faced each other three more times in subsequent tournaments, in 2009, 2014 and the current edition, with South Africa winning on all occasions.



SA vs NZ in T20 World Cups

Played	: 4
South Africa won	: 4
New Zealand won	: 0

PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal retain five-point lead

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

London, March 2: William Saliba and Jurrien Timber both scored from corner kicks as Arsenal beat Chelsea 2-1 at the Emirates Stadium to retain its five-point lead at the top of the Premier League.

Saliba opened the scoring in the 21st minute, flicking the ball home with the help of a deflection, and Timber restored Arsenal's lead in the 66th with a header from another corner.

Chelsea had equalised on the stroke of halftime when Piero Hincapie turned the ball into his own net to make it 1-1. Chelsea winger Pedro Neto was sent off in the 70th minute after picking up two yellow cards in three minutes, reports Xinhua

Benjamin Sessa continued his impressive form as Manchester United came from behind to beat Crystal Palace 2-1 at home and climb to third in the table.

Manchester United fell behind early when Maxence



Lacroix scored for Palace, but Bruno Fernandes equalized from the penalty spot after Lacroix was sent off for conceding the spot-kick and denying a clear goal-scoring opportunity.

Sesko then netted the winner in the 65th minute with a powerful header from a Fernandes cross.

Harry Wilson and Alex Iwobi scored first-half goals as Fulham beat Tottenham Hotspur 2-1 at home, with Richarlison

replying for Tottenham with its only shot on target.

"It was a big win," Mikel Arteta said. "I was very happy for big parts of the game and the performance that we put in against a top side, coming after a London derby and the expectations and the will that we have to continue to win.

"The timing of the goal that we conceded was a big blow but emotionally we reacted, it was exactly what we needed to stay focused and go," he added.

AIFF invites bids for commercial rights

The All India Football Federation has offered two packages for bidding pertaining to men's and women's club competitions, including ISL, for 15 years minimum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Mar 2: The All India Football Federation (AIFF) Monday invited bids for the commercial rights of both men's and women's club competitions for a period of 15 years minimum starting with the 2026-2027 season.

The AIFF has offered two packages for bidding pertaining to men's and women's club competitions.

Package A consists of Indian Super League (or seniormost men's league) and Federation Cup (or seniormost cup competition). Package B comprises Indian Women's League (IWL)



and IWL 2, and at the bidder's option, Women's Federation Cup - which is likely to be introduced later on.

The bids for the commercial rights of the recently rechristened Indian Football League (earlier I-League) were not included in the latest Request for Proposal (RFP).

"We want the commercial rights for a minimum duration of 15 years. If the bidder agrees it can be done for 20 years also, it is an option," a top AIFF official told PTI.

However, unlike in the past, the RFP will not be made pub-

licly available. Instead, interested parties will have to purchase the document for Rs 2.5 lakh from the AIFF.

A pre-bid conference has been scheduled for March 11, while the last date of bid submission is March 19. The bids will be opened March 20.

The latest tender process came against the backdrop of prolonged uncertainty surrounding the start of the on-going ISL season which began February 14 in a truncated format.

The start of 2025-2026 ISL was delayed by around five months

after crisis hit the country's football after the national federation and its previous commercial partner FSDL failed to renew the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) beyond December 8 last year.

A tender was floated by the AIFF for the selection of a new commercial partner under the supervision of a Supreme Court-appointed committee, but it found no takers.

But, after the intervention of the sports minister and following some tough negotiations, all the 14 clubs confirmed participation in the truncated ISL with 91 matches set to be played on home and away basis.

On January 18, the AIFF issued the Request for Proposal (RFP) document for broadcast rights relating to the truncated ISL.

The AIFF, February 2, awarded the exclusive global broadcast rights of the truncated ISL 2025-26 to FanCode for Rs 8.62 crore.

Kaleidoscope Production and Services (KPS Studios) was awarded the production rights of the league - global as well as domestic.