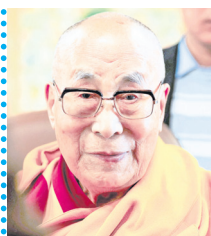




## Deepika's priority

Deepika Padukone reflects on new motherhood, sharing joyful moments and revealing her biggest obsession

LEISURE | P2



## Grammy for Dalai Lama

China deplores the Grammy given to the Dalai Lama, opposing the recognition's possible use as a tool for anti-China 'political manipulation'

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Bullions crash

Silver prices extend its steep fall for the third straight day, tumbling ₹52,000 to ₹2.60L/kg, while gold falls to ₹1.52L/10g

BUSINESS | P11



## Anahat makes history

Seventh seed Anahat Singh defeats top seed and World No 10 in the Squash on Fire Open final, clinches maiden PSA Bronze-level title

SPORTS | P12

## Prez begins 6-day tour

**BHUBANESWAR:** President Droupadi Murmu arrived here Monday a six-day visit to Odisha during which she will attend religious and academic programmes across five districts, officials said. President Murmu was received at the Biju Patnaik International Airport here by Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and others. She was accorded a ceremonial welcome as different cultural troupes performed at the airport and on the way to Lok Bhavan. According to her itinerary, she will attend programmes across Khurda, Jajpur, Balasore, Puri and Mayurbhanj districts over the next few days.

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



For the past 75 years, all budgets were life changing. They just didn't change mine

# US, India agree on trade deal: Trump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** India and the US agreed on a trade deal under which Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from current 25 per cent, US President Donald Trump said Monday after a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Prime Minister said he was delighted that “made in India products will now have a reduced tariff of 18 per cent”.

“Big thanks to President Trump on behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India for this wonderful announcement,” Modi said on X without mentioning the trade deal.

Trump claimed India will move forward to reduce its “tariffs and non tariff barriers” against the US to zero.

“Out of friendship and respect for Prime Minister Modi and, as per his request, effective immediately, we agreed to a trade deal between the United



States and India, whereby the United States will charge a reduced reciprocal tariff, lowering it from 25 per cent to 18 per cent,” the US President said on social media.

India will “likewise move forward to reduce their tariffs and non tariff barriers against the United States, to zero”. Trump said Modi also committed to “buy American” at a much higher level, in addition to over USD 500 billion dollars of US energy, technology, agricultural, coal, and many other products.

“Our amazing relationship with India will be even stronger going forward. Prime Minister Modi and I are two people that

get things done something that cannot be said for most,” he said.

In his remarks, Modi said, “When two large economies and the world’s largest democracies work together, it benefits our people and unlocks immense opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation.”

“President Trump’s leadership is vital for global peace, stability, and prosperity. India fully supports his efforts for peace,” he said. “I look forward to working closely with him to take our partnership to unprecedented heights,” he added.

Trump said Modi and he also discussed ending the war between Russia and Ukraine.

“He agreed to stop buying Russian Oil, and to buy much more from the United States and, potentially, Venezuela,” the US President said.

“This will help END THE WAR in Ukraine, which is taking place right now, with thousands of people dying each and every week,” Trump said.

## UPROAR IN LS Rajnath vs Rahul over Naravane's 'memoir'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** A row erupted in the Lok Sabha Monday when Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi sought to quote from an unpublished “memoir” of former Army chief MM Naravane on the 2020 India-China conflict, but faced strong opposition from Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and other BJP members who accused the Congress leader of misleading the House.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla disallowed Gandhi from raising the issue, but he did not relent and several opposition leaders also rallied behind him. The House was adjourned twice and later for the day amid uproar as heated exchanges took place between the treasury and opposition benches.

Earlier, as Gandhi rose to speak on the Motion of Thanks to the President’s address, he said he would first like to respond to the charges made by the previous speaker, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya, against the Congress on nationalism and began quoting from what he said was the “memoir” of Gen. Naravane (retd) talking about the India-China conflict of 2020.

MORE P9

## CM launches ₹600-cr projects in Rayagada



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Rayagada, Feb 2:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday launched development projects worth ₹600 crore in Rayagada and announced that 80 per cent of jobs in industries being set up in the district would be reserved for local youth.

While attending the ‘Subhadra Shakti Mela’ at Rayagada, Majhi inaugurated 22 projects worth ₹238 crore and laid the foundation stones for 87 others valued at over ₹366 crore.

The projects include infrastructure development works such as roads, bridges, health-care, schools and women empowerment initiatives.

The CM also laid the foundation stone for the improvement and beautification of Maa Ma-

jighariani Temple with an investment of ₹37 crore.

“As per demands of district MLAs and local leaders, work on indoor stadiums will start soon in all blocks of the district,” he said. Education, health, transportation system will be strengthened and the proposal for setting up a medical college in Rayagada is under consideration of the government, he said.

Stating that Rayagada has become an example of women empowerment, the CM said 1.52 lakh women are organised through 12,783 self-help groups (SHGs) in the district and are creating a bright future for themselves.

Addressing the gathering mostly comprising women, the CM said in the financial year 2025-26, loans worth about ₹200 crore have been provided to 4,217 SHGs in the district.

46001/3/2526



ଶ୍ରୀ ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋଦୀ  
ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ



## ଶୁଭାରମ୍ଭ

# ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ କନ୍ୟା ବିବାହ ଯୋଜନା

ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ  
ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀଙ୍କ  
କରକମଳରେ



ଶ୍ରୀ ମୋହନ ଚରଣ ମାଝୀ  
ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ସାମାଜିକ ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଓ ଲିଙ୍ଗଗତ ସମାନତା ପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାରଙ୍କର ଏକ ଅଗ୍ରଗାମୀ ପଦକ୍ଷେପ

ଗରିମାମୟ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ପ୍ରଭାତୀ ପରିଡ଼ା

ଉପ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ଶ୍ରୀ ବିଭୂତି ଭୂଷଣ ଜେନା

ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ଓ ପରିବହନ,  
ଇସ୍ପାତ ଓ ଖଣି, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ଶ୍ରୀ ଗୋକୁଳାନନ୍ଦ ମଲ୍ଲିକ

ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ମହ୍ୟ ଓ ପ୍ରାଣିସମ୍ପଦ ବିକାଶ,  
ସୃଷ୍ଟି, ଷ୍ଟ୍ରକ୍ଚର ଓ ମଧ୍ୟମ ଉଦ୍ୟୋଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ଡଃ ପ୍ରଦୀପ କୁମାର ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ

ସାଂସଦ, ବ୍ରହ୍ମପୁର

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଅନିତା ଶୁଭଦର୍ଶିନୀ

ସାଂସଦ, ଆସିକା

ଶ୍ରୀ ସୁକାନ୍ତ କୁମାର ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ

ସାଂସଦ, କନ୍ଧମାଳ

ଏବଂ ବିଧାୟକ ବୃନ୍ଦ, ଗଞ୍ଜାମ

୦୩ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୨୦୨୬ | ମା' ତାରା ତାରିଣୀ ମନ୍ଦିର, ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମପୁର, ଗଞ୍ଜାମ

ଯୋଜନାର ଲାଭ

ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବିବାହ ପାଇଁ  
୬୦ ହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା

ବିବାହର ସମସ୍ତ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ  
ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା କ୍ଷୟ

ସହଜ ଏବଂ ସରଳୀକୃତ  
ବିବାହ ପଞ୍ଜୀକରଣ

ଲାଭାର୍ଥୀଙ୍କ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଯୋଗ୍ୟତା

ଉଭୟ କନ୍ୟା ଏବଂ ବର  
ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସ୍ଥାୟୀ ବାସିନ୍ଦା ହୋଇଥିବେ

ବୟସ: କନ୍ୟା: ୧୮-୩୫ ବର୍ଷ  
ବର: ୨୧-୩୫ ବର୍ଷ

ପରିବାରର କୌଣସି ସଦସ୍ୟଙ୍କୁ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ରାଜ୍ୟ କିମ୍ବା  
କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସରକାରଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ବିବାହ ସହାୟତା ମିଳିନଥିବ

ଯୋଜନାର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ବିଶେଷତା

ବିଧବା ବିବାହକୁ ପ୍ରୋତ୍ସାହନ

ସହାୟତା ନମ୍ବର

ପୂର୍ବ  
ହେଲ୍ପଲାଇନ୍ ୧୧୨

ମନ୍ଦିର  
ହେଲ୍ପଲାଇନ୍ ୧୮୧

ତାରକ  
ହେଲ୍ପଲାଇନ୍ ୧୦୯୮

ପୂର୍ବ  
ହେଲ୍ପଲାଇନ୍ ୧୪୭୭୮

## ମହିଳା ଓ ଶିଶୁ ବିକାଶ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର

wcd.odisha.gov.in wcdodisha/







**MAHANADI COALFIELDS LIMITED**  
Govt. of India Undertaking & Subsidiary of Coal India Ltd.

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 MINISTRY OF COAL  
 GOVT. OF INDIA

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— 2026 —



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 SAMBALPUR, ODISHA  
 5:00AM ONWARDS

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₹5 LAKH	₹4 LAKH	₹3 LAKH	₹1.5 LAKH	₹1 LAKH

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A true test of endurance, spirit, and achievement.



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**FUN RUN 1.5 KM**

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MCL

MAHANADI COALFIELDS LIMITED

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# Admin reaches out to Kotia border villagers

NARENDRA RAUT, OP

**Koraput, Feb 2:** With a view to addressing long-pending grievances and ensuring that eligible beneficiaries are effectively covered under various Odisha government schemes, especially in the aftermath of Jana Sena Party leaders claiming stake over 14 hamlets in Kotia gram pachayat, bordering Andhra Pradesh, Pottangi block administration Monday carried out an extensive public outreach and awareness campaign across 21 villages in the gram panchayat.

The public outreach programme was conducted in villages such as Tadiwalsa, Arjuwalsa and surrounding habitations, which lie close to the sensitive border zone. Senior officials of the block administration actively participated in the campaign, including block development officer Ramakrishna Naik, supply officer Ashok Kumar Sahu, block social security officer Sudhir Kumar Sahu, and assistant project officer Soumyadra Kumar Naik.

During the campaign, officials interacted closely with villagers and provided detailed information on key welfare schemes. Special emphasis was laid on ration card inclusion for residents of the Kotia border area, ensuring food security for every eligible household. Awareness sessions were also conducted on various pension schemes, Subhadra Yojana, and other social security benefits



## BUILDING TRUST

Issues related to voter list amendment were discussed in details with officials guiding residents on the process to correct or include their names to ensure their democratic rights are protected

Rural housing scheme was another major focus, as officials assessed ground-level requirements and identified eligible beneficiaries for housing support

Adopting a door-to-door approach, the administration reached individual households to explain government schemes, verify documents, and select deserving beneficiaries on the spot

aimed at supporting women, elderly and economically weaker sections.

Issues related to voter list amendment were discussed in details with officials guiding residents on the process to correct or include their

names to ensure their democratic rights are protected. The rural housing scheme was another major focus, as officials assessed ground-level requirements and identified eligible beneficiaries for housing support.

Adopting a door-to-door approach, the administration reached individual households to explain government schemes, verify documents, and select deserving beneficiaries on the spot. This direct engagement helped build trust among residents and ensured transparency in the implementation process.

The public relations campaign was widely appreciated by villagers, who expressed satisfaction over the administration's proactive efforts. The initiative reaffirmed the government's commitment to inclusive development, welfare outreach, and sustained administrative presence in the strategically important Kotia border region.

# state

## Curb illegal tree felling: NGT to Bolangir admin

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bolangir, Feb 2:** Hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) filed over large-scale tree felling in the name of several development projects in Bolangir district, the National Green Tribunal's (NGT) Eastern Zone bench in Kolkata has directed the district administration, Forest and Environment department and State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) to take proactive steps to prevent the indiscriminate tree cutting in the district.

The apex green body, which passed the order January 30, 2026, was hearing the PIL (113/2025/EZ) filed by Bolangir-based RTI activist and social worker Hemant Kumar Panda. The bench, comprising Judicial Member Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi and environmen-



tal expert Ishwar Singh, directed the Bolangir Collector, the divisional forest officer and the secretary of State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) to act with due vigilance and take preventive measures to stop illegal tree cutting.

The tribunal said that if specific complaints are raised again, the authorities concerned must take legal action.

Panda informed the NGT that official records obtained from de-

**The PIL filed in the green tribunal said that about 4.45 lakh trees were cut down across the district over the past five years to pave way for various projects**

partmental offices shows about 4.45 lakh trees were cut down across the district over the past five years to pave way for various projects. Of these, more than 15,000 trees were felled solely for road widening projects.

He said the felled trees included old and environmentally vital as well as shade-giving species such as neem, peepal, banyan, mango, jamun and

ashoka. Panda argued that had road-widening projects been planned and executed with due legal scrutiny and environmental safeguards, such large-scale loss of trees could have been avoided.

According to the petition, the extensive felling has led to rising temperatures, soil erosion, lack of roadside shade, a decline in birds and wildlife, loss of biodiversity and adverse impacts on rural life in the district. Panda stressed that development must maintain a balance with environmental protection.

In a press statement issued after the ruling, Panda said he would again seek legal remedy if indiscriminate and unscientific tree felling continues across the district in the name of road widening.

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## 210 missing women, kids rescued in 10-day drive by Angul police

**Angul:** Angul police rescued 210 missing persons, including 192 women and 18 children, during a 10-day special drive titled Operation Anveshan-2, officials said. The operation was conducted from January 21 to 30 under the direction of Angul SP Rahul Jain to strengthen women and child safety. Multiple police teams were deployed across the district and outside Odisha, based on missing-person complaints lodged over the past several months. Police used technical surveillance, mobile tracking, CCTV footage analysis and coordination with railway police, and other district police units. All rescued persons were safely reunited with their families after completing legal formalities.

### S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

For & on behalf of President of India, Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRS)/TATA, S.E. Railway invites E-Tender for the under mentioned work: **Open E-Tender Notice No. RS-TATA-14-2025-26**; Description of Work : Loco body washing, inside cleaning, Loco body filter cleaning, grating/cover opening, Loco blowing, grating/cover fitment of electric locomotives of Electric Loco Shed, Tatanagar for two years. **Tender value :** ₹1,08,29,910.00; **E.M.D. :** ₹ 2,04,200.00; **Cost of Tender Form :** ₹ 5,000.00; **Date and time of closing of tender:** 15:00 hrs. of 23.02.2026; **Date of opening of tender:** 23.02.2026 at TRS/Tatanagar. Manual offers are not allowed against the E-Tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Tenderer can be viewed at website: <http://www.ireps.gov.in>; Complete detail particulars of the E-Tender are available on the website. If the date of opening happens to be a BANDHI or HOLIDAY, the tender will be opened at same time on the next working day. (PR-1131)

## EAST COAST RAILWAY

Notification No. : SBP/Pers/Staff/Re-engagement/Operating, Dated : 29.01.2026

### INDICATIVE NOTICE

**Re-engagement of Retired Operating staff (SS, SM, CHC & SCR) in Sambalpur Division, East Coast Railway**

The detailed Notification No.: SBP/Pers/Staff/Re-engagement/Operating, Dated : 29.01.2026 is available in East Coast Railway website on the following Path : [www.ecor.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.ecor.indianrailways.gov.in) → About us → Division → Sambalpur Division → Recruitment.

PR-1078/Q/25-26 Assistant Personnel Officer/Sambalpur



No.32001/14/2526

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,**  
**BHANJANAGAR IRRIGATION DIVISION, BHANJANAGAR**  
Phone No.06821-291004, e-mail ID : [bnjirrigation2010@gmail.com](mailto:bnjirrigation2010@gmail.com)  
**e-Procurement Notice No. e-BNID-03/2025-26**

1. Name of work	: Canal Lining works
2. Total No of works	: 10 (Ten) only
3. Estimated cost	: Rs.45.63 Lakhs to 49.65 Lakhs
4. Period of completion	: 03 (three) calendar months
5. Date & time of availability of Bid Document in the portal	: 10.00 hours of 05.02.2026 to 5.00 hours of 16.02.2026
6. Last date/Time for receipt of Bids in the Portal	: 16.02.2026 upto 5.00 hours
7. Date and place of opening of Bid	: 17.02.2026 at 11.00 Hours in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Bhanjanagar Irrigation Division, Bhanjanagar
8. Name and address of the O.I.T (Officer Inviting Tender)	: Superintending Engineer Bhanjanagar Irrigation Division Bhanjanagar

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal "<https://tendersodisha.gov.in>".

Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
Bhanjanagar Irrigation Division  
Bhanjanagar

OIPR-32001/32010/1/25-26/0014

## OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, JALESWAR, BALASORE

No. 249 Date - 30.01.2026

### “e” Procurement Notice

**Bid Identification No. PSJLS\_03/2025-26**

**No.190018/2526 :** Bid Documents consisting of Work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD, time of completion, class of contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Government website i.e. [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

1. Name of the Work	: Building Works
2. No. of works	: 04 Nos.
3. Estimated Cost	: 13,72,269.00 to 15,35,295.00
4. Period of Completion	: 120 days
5. Bid Submission Start Date	: 04.02.2026 at 10:00 A.M.
6. Bid Submission Closing Date	: 16.02.2026 upto 11:00 A.M.
7. Bid Opening Date	: 16.02.2026 at 1:00 P.M.
8. Name of Officer inviting Bid	: Block Development Officer, Jaleswar

Further details can be seen from the procurement portal i.e. [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in)

Sd/- Block Development Officer  
Jaleswar

OIPR-19001/19145/1/25-26/0008

## PITABAS MURDER

# 15 accused produced before Sessions Court

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 2:** Fifteen accused, including former legislator Bikram Kumar Panda Monday appeared before the court of District and Sessions Judge Ashanta Kumar Das in connection with the murder of Berhampur-based lawyer and BJP leader Pitabas Panda.

The case was earlier committed from Berhampur Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate (SDJM) court and subsequently transferred to the district court that scheduled the hearing for Monday. Accordingly, 14 accused, including Bikram, who are lodged in Berhampur Circle Jail, were produced before the court. Former Berhampur mayor Shibashankar Das, also known as Pintu, who is lodged in Phulbani jail, was also brought to court under tight security.

Another accused in the case, BJD leader Madan Dalai, could not appear as he was reportedly un-



well. “The district judge has fixed February 6 as the next date for the appearance of all accused,” defence counsel Deepak Pattnaik said.

Pitabas was shot dead at close range on the night of October 6, 2025 near Baikunthanagar Chhak in Berhampur.

Police had arrested a total of 16 persons – Bikram, Pintu, BJD leader Dalai, BJD corporator Malay Bisoyi, Shunyachandra Dash, Sunil Hota, Uma Bisoyi, Kurupati Bhuyan, Chintu Pradhan, Bipin Swain, Simanchal Nayak, Kunda Kumar, Shishupal Kumar Paswan, Jogi Rout, Rajendra Sahu and Kalucharan Bhuyan. Earlier, the accused had moved the court seeking bail, but their pleas were rejected, Pattnaik said.

## Farmer alleges assault by paddy mandi secy

**Dhenkanal:** A farmer has alleged assault, intimidation and ‘illegal’ deductions (katni-chhatni) during paddy procurement at a mandi under Gadashila Society in Odapada block of Dhenkanal district. According to the complaint, farmer Sudhakar Parida was threatened and subjected to heavy “deduction” from his paddy, and was allegedly beaten by the society secretary when he protested. Parida, with support from members of Navnirman Krushak Sangathan (NNKS), staged a protest Monday by placing paddy bags in front of the Collector's office. Parida alleged that there was no facility at the mandi to test paddy quality, yet forcible deductions were imposed at the rate of 5 kg per quintal. From a total of 38 quintals, 1 quintal and 90 kg were allegedly deducted. When he objected, the mandi secretary allegedly assaulted him. The issue was brought to the notice of FS&CW Minister Krushna Chandra Patra, who said no farmer would be subjected to illegal cuts and that strict action would be taken against those involved. A team of officials are conducting inspections at several locations from where such complaints are arriving, he added.

## Farm mechanisation hits livelihoods in Bhadrak



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhadrak, Feb 2:** Unregulated mechanisation in agriculture is fast emerging as a serious threat to straw-dependent livelihoods in Bhadrak district, where the widespread use of paddy harvesting machines has sharply reduced the availability of paddy straw.

Farmers, facing high labour costs and tight harvesting windows, have increasingly turned to machines that complete the work faster and at significantly lower cost. While the economic rationale is strong, the social impact has been substantial.

Machine harvesting destroys paddy straw at the source, depriving cattle rearers, mushroom growers and households

that rely on straw for fodder and roofing. As straw becomes scarce, many small farmers and cultivators are being pushed out of traditional occupations.

Experts warn that the lack of regulatory guidelines or alternative straw-management strategies could deepen rural distress. They argue that mechanisation must be paired with policy safeguards to protect allied agricultural sectors.

“Bhadrak’s experience highlights the urgent need for balanced agricultural reforms, ensuring gains in efficiency do not come at the expense of sustainability and rural employment,” said an agrarian expert, on condition of anonymity.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Loisingha, Feb 2:** A farmer from Bolangir district allegedly died in Kerala, where he had gone to collect the payments made to his bank account there against sale of his Kharif paddy.

The deceased was identified as Balam Pradhan of Nuagaon (A) village under Agalpur block. According to the complaint, the payment for his Kharif paddy, instead of being credited to his local bank account, was deposited into his account in Kerala, where he had earlier worked.

Sources at Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS), Nuagaon (A), said Balam sold 67 bags (30 quintals) of paddy at the PACS December 22, 2025. At the minimum support price of ₹2,300 per quintal, the value came to ₹71,300. Including a bonus of ₹800 per quintal, he was entitled to receive a total of ₹91,100 for the sale.

However, delays and errors in crediting the payment allegedly forced him to travel out of state, ultimately leading

## Delay in paddy lifting irks Kesinga farmers

**Kesinga:** Around 4,000 quintals of paddy belonging to 82 farmers remain uncollected at Kandel PACS mandi in Kalahandi district's Kesinga block, triggering widespread discontent among cultivators. The paddy has been lying in the open yard, forcing farmers to guard their produce day and night amid severe cold and heavy dew. With no covered storage facilities available, farmers have been using polythene sheets to protect the stock from moisture damage. Although the District Collector had directed five rice mills to lift the paddy, millers have allegedly failed to comply with the order. Farmers also accused millers of making arbitrary deductions of 6 to 7 kg per quintal during procurement.



Balam Pradhan

to the tragic outcome.

The government maintains that payments are credited to farmers' bank accounts within a week. However, despite a long lapse after selling his paddy, Balam did not receive the money in his local bank account. He repeatedly checked his account but grew increasingly frustrated

when no credit appeared.

After making inquiries, he learned that the proceeds from this year's paddy sale had been deposited into a bank account he had opened in Kerala several years ago. To repay crop-related loans, Balam traveled to Kerala last Thursday with an associate to withdraw the money. He fell ill after reaching there Saturday. With the help of locals, his companion admitted him to a nearby hospital. Doctors later declared Balam dead, his brother-in-law, Subal Sahu said.

PACS secretary Ranjan Sahu said hundreds of farmers

# Class I student dies in Rayagada SSD hostel

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rayagada/Kolnara, Feb 2:** A Class I student residing at a Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Development (SSD) department-run residential hostel in Rayagada district died Monday after suffering from fever.

The deceased was identified as Thabir Mandangi, 7, a student of SSD High School at Badakhilapadar under Kolnara block.

Sources said Thabir developed fever Monday morning. An auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) at the school administered him medicine but in the afternoon, he collapsed while trying to get up.

The school headmaster, ma-

tron and staff rushed him to the Badakhilapadar primary health centre (PHC). As no medical staffer was present there, they were advised to take him to Kolnara CHC where the doctors declared the child dead.

When asked about the sudden death of the student, the headmaster said there was no negligence in providing treatment.

Kolnara block welfare extension officer Debashish Munda and Chandili IIC Uttam Kumar Sahu visited the hospital and began a probe.

Thabir hailed from Padakapadu under Badalubadi panchayat. The district welfare officer said an inquiry is under way to ascertain the cause of death.





FOCUS DEVELOPMENT

FAR AWAY FROM THE PATH



The budget has either excluded our serious problems or given a kind of lip service to them. The country can never achieve sustainable development with such a budget

an India where inequality remains high, health services are poor and education poses many challenges that have been highlighted time and again. Consider that the total percentage on education (Centre and State expenditure on education combined) is merely 3.3% of GDP, and on health it stands at just 1.5%. This is a shockingly low number, unbelievable because it is well acknowledged that with a population that is not healthy and is poorly educated, the nation can never achieve the goals of Viksit Bharat. Our experience in the last decade shows that unless both, education and health sectors are put under the government's management, these cannot reach the bottom 40% of population. Yet, matters have moved in the reverse direction in recent years and the budget has been unable or is unwilling to take a bold stance on this. Note that the push toward privatisation of health, most visibly seen in the rise of private equity investments in hospitals, is a trend that in effect works to raise treatment costs and reduce health access, not widen it.

Next, the expenditure on all centrally sponsored schemes in this current year is much less than the expenditure budgeted last year. That is, these schemes are not taken

seriously by the government. And the increase in the budget on these schemes is only marginal. Considering price rise, one can state that overall, the expenditure on the centrally sponsored schemes has remained almost stagnant. This gives the picture of schemes that cannot and will not deliver as intended or advertised.

The expenditure on scientific departments is a mere 1.04% of the budget expenditure. How will India achieve Vikisit Bharat goals with not enough investment in evidence-based high quality scientific impetus and efforts alongside to build a scientific temper and the right attitude of the people? Considering the fact that India is lagging far behind other emerging countries in R&D, this low number is a big negative. Anecdotal evidence shows that scientific temper has taken a hit with what is sometimes called "cow-dung science" and reports that money has been spent on research that may not meet the strict demands of modern science. A proper allocation with a cautionary note on where this money would go would have helped correct this slide.

Apart from this there are several urgent problems which are not even covered in the budget. To start with,

these are related to MSMEs, rising inequalities of wealth and income in India, and climate change. MSMEs are expected to play a critical role in the implementation of EU-India FTA. There are several challenges with regard to the implementation of the FTA. These are particularly related to non-tariff barriers: the FTA requires that production of goods should be of standard quality. Also, production of goods should be without the use of child labour, strict environmental norms should be followed, and so on. Our MSMEs today do not mostly follow these norms. However, nothing has been included to help in these fields by the budget.

There is a lot of discussion on wealth and income inequalities these days. It seems that the goals of Vikisit Bharat cannot be achieved with these wide inequalities. Climate change, according to the government, is limited to solar energy. However, it also includes widespread pollution, flooding experienced by almost all regions and deforestation including the worsening conditions of the Himalayas – there is no attempt to address these emergencies.

Unemployment, particularly of youth, is rising continuously in India. The budget does not even mention this burning problem. To sum up, the budget has either excluded our serious problems or given a kind of lip service to them. The country can never achieve sustainable development with such a budget. The path is not right and to that extent the dreams of development will remain just dreams.

*The writer is Professor of Economics at the Centre For Development Alternatives, Ahmedabad, and Associate, Levy Economics Institute of Bard College, New York.*

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Indira Hirway

UNEMPLOYMENT, PARTICULARLY OF YOUTH, IS RISING CONTINUOUSLY IN INDIA. THE BUDGET DOES NOT EVEN MENTION THIS BURNING PROBLEM

Before talks with Starmer in Beijing, Xi said the two men would "stand the test of history" if they could "rise above differences." For many years China's status as a second global superpower has become a cause for concern for the world's democracies. But, Trump's recent conduct as President of the first-placed superpower makes the challenges more acute. China accounts for just under a fifth of global gross domestic product. Its manufacturing output is greater than all G7 nations combined. It has a formidable AI sector, the only one in the world that competes with the US. It leads the world in green energy technology – a field the current climate-sceptic White House administration is happy to neglect.

In this backdrop, it seems rational for countries like the UK to begin a fresh dialogue with China. Starmer has understood this geopolitical reality and dismissed his opponent and conservative party leader Kemi Badenoch's claim that he is kowtowing before Xi.

Conservatives in the UK surely have a point, considering the fact that China has trampled on civil rights in Hong Kong, imprisoned Jimmy Lai, a pro-democracy businessman and British citizen, and ruthlessly repressed the Uyghur minority. Starmer promised to raise these issues during his visit to Beijing. The contradiction between upholding values of democracy and befriending President Xi is stark but out of necessity. There may not be a reason to refuse engagement, especially when the US under Trump has been dumping one ally after another.

After their meeting, Starmer said his talks with Xi had been productive and the relationship between the countries was in a "good, strong place." He made a series of announcements that could unlock new opportunities for British businesses. In a significant move, China agreed to a visa waiver for British tourists and business travellers, ending the requirement for travel to be no more than 30 days and bringing the UK into line with 50 other countries. The UK also signed a number of agreements with China on closer economic cooperation, including greater trade and services, making it easier for British firms to operate there.

Xi played his cards well, reminding the British PM of the ups and downs in the relationship between the two countries and at the same time emphasizing the need to not "shy away from difficulties" and press ahead. He said the two countries should take a broad perspective, rise above differences and respect each other. Then only, he concluded, "we will prove ourselves able to stand the test of history."

It might be time for Trump to pay attention and recalculate his strategies. His policies might quite literally be creating a new world order with changed axis and geopolitical alliances.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

FOR INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, ECONOMIC POLICY MUST MOVE BEYOND CELEBRATORY NARRATIVES AND CONFRONT THE LIVED REALITIES OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF CITIZENS

Last old man standing

Sir, In a sporting world obsessed with youth, Novak Djokovic, at 38, is ancient by tennis standards. With his two greatest rivals - Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal having left the field, Djokovic is the last old man still going on and pushing himself in his relentless pursuit of winning his 25th Grand Slam. At 38, his epic victory over Sinner in the Australian Open semi-final suggested and raised hopes that the Serbian great had come very close to achieving it. But agonisingly it wasn't to be as Alcaraz stymied it. Nevertheless, that Djokovic has amassed all the records he has over the years is amazing in itself and that he continues to compete at such a level in a young man's game is simply astounding. Probably for the next couple of years, it will still be fascinating to see the old battler wield his racket against young aces like Alcaraz and Sinner, matching them shot for shot. And who knows, the legendary Serb, for one last time, may lay his hands firmly on his eluding 25th Slam trophy!

Rangapathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Unabated harassment

Sir, This refers to the news report "Mamata moves SC against SIR," Orissa Post, February 2. I think the step taken by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was imperative as the harassment in the name of Special Intensive Revision (SIR) continues unabated. Even the senior most citizen having physical disability are not spared and are forced to attend SIR hearings. The so-called logical discrepancies prompting the electorates to address are all stuff and nonsense. The documents submitted by electorates during SIR hearings are not properly acknowledged by the AERO concerned. There are other serious deficiencies in services on the part of Election Commission of India (ECI) which need to be rectified.

Arun Gupta, KOLKATA

“

When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge

SRI AUROBINDO

UK woos China

China's President Xi Jinping now finds himself in an enviable position enjoying kind of a special superpower status as countries, including US allies in the NATO, are going out of their way to forge ties with China. Irony is that the position has been thrust upon him in a changed global geopolitical scenario following US President Donald Trump's new policy of antagonizing his country's trusted, age-old allies with tariffs and war threats. On the other hand, Trump himself is trying to woo Xi, while he warns others against doing so. One of the countries rushing to Beijing to cement ties is the UK. Its Prime Minister Keir Starmer recently met Xi ostensibly to sign agreements for trade and investment. The underlying intent could be to create a balancing factor so as not to be too reliant on the US which has become unpredictable under Trump. Starmer might be counting on economic deals with China to prevent the US President from dictating terms to the UK and other European countries.

This becomes clear from the fact that no big trade deals have been signed by the two countries during Starmer's visit. Sending a message to Trump appears to be the main concern rather than making any dramatic shift in the UK's economic policies vis-à-vis China. Xi would also likely be happy to use the opportunity that the changed situation has provided to have China become the refuge of countries that find their traditional friendships with the US under strain and uncertainty in recent times. In the case of the UK, Starmer appears not too touchy about China not being a democratic country and its controversial human rights track record. Xi has said the UK's relationship with his country has gone through "twists and turns" over the years but a more "consistent" approach is in both their interests.

Before talks with Starmer in Beijing, Xi said the two men would "stand the test of history" if they could "rise above differences." For many years China's status as a second global superpower has become a cause for concern for the world's democracies. But, Trump's recent conduct as President of the first-placed superpower makes the challenges more acute. China accounts for just under a fifth of global gross domestic product. Its manufacturing output is greater than all G7 nations combined. It has a formidable AI sector, the only one in the world that competes with the US. It leads the world in green energy technology – a field the current climate-sceptic White House administration is happy to neglect.

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Conservatives in the UK surely have a point, considering the fact that China has trampled on civil rights in Hong Kong, imprisoned Jimmy Lai, a pro-democracy businessman and British citizen, and ruthlessly repressed the Uyghur minority. Starmer promised to raise these issues during his visit to Beijing. The contradiction between upholding values of democracy and befriending President Xi is stark but out of necessity. There may not be a reason to refuse engagement, especially when the US under Trump has been dumping one ally after another.

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WISDOM CORNER

“All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives.

DALAI LAMA

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

HELEN KELLER

“Keep me away from the wisdom which does not cry, the philosophy which does not laugh and the greatness which does not bow before children.

KAHLIL GIBRAN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1870:** On this day in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified, guaranteeing the right to vote regardless of race and intending to ensure, with the Fourteenth Amendment, the civil rights of former slaves.

■ **1917:** Not yet involved in World War I, the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany after the Germans announced their intention to practice unrestricted submarine warfare.

■ **1960:** The Italian dramedy *La dolce vita*, which was directed by Federico Fellini, had its world premiere, and it became widely hailed as one of the most important films in cinema.

■ **1966:** Luna 9 touches down on the Moon. The unmanned Soviet spacecraft was the first to achieve a soft landing there.

■ **1969:** Yasser Arafat becomes leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Even after his death in 2011, Arafat remained a highly controversial figure, many Arabs praising him as a freedom fighter while many Israelis denouncing him as a terrorist.

■ **1972:** The deadliest snowstorm in history kills 4000. The Iran Blizard lasted a week and left whole villages without survivors.

■ **1989:** Paraguay's dictator, Alfredo Stroessner, is overthrown. Stroessner had come to power in 1954 with a military coup.

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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)

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# J&K tourism braves all odds

Jammu and Kashmir recorded 1.78cr tourist visits in 2025 despite security incidents, natural calamities



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 2:** Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Monday said that tourism continues to be a vital pillar of Jammu and Kashmir's economy, with the Union Territory recording 1.78 crore tourist visits in 2025 despite security-related incidents and natural calamities. "Despite challenges arising from security-related incidents and natural calamities, the Union Territory recorded 1.78 crore tourist visits in 2025," Sinha said while addressing members of the Legislative Assembly on the inaugural day of the Budget session beginning Monday.

The lieutenant governor referenced security incidents and natural calamities, including the Pahalgam attack, Operation Sindoor, and last year's floods.

Sinha noted that tourism has been accorded industry status to attract investment and generate employment in the region. He highlighted the opening of the first-ever Chrysanthemum Garden, Bagh-e-Gul-e Dawood, for tourists in October 2025, which aims to promote Kashmir as a year-round destination.

"With more than 50 vibrant varieties, the garden is a strategic cornerstone in our mission to transition Kashmir into a year-round destination. Just as the tulip garden defines our spring, Bagh-e-Gul-e Dawood is set to become the definitive icon of autumn and will attract tourists during the lean season," he said.

Sinha further shared that the government has undertaken confidence-building measures, improved tourist facilitation and strengthened coordination with stakeholders to boost the sector. "Special focus has been laid on reviving pilgrim tourism in Jammu, adventure tourism in Kashmir and eco-tourism in tribal and border areas to ensure balanced regional growth," he added.

He noted that the government is planning to launch a significant project for the sustainable development of emerging tourist destinations through public and private sector investments to expand the tourism footprint across the Union Territory.

Highlighting achievements in the power sector, Sinha said it has witnessed a structural transformation, with major hydropower projects, including

Pakal Dul, Kiru, Kwar and Ratle, having a combined capacity of 3,014 MW, under execution.

He said that in the last five years, 5,708 MVA capacity has been added to the distribution sector and 4,239 MVA to the transmission sector. "Installation of smart prepaid meters is underway in mission mode, with 10.44 lakh meters already installed and 100 per cent coverage targeted by 2026-27," he said.

The lieutenant governor mentioned that power losses have reduced by nine per cent, while revenue realisation has increased by 16 per cent. He added that solarisation of government buildings and households under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana has further strengthened renewable energy adoption, with over 6,700 government buildings and more than 16,800 households already solarised.

Sinha also described the railway connectivity to Kashmir as a historic milestone, saying that the Valley has now been linked with the rest of the country, opening new avenues for trade, tourism and economic progress. He informed that a full-fledged railway division has been sanctioned for Jammu and Kashmir, and expansion and modernisation of the Jammu Tawi railway station is underway.

Emphasising infrastructure development, the lieutenant governor said the road sector has witnessed unprecedented investment of Rs 61,528 crore, including expressways, national highways, ring roads and tunnels, significantly improving connectivity.

Sinha said that 19 new National Highway projects worth Rs 10,637 crore have been sanctioned for 2025-26, including key works such as the Pir Ki Gali Tunnel, Sadhna Tunnel, Lal Chowk-Parimpora Flyover and Magam Flyover, aimed at easing traffic congestion and improving urban mobility.



Children play on a snow-covered road after fresh snowfall, in Tangmarg, Baramulla district, Monday

PTI PHOTO

## Stalin announces Tamil Biennale in Jan 2027

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mamallapuram (Tamil Nadu), Feb 2:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin Monday announced the launch of a first of its kind Tamil Biennale in January next year to position the state as a global hub for art and cultural tourism.

Inaugurating the Tamil Nadu Global Tourism Summit 2026 at the UNESCO heritage site of Mamallapuram, the chief minister also unveiled a Rs 100 crore plan to establish a Special Area Development Authority for the town to create international standard infrastructure.

Addressing a gathering of global investors and industry stakeholders, Stalin said the state government has signed 127 Memoranda of Understanding representing a committed investment of Rs 22,794.78 crore.

"These projects are expected to generate employment for 65,937 people across various segments, including heritage,

FIRST OF ITS KIND



**These projects are expected to generate employment for 65,937 people across various segments, including heritage, adventure, and eco-tourism**

MK STALIN | CM, TAMIL NADU

adventure, and eco-tourism," he added.

The chief minister noted that under the 2023 Tourism Policy, the state nodal agency SIPCOT will identify and develop new tourist destinations in two phases.

While the first phase covers sites in Kanyakumari, Kallakurichi, Erode, and Thoothukudi, the second phase has identified 31 locations for theme parks, camping sites, and nature stay.

This expansion is projected to create job opportunities for sev-

eral lakh people across the state.

Highlighting the growth of the sector, Stalin stated that the government has allocated 612.18 crore rupees for tourism development over the last five years.

This investment has helped in attracting 128.97 crore domestic and 45 lakh foreign tourists during the same period, he added.

He emphasised that the state provides a safe environment and excellent transport facilities for travellers.

During the event, the chief minister virtually inaugurated completed infrastructure projects worth Rs 40.25 crore, including a glow garden in Mamallapuram and a new hotel in Chidambaram.

He also laid the foundation stone for additional facilities in Thirukkadaaiyur and Tharangambadi.

The summit was attended by state ministers TM Anbarasan, R Rajendran, and TRB Rajaa, alongside special guest and Indian cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin.

The event also featured the distribution of prizes to winners of the Tourism Innovation Hackathon, which focused on culinary, rural, and digital tourism innovations. Winners including Thamizh Nilam Thamizh Pannai, an organic farm located in Thirukalukundram near Mamallapuram, and Xera Robotics Private Limited, received cash prizes of Rs 1 lakh each.

### CONFUSE, DISTRACT, RECRUIT

## ISI pushes homegrown terror to overwhelm Indian agencies



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Indian agencies have busted several plots hatched by ISI-backed terrorists, which were aimed at carrying out strikes in India. What the Indian agencies have learnt in recent months is that Pakistan has set up multiple networks within the country aimed at disturbing peace.

An Intelligence Bureau official stated that it is not just one type of network that the ISI has established. The Pakistani spy agency is not only limiting itself to setting up terror modules meant to carry out attacks. There are spy rings that have been established, and in addition to this, a major honey-trapping network has emerged in the country. The ISI has been using its proxies to target individuals in Jammu and Kashmir, whom they feel are anti-Pakistan.

Further, there are hit squads too that have come back. These squads have prepared hit lists of prominent people. Officials say that this only indicates the scale at which the ISI wants to operate in the country. Following the Pa-

halgam attack, India hit back by carrying out Operation Sindoor. This has led to heightened security at the borders, as a result of which the infiltrations have dried up.

Another official said that there is also heightened drone activity in the bordering areas. The drones are sent in to drop off drugs and arms in Punjab. The intention is to revive the Khalistan movement there, officials say. The ISI has also instructed its proxy, the Lashkar-e-Taiba, to carry out a sustained campaign in Jammu and Kashmir whereby prominent individuals would be targeted and labelled anti-Pakistan and anti-Kashmir. This operation is aimed at

maligning such individuals and attempting to get the locals to act against such persons.

Last week, the Lashkar-e-Taiba targeted noted counter-terrorism expert Junaid Qureshi. He has been critical of the ISI, and hence, the threat was issued to him. Qureshi's father, Hashim Qureshi, was one of the hijackers of the Air India flight IC-405 in 1971. However, Qureshi does not subscribe to his father's view.

**With no terrorist being able to infiltrate, Pakistan has reactivated existing modules in Jammu and Kashmir. Those terrorists who had infiltrated much earlier were kept on standby mode, and now they have been instructed to strike in Jammu and Kashmir**

## Vijay dances to folk music at TVK's third anniv programme

*TVK's political journey has been marked by rapid mobilisation, large conventions, and a clear intent to position itself as a serious electoral force in TN*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Chennai, Feb 2:** The third anniversary celebrations of the Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK) began on a high note at the party's Panaiyur office, with party President Vijay striking an energetic and celebratory tone that seemed to underscore both revival and resolve ahead of the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

The event marked three



years since the formal launch of Tamil Nadu Vetri Kazhagam February 2, 2024, when Vijay announced his political entry and unveiled the party's name.

Since then, TVK's political journey has been marked by rapid mobilisation, large con-

ventions, and a clear intent to position itself as a serious electoral force in Tamil Nadu.

The TVK's first major party convention was held at Vikravandi in Villupuram district, where the overwhelming public response surprised even

## Cleanup drive at Adyar estuary

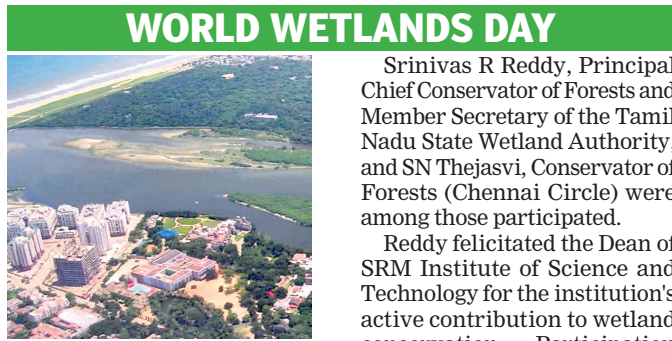
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chennai, Feb 2:** A nature walk and clean-up drive at the Adyar Estuary were organised here Monday to mark World Wetlands Day.

Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission organised the event to raise environmental awareness and foster public participation in conservation.

World Wetlands Day is observed February 2 every year, as a tribute to the adoption of the Ramsar Convention in the Iranian city of Ramsar February 2, 1971 and to highlight the ecological importance of wetlands and promote their sustainable management.

The event, held at 6.30 am in coordination with the Chennai Forest Division and SRM Institute of Science and Technology,



saw the collection of 86 kg of solid waste, including soft plastics, from the wetland area.

The collected waste was handed over to an authorised agency entrusted by the mission for scientific waste management. The soft plastic waste gathered during the drive is slated to be recycled into eco-friendly flower pots as part of a circular economy initiative.

Srinivas R Reddy, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Member Secretary of the Tamil Nadu State Wetland Authority, and SN Thejasvi, Conservator of Forests (Chennai Circle) were among those participated.

Reddy felicitated the Dean of SRM Institute of Science and Technology for the institution's active contribution to wetland conservation. Participation certificates and mementos were also distributed to students who participated in the drive.

"The programme significantly contributed to enhancing environmental awareness among students and reinforced the importance of active public participation in wetland conservation initiatives," an official statement said.

## Army unfurls high-mast tricolour at Rajouri's Usman Memorial

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 2:** The Army Monday inaugurated a 62-foot high-mast national flag at the historic Usman Memorial in Jhangar in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district, as part of the run-up to the Naushera day celebrations, a defence spokesperson said.

Naushera Day is celebrated February 6 at the Jadunath War Memorial to commemorate the victory of India troops in the 1947-48 Indo-Pak war. The memorial honours Brigadier Mohd Usman, who died in the Naushera battle and is remembered as the 'Lion of Naushera' or 'Naushera Ka Sher'.

The Tricolour, symbolising courage, sacrifice and national pride, stands prominently in the region, reminding citizens



of the valour and supreme sacrifice of the brave soldiers who defended the area with unwavering spirit in the 1947-48 war, the spokesperson said.

The event concluded with a salute to the flag and a pledge to uphold the values of unity, service and national integrity, the spokesperson said, adding that the ceremony reinforced the strong bond between the armed forces and the local community.



Even amid the global hardship and recession, the strength of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's good governance has continuously sustained the strong and successful journey of the Indian economy with credibility and stability by overcoming the external turmoil and internal disruptions

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | SENIOR BJP LEADER

When policies are clear and intent is firm, the outcomes are evident. India's rapid progress on the global economic stage reflects this clarity

YOGI ADITYANATH | UTTAR PRADESH CM

The land border remains closed. Overland trade routes to Europe and Asia, and onward to Europe, which are the most cost-effective and efficient for Punjab, are unavailable. Exporters are forced onto long and expensive sea routes, eroding competitiveness even before products reach European markets

PARTAP SINGH BAJWA | SENIOR CONG LEADER

## SHORT TAKES

### 2 held in crackdown on cyber criminals

**New Delhi:** The CBI has arrested two alleged cybercriminals after conducting a massive countrywide search operation across 35 locations as part of a sweeping multinational crackdown on cyber-enabled financial crimes, officials said Monday. Operation CyStrike was launched January 30 in coordination with the FBI in the United States and agencies of the United Kingdom, Kuwait, Ireland, and Singapore. The CBI officers searched 35 locations across 10 states, including Delhi, Bihar, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Telangana and West Bengal.

### AIADMK demands Bharat Ratna for J Jayalalithaa

**New Delhi:** A demand for conferring Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honour, on former Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa was made by her party MP in the Rajya Sabha Monday, terming her as the 'mother of welfare schemes'. Raising the issue through a zero hour mention, AIADMK's M Dhanapal said Jayalalithaa was a transformational leader who combined compassion with administrative efficiency and political courage.

### Human skull, skeletal remains found in tank

**Palghar:** A human skull and skeletal remains were found in a 30-year-old abandoned water tank in Vasai in Palghar while the structure was being demolished, a police official said Monday. The tank is located in Manickpur area, Assistant Commissioner of Police Umesh Mane Patil said.

### Bomb threat turns out to be hoax

**Junagadh:** The Junagadh district court and the Rajkot collector's office received bomb threats Monday, which were later found to be hoaxes following searches conducted by the police, officials said. The Registrar of the district court received an email stating three bombs planted in the building will go off at 2:10 PM, said Deputy Superintendent of Police, Junagadh city, Hitesh Dandhaliya.

BHAJANLAL SHARMA | RAJASTHAN CM

The Budget also includes significant provisions to strengthen women's empowerment, security and economic participation, as well as to improve agricultural infrastructure, market access for farmers and risk mitigation

SEYCHELLES PRESIDENT TO VISIT INDIA FROM FEB 5-10

Seychelles President Patrick Herminie will undertake a six-day visit to India beginning Thursday with a focus on boosting bilateral ties in a range of areas including trade and defence. It will be President Herminie's first visit to India since assuming office last October



## WB'S SIR FIGHT REACHES DELHI

# Mamata storms out of CEC meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The TMC-EC faceoff over the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in poll-bound West Bengal intensified Monday as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee walked out of a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, alleging he was being "arrogant" and that the poll panel was working at the behest of the BJP.

Election Commission officials claimed that she left without listening to the response of the poll panel top brass on the issues raised by her. On the other hand, the BJP hit back at Banerjee, alleging that she was protesting against an "imagined grievance" and enacting a "drama".

The TMC supremo, who has been demanding a halt to the voters' list cleanup exercise in West Bengal, is in Delhi along with SIR-affected families from her state. She reached Delhi Sunday. Earlier in the day, she confronted police personnel deployed outside Banga Bhawan in Chanakyapuri here and alleged harassment of the families by the Delhi Police. The force refuted the claim, stating that the deployment outside the Banga Bhawan was part of security. In the afternoon, she went to the poll panel's office here, wearing a black shawl as a mark of "protest", accompanied by party MPs Abhishek Banerjee and Kalyan Banerjee, and 12 members from "SIR affected families" from West Bengal to meet Kumar and fellow ECs.

She later said that they "boycotted" the meeting in protest, while poll panel officials claimed she left in a huff without listening to the response of the EC top brass.

Talking to the media after coming out of the Election Commission's headquarters here, the West Bengal CM launched a fresh tirade against the poll panel, accusing it of working as



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee and TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee, in South Avenue area, New Delhi

the BJP's "dalal" (middleman). "So many people have died, who is responsible? The EC is responsible. They are working at the behest of the BJP," Banerjee alleged "They behaved very badly with us, I said I am sorry we came here for justice; we did not get that, and you are lying. He is a great liar....," she said.

"We said we will fight it on the ground. You have the power of the BJP; we have the power of the people. We boycotted the meeting and came out. They have insulted us, humiliated us... I have not seen this type of Election Commission; they are very arrogant ... He talks with an attitude like he is Zamindar, and we are servants," she alleged. However, EC officials said that the TMC leaders were given a patient hearing.

First TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee spoke, followed by Mamata Banerjee, the officials said, adding that the points raised by them were duly noted down by CEC Kumar and Election Commissioners S S Sandhu and Vivek Joshi. The delegation submitted a memorandum, alleging "grave procedural, legal and Constitutional violations in the conduct of the SIR".

In it, West Bengal's ruling party demanded the EC immediately withdraw all SIR

hearing notices, abandon the "logical discrepancy" framework, stop the "interference" of micro-observers, disengage all non-statutory personnel immediately, and take "full institutional accountability for the tragic loss of lives".

An EC official said, "When the CEC started to respond, the TMC leaders interjected on multiple occasions. She was agitated and left the meeting in a huff."

The CEC explained that the "rule of law will prevail" and anybody taking the law into their own hands will be dealt with strictly in accordance with the provisions of law and powers vested in the commission.

Kumar told the TMC leadership that its MLAs are openly using abusive and threatening language against the commission and especially against the CEC. There have been incidents of vandalism of the electoral registration officers by TMC workers and MLAs, Kumar told TMC leaders. "No pressure, obstruction, or interference of any kind by anyone should be exerted on officers engaged in SIR work. Honorarium payable to Booth Level Officers (BLOs) should be released in a timely manner without any further delay, the CEC told the delegation," an official said.

## Wangchuk tried to incite Gen Z protests: Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Centre and the Union Territory of Ladakh administration told the Supreme Court Monday that jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk tried to instigate Gen Z for protests like in Nepal and Bangladesh.

A bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and P V Varale was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that Wangchuk even referred to 'Arab Springs' like agitation which has led to the overthrow of multiple governments in countries of the Arab world. "He carefully crafted his speech to instigate Gen Z and asked for agitations like in Nepal and Bangladesh and used speeches of Mahatma Gandhi to cover the real intention," Mehta said.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by Gitanjali J Angmo, the wife of jailed climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, against his detention under the stringent National Security Act (NSA).

The NSA empowers the Centre and states to detain individuals to prevent them from acting in a manner "prejudicial to the defence of India". The maximum detention period is 12 months, though it can be revoked earlier.

Mehta said Wangchuk referred to the central government as "them" and separated people of Ladakh as "us" and called for "plebiscite" and "referendum", the calls which were made once in Jammu and Kashmir.

"There is no them or us but we are all Indians. Ladakh is a place which shares borders with two countries -- China and Pakistan. The area is very fragile. "The speeches made by him have to be taken into account in totality. He was misleading young people and carefully using the speeches of Mahatma Gandhi to cover it. Gandhi ji never instigated people against their own government," Mehta said.

# Air India grounds plane over fuel switch defect

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** An Air India pilot Monday reported a defect with the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 plane after operating the flight from London Heathrow to Bangalore, and the airline has grounded the aircraft for checks, according to sources.

The functioning of the fuel control switch is in focus following the crash of Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft, or Dreamliner, that killed 260 people last June, as the preliminary probe report mentioned about fuel supply being cut off soon after take-off.

The sources said that after landing at Bangalore Monday morning, the pilot recorded in the defect log book that the left engine fuel switch slipped from 'RUN' to 'CUT OFF' and that it was not getting locked in its position.

'RUN' and 'CUT OFF' are used to start or shut down engines, respectively.

The aircraft operated the flight AI132 from London to Bangalore, and it landed at Bangalore Monday morning.

There were more than 200 people on board, the sources said. Air India Monday said it was aware that one of its pilots had reported a possible defect on the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 aircraft.

"After receiving this initial information, we have grounded the said aircraft and are involving the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) to get the pilot's concerns checked on a priority basis. The matter has been communicated to the aviation regulator, DGCA."

"Air India had checked the fuel control switches on all Boeing 787 aircraft in its fleet after a directive from the DGCA, and had found no issues," the airline said in a statement. According to pilots' grouping FIP, the malfunctioning of the fuel control switch might have happened at London Heathrow itself. In a statement, Boeing said it was



The functioning of the fuel control switch is in focus following the crash of Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft, or Dreamliner, that killed 260 people last June, as the preliminary probe report mentioned about fuel supply being cut off soon after take-off

in contact with Air India and was supporting their review of this matter.

There was no immediate comment from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) said it has been insisting on checking the electrical systems of Dreamliners after the AI171 crash.

In a statement, FIP, which is also party to a litigation related to AI171 crash, listed various incidents involving the Dreamliners.

"Today again history has repeated at Heathrow where the left fuel control switch was cutting off after moving the switch to run during start. Also, we have been insisting that all B-787 be grounded and checked for the electrical systems," it said.

Not-for-profit group Safety Matters Foundation Monday said that during the operation of the flight, the crew reported abnormal behaviour of the left engine fuel control switch of the aircraft.

## SC grants bail to three in 2024 Pune Porsche crash case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Supreme Court Monday granted bail to three accused in the 2024 Pune Porsche accident case that claimed two lives, while observing that parents are to be blamed for such incidents involving juveniles as they don't have control over their children.

Noting that the accused - Amar Santish Gaikwad (alleged middleman), Aditya Avinash Sood and Ashish Satish Mittal (parents of two other juveniles in the car) - had been in custody for 18 months, a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan granted bail to them. Sood and Mittal are accused of conspiracy to replace the blood samples of their wards. "Something needs to be said about the parents of these juveniles. Substance abuse is another thing but giving them (children) car keys and funds to have a gala time is unacceptable," the court observed.

# Election process can't be stalled at behest of individual grievance: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Supreme Court Monday said that election process cannot be lightly interdicted or stalled at the behest of an individual grievance.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta said in respect of individual grievances, the ultimate and exclusive remedy lies by way of an election petition.

The bench delivered its verdict on an appeal challenging a July 2025 interim order of the Uttarakhand High Court which had directed the returning officer to allot a symbol and permit a man to participate in the election to the office of zila panchayat member.

The top court said the right to contest or question an election being statutory in nature, must be strictly construed and exercised in accordance with

the statute governing the field. "The high court must, therefore, eschew the grant of liberal interim reliefs in favour of individuals and instead remain mindful of the overarching public interest in ensuring the smooth and uninterrupted conduct of elections across the state," the bench said.

It noted the Uttarakhand State Election Commission had issued a revised notification resuming the panchayat elections in 12 districts and the man submitted his nomination for election to the post of zila panchayat member from a constituency in Pithoragarh district. His candidature was cancelled after objection was raised alleging failure on his part to make the requisite disclosures.

Later, the man moved the high court aggrieved by cancellation of his candidature.



Class X students share a light moment after appearing for the first exam of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) outside an examination centre, at Balurghat

# 'Plastic waste disposal a matter of significant public importance'

In an order, Information Commissioner P R Ramesh reprimanded the Central Pollution Control Board for repeated failures to provide details under the Right to Information Act on action taken regarding the enforcement of guidelines for disposal of thermoset plastic waste, including fibre reinforced plastic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Central Information Commission has said matters concerning the implementation of guidelines for disposal of thermoset plastic waste are of "significant public importance" as it has serious environmental implications.

In an order, Information Commissioner P R Ramesh

reprimanded the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for repeated failures to provide details under the Right to Information (RTI) Act on action taken regarding the enforcement of guidelines for disposal of thermoset plastic waste, including fibre reinforced plastic (FRP).

Thermoset plastics can not be remelted or reshaped once



set, and their disposal is considered highly difficult.

"The issues raised by the appellant are of significant public importance, and appropriate action is required to ensure

effective and transparent implementation of the guidelines issued by the CPCB," the Central Information Commission (CIC) observed.

The CIC noted that despite

clear directions from the First Appellate Authority (FAA), the CPCB failed to furnish point-wise replies to multiple RTI applications and did not allow inspection of records in several cases.

Admonishing the conduct of the then Central Public Information Officer (CPIO), the Commission said it amounted to a "gross violation of the provisions of the RTI Act", adding that such conduct reflected a "casual behaviour of officers towards RTI applications".

The CIC also stated in its order dated January 30 that the waste disposal guidelines were framed pursuant to directions of the National Green Tribunal,

making their implementation critical for environmental protection and public interest.

Directing corrective action, the Commission ordered the CPCB to "re-examine the matter and furnish a revised point-wise reply strictly as per the provisions of the RTI Act" within four weeks.

It also directed the authority to "afford an opportunity of inspection of relevant records" to the appellant on a mutually decided date and time.

Emphasising transparency in environmental governance, the CIC said accountability in the enforcement of plastic waste management norms is essential in the interest of the public at large.



of the day

quote

We will not allow the state elections to take place with erroneous electoral rolls. If the poll process is not completed in Bengal by midnight May 5, President's Rule will automatically be invoked, and the state would be ruled from the Lok Bhavan

SUVENDU ADHIKARI | SENIOR BJP LEADER

Maintaining law and order is paramount, and that no violation will be tolerated under any circumstances, irrespective of political affiliation

N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | ANDHRA PRADESH CM

Through MGNREGA, a total of nearly 4,879 crore person-days of employment have been generated. As a result, nearly 10.10 crore rural assets have been created

MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

POST OF THE DAY

Aap chronology Samajhiye On 31st aug 2025, Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping On 14th Jan 2026, Chinese state officials met RSS leaders Today, when Rahul Gandhi went to Parliament to expose DS agents of China in India, he was not allowed to speak on the issue. Why BJP is saving those anti nationals?

@DrNimoYadav

SHORT TAKES

7 cops, 2 others hurt in violence

**Gariaband (Chhattisgarh):** Seven cops and two villagers were injured in stone-pelting and violence that erupted in a village in Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district after a vandalism case accused out on bail, along with two others, went on an attack spree, police said Monday. The out on bail accused and his two associates allegedly assaulted four persons at different locations, one of them a witness in a 2024 temple desecration case.

Two tigers electrocuted

**Bhopal:** A tiger and a tigress died of electrocution in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol district Monday, taking the death toll of big cats in the state this year to nine, an official said. The two carcasses were found less than 100 metres apart in agricultural land in North Shahdol forest division, some 75 kilometres from the district headquarters, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Subharanjan Sen told PTI. "The tigers died due to electrocution. Wires used in the incident have been recovered. With these two deaths, nine tigers have died in Madhya Pradesh since January 1 this year. Seven of these deaths took place in January," Sen said. Another official said such electric traps are laid by farmers to protect crops from herbivores but they often end up electrocuting tigers.

NIA raids six places in Kashmir

**Srinagar:**The National Investigation Agency Monday carried out searches at six locations in three districts of Kashmir as part of an investigation into the terror ecosystem in the Valley, officials said. The searches were carried out at Rafiabab, Sopore and Bomai in Baramulla district, Bandipora, and the Parimpora area of Srinagar, the officials said.



Our government is sensitive. The earlier BJP government was insensitive - Yediyurappa reduced the rice given under the Anna Bhagya scheme and even resorted to firing when farmers demanded fertilizers

SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

DIGANTARA, SINGAPORE'S DEFENCE ARM INK PACT

India's Digantara Industries has joined hands with Singapore's defence arm to develop tools for space situational awareness and also to protect their national satellites from collision with space debris



Rahul triggers political storm

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla disallowed Gandhi from raising the issue, but he did not relent and several Opposition leaders also rallied behind him. The House was adjourned twice and later for the day amid uproar as heated exchanges took place between the treasury and opposition benches

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** A major political row erupted Monday as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi sought to quote in the Lok Sabha from an unpublished "memoir" of former Army chief M M Naravane on the 2020 India-China conflict to attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, evoking a backlash from BJP leaders who accused him of misleading the House and belittling the armed forces.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla disallowed Gandhi from raising the issue, but he did not relent and several Opposition leaders also rallied behind him. The House was adjourned twice and later for the day amid uproar as heated exchanges took place between the treasury and Opposition benches.

While Gandhi said the government is "afraid" of a line that he wants to quote from the book and asserted that he would state that line in the Lower House, the BJP alleged that the Congress leader undermined the dignity of Parliament and hurt the morale of the Indian soldiers with his

NARAVANE MEMOIR ROW



false accusations, in defiance of Speaker Om Birla's ruling. The ruling party's leaders, including ministers, asked Gandhi to stop "speaking the language of anti-India elements".

Speaking with reporters, Gandhi claimed that he was not being allowed to quote from Naravane's unpublished book in the Lok Sabha because it indicts Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh for "letting down" the army during the 2020 conflict with China.

"Naravane ji has written about the prime minister and Rajnath Singh ji clearly in his book, which has appeared in an article, and I am quoting from that article. They are scared because if it comes out, the reality of Narendra Modi ji and Rajnath Singh ji will be revealed. What happened to the 56-inch chest when China was before us and advancing?" Gandhi said.

Congress and its leaders also shared on social media excerpts from an article in a magazine that quoted Naravane's unpublished book.

Earlier, as Gandhi rose to speak on the Motion of Thanks

to the President's Address, he said he would first like to respond to the charges made by the previous speaker, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya, against the Congress on nationalism and began quoting from what he said was the "memoir" of Naravane talking about the India-China conflict of 2020.

However, Defence Minister Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah strongly protested and asked Gandhi to clarify whether the book had been published or not.

The uproar went on for about 50 minutes with Speaker Om Birla repeatedly saying that no book or newspaper clipping can be quoted on a matter not related to the proceedings of the House, and Gandhi insisting that the document was authenticated and he could quote from it.

Government sources said Gandhi was reading "concocted things" on China. They said there was ample material in the public domain on the decisions taken by India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, on China, and alleged that he "sundered thousands of acres of land just to further his

own statesmanship". Rajnath Singh maintained that the book had not been published. Gandhi then said he was quoting from a magazine article to put forth his views.

Birla again disallowed it and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju called for the Speaker's ruling to be adhered to.

Rijiju said if the Leader of Opposition repeatedly ignores the Speaker's ruling and flouts rules, the House will have to discuss what action should be taken against such a member.

When Gandhi persisted, the Speaker repeatedly warned him against quoting the book.

Singh then got up and asked if the book was not allowed to be published as alleged, why didn't Naravane go to court against it. The defence minister also accused Gandhi of "misleading" the House.

When the House reassembled at 4 pm, Gandhi said he was raising a matter of national security.

"It is uncomfortable for the defence minister and the prime minister, I understand. I consider national security the most important issue. If it was not uncomfortable, they would have let me speak, but the fact that they are not allowing me to speak shows that they are uncomfortable," Gandhi said.

Several opposition leaders, including TMC's Mahua Moitra and Kalyan Banerjee, RJD's Manoj Jha and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, supported Gandhi on the issue.

Attacking the ruling BJP, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha has raised an extremely serious issue related to national security in the House but the government is evading the questions on it.

SNIPPETS

CBI takes over Ankita Bhandari case from Uttarakhand Police

**New Delhi:** The CBI has registered a case into the alleged murder of 19-year-old resort receptionist Ankita Bhandari in 2022, taking over the investigation from the Uttarakhand Police, officials said Monday. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami had recommended a CBI inquiry into the case on the demand of the deceased receptionist's parents. The CBI has taken over the material from Uttarakhand Police and registered its own case on the basis of it, they said. The parents had demanded a CBI enquiry into the case under the supervision of a Supreme Court judge. In the letter, Ankita's father said that his daughter was murdered because of a "VIP" whose identity is still unknown. In 2022, Ankita Bhandari, a receptionist at Vanantra Resort in Uttarakhand's Pauri, was murdered by resort owner Pulkit Arya and two of his employees. All three were sentenced to life imprisonment in this case.

Man kills 6-yr-old daughter to contest panchayat polls

**Hyderabad:** A Maharashtra man, a father of three children, who aspired to contest local body elections in the state, allegedly killed his six-year old daughter by throwing her into a canal in Telangana to be eligible to contest panchayat polls, police said Monday. Those having more than two children are ineligible to contest local polls in Maharashtra. The 28-year-old man, a resident of Kerur village in Mukhed taluka of Nanded district in Maharashtra, bordering Telangana, came towards Nizamabad district along with his daughter on a bike January 29 and threw her in a canal. Local residents after noticing the girl's dead body in the canal informed the police.



An artiste performs Tibetan dance during the 'Kala Ghoda Arts Festival', at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, in Mumbai, Maharashtra

MOMO CRAVING TURNS COSTLY

Boy's snack run leads to family losing ₹85L

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Deoria (UP), Feb 2:** What began as a craving for momos ended in a shocking loss for a family in Deoria district, where a Class VII student was allegedly coaxed into handing over jewellery from his home worth about ₹85 lakh to three youths in exchange for the snack, police said Monday.

The incident came to light in Bhagwanpur Tiwari village under Rampur Karkhana police station area when the boy's aunt visited the house Sunday and asked for her jewellery.

Upon opening the cupboard, the family was stunned to discover that all the ornaments were missing. When questioned, the minor revealed that he had given away the jewellery to youths operating a momo stall at Dumri Chauraha



on the Deoria-Kasya road, officials said.

Police said the boy, who lives in the village for his studies, had developed a habit of regularly consuming the snack. According to the complaint, the stall operators initially sold him momos for cash. Once his money ran out, they allegedly

lured him into bringing jewellery from home, insisting that he hand over ornaments in exchange for the snacks.

Over several days, the boy allegedly kept bringing gold items from the family cupboard and giving them away to the youths.

Following a written com-

Police said the boy, who lives in the village for his studies, had developed a habit of regularly consuming the snack

Once his money ran out, they allegedly lured him into bringing jewellery from home, insisting that he hand over ornaments in exchange for the snacks

Over several days, the boy allegedly kept bringing gold items from the family cupboard and giving them away to the youths

plaint by the boy's father, Vimlesh Mishra, a temple priest in Varanasi, an FIR was registered against three accused under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) Section 305 (theft) at Rampur Karkha-

BJP appoints observer for election of Manipur legislature party leader

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The BJP Parliamentary Board Monday appointed party national general secretary Tarun Chugh as the central observer for the election of the legislature party leader in Manipur, indicating the possible formation of a popular government in the North-eastern state.

The move came as NDA MLAs from Manipur arrived in the national capital after being summoned by the BJP central leadership, ostensibly to discuss the formation of government in the state where the current spell of the President's rule will expire next week.

"The BJP Parliamentary Board has appointed Tarun Chugh, National General Secretary, as Central Observer for the election of the Legislature Party Leader in Manipur," party national general secretary Arun Singh said in a statement.

Manipur has been under the President's rule since February 13, 2025, following months of ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities.

The central rule was imposed after the BJP-led government headed by Biren Singh resigned February 9, 2025. The 60-member state assembly, whose tenure is till 2027, was put under suspended animation.

Nearly 20 MLAs arrived Sunday night, while others reached here Monday following the direction of the BJP leadership.

The legislature party meeting will be held days ahead of the expiry of the second spell of the President's rule, which was first imposed February 13, 2025, for six months and then extended for another six months in August 2025.



Manipur has been under the President's rule since February 13, 2025, following months of ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki communities

The central rule was imposed after the BJP-led government headed by Biren Singh resigned February 9, 2025

The 60-member state assembly, whose tenure is till 2027, was put under suspended animation

Those who have arrived in the national capital include former chief minister N Biren Singh, Assembly Speaker Satyabrata Singh and former minister Y Khemchand Singh. BJP state president A Sharda Devi is also in Delhi.

The BJP central leadership had held several rounds of separate meetings with its Meitei and Kuki MLAs, allies NPF and NPP and a few Independent legislators over the last few months to gauge their views on whether the political situation was conducive for the formation of a popular government, the sources said.

On December 14, 2025, BJP's national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh and the party's Northeast co-ordinator Sambit Patra met BJP MLAs from both the warring Meitei and Kuki communities in Delhi under one roof.

Budget: J'khand gets over ₹7,500 crore for rail infra augmentation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Ranchi, Feb 2:** Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw Monday said ₹7,536 crore has been allocated to Jharkhand in the Union Budget 2026-27 to accelerate railway projects in the state.

Addressing the media through video conference, he said a record number of railway projects worth ₹63,470 crore is underway in the eastern state.

"More than 12 Vande Bharat trains and four Amrit Bharat trains have been allocated to Jharkhand, and planning is underway for two more Amrit Bharat trains in the state. Of the two proposed Amrit Bharat trains, one has already been approved on the Dhanbad-Coimbatore route, which will start soon," he said.

There have been many connectivity projects pending for a long time in the state, he said. "The DPRs (Detailed Project Reports) for all those projects are being prepared, and the approval processes are going on," he added.



Jharkhand's railway connectivity is going to improve significantly, Vaishnaw said.

A press statement issued by the railways said the network in Jharkhand has expanded rapidly since 2014. "Since 2014, around 1,400-km of tracks have been constructed, which is more than the entire rail network of UAE," it added.

A total of 57 stations in Jharkhand have been identified for complete redevelopment under the Amrit Station Scheme at a total investment of ₹2,153 crore, it said.







of the day

QUOTE

India's budget demonstrates the ongoing commitment to maintaining macro stability through a gradual path of government debt reduction balanced against a still-robust capex program to enhance growth prospects

JEREMY ZOOK | DIRECTOR AND PRIMARY SOVEREIGN ANALYST, FITCH RATINGS

On the commodity front, prices are going up. (In) precious metals, the increase is phenomenal, but we are keeping a very close watch due to the geopolitical scenario also... but yes, in times to come, we are going to review the price increase

PARTHO BANERJEE | SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MARKETING & SALES, MARUTI SUZUKI

The tyre industry's growth is intrinsically linked to the pace of infrastructure expansion in the country. The government's focus on elevating public capex reinforces demand momentum for tyres across both passenger and commercial vehicles

ARUN MAMMEN | CHAIRMAN, ATMA

Q3 RESULTS

Ather Energy loss narrows to ₹85cr

**New Delhi:** Electric two-wheeler maker Ather Energy on Monday reported narrowing of the net loss to ₹85 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2025. The company reported a net loss of ₹198 crore in the October-December quarter of the previous fiscal. Total income increased to ₹996 crore for the third quarter as against ₹650 crore in the year-ago period, Ather Energy said in a regulatory filing. The company said it recorded its highest-ever quarterly volumes of 67,851 units, delivering 50 per cent year-on-year growth, it added. Ather said its losses continued to shrink, with EBITDA loss down to ₹29.9 crore, and the quarterly loss narrowing by 45 per cent as compared to Q2 FY26, underscoring steady progress toward profitable, sustainable growth.

Mahindra Lifespace posts ₹109cr profit

**New Delhi:** Realty firm Mahindra Lifespace Developers Ltd Monday reported a consolidated net profit of ₹108.88 crore for the December quarter on higher income and exceptional gains. The company, which is part of Mahindra Group, had posed a net loss of ₹22.47 crore in the year-ago period. Total income rose to ₹469.08 crore during the October-December period of this fiscal year from ₹185.77 crore in the corresponding period of the preceding year, according to a regulatory filing. The company reported around ₹96 crore as exceptional gains and share of profit from joint ventures and associates. During the third quarter of this fiscal, the company's sales bookings rose to ₹572 crore as compared to ₹334 crore in the year-ago period.

UPL Ltd profit down 43% to ₹490 crore

**New Delhi:** UPL Ltd Monday posted a 43 per cent drop in consolidated net profit to ₹490 crore for the December quarter on higher base effect. The company had reported higher net profit of ₹853 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year because of tax refunds to the tune of ₹499 crore, according to a regulatory filing.



We are still considering, and inter-ministerial consultation is on for raising FDI cap to 49 per cent

N NAGARAJU | FINANCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

UPI TRANSACTIONS HIT RECORD HIGH

Transactions through the popular Unified Payments Interface (UPI) touched a record ₹28.33 lakh crore and 21.70 billion in value and volume terms, respectively, in January, according to data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). NPCI said the value of transactions was at ₹27.97 lakh crore in December



WEAK GLOBAL TRENDS

Bullions stay in red

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Silver prices extended its steep fall for the third straight day, tumbling ₹52,000 to ₹2.60 lakh per kg in the national capital Monday, while gold fell to ₹1.52 lakh per 10 grams amid weak global trends and a firm US dollar.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal nosedived ₹52,000, or nearly 17 per cent, to ₹2,60,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes).

On Saturday, the metal tanked 19 per cent, or ₹72,500, to ₹3.12 lakh per kilogram.

In the last three sessions, silver prices have fallen ₹1,44,500, or nearly 36 per cent from ₹4,04,500 per kg -- its all-time high -- recorded January 29.

Gold price of 99.9 per cent purity also bore the brunt of the sell-off, crashing by ₹12,800, or 7.73 per cent, to ₹1,52,700 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) on Monday. It had settled at ₹1,65,500 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Over the last three sessions, the metal has plunged ₹30,300, or nearly 17 per cent, from its record high of ₹1,83,000 per 10 grams on January 29, as investors rushed to book profits after a sharp rally.

Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk,



Silver slides to ₹2.6 lakh/kg

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Gold drops to ₹1.52 lakh/10g

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said, the Union Budget 2026-27 delivered no changes to gold and silver import duties in the domestic markets, contrary to market expectations, removing a potential near-term catalyst for prices in the country.

In the global market, gold and silver mirrored

the bearish trend, with spot yellow metal slipping

₹83.75, or 1.72 per cent, to ₹4,781.60 per ounce. "Spot gold began the week on a negative note and continue to reel under intense sell-

ing pressure, driven by firm dollar and President Trump's nomination of Kevin Warsh as the next Fed Chair," Praveen Singh, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said.

Spot silver prices also slipped \$1.2, or 1.42 per cent, to \$83.49 per ounce in the overseas trade.

"Market participants will focus on developments in Middle East, alongside monetary policy decisions from Europe, the UK, and India," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

On the economic front, traders will also monitor US key data releases, including non-farm payrolls, the unemployment rate, and speeches from several Federal Reserve officials, are expected to influence the precious metals market this week, he added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Leading automakers Maruti Suzuki, Tata Motors, Mahindra, and Hyundai posted higher sales in January riding on the growth momentum ushered in by the GST reforms in the festive period last year.

The country's leading carmaker Maruti Suzuki India said its domestic passenger vehicle dispatches to dealers rose to 1,74,529 units last month as compared with 1,73,599 units in the year-ago month.

Sales of mini-segment cars, comprising Alto and S-Presso, rose marginally to 14,268 units against 14,247 units in January 2025 while dispatches of com-

pass cars, including Baleno, Dzire, Ignis, and Swift, declined to 72,738 units from 82,241 units in the year-ago month.

Utility vehicles -- consisting of Grand Vitara, Brezza, Ertiga and XL6 -- however, rose to 75,609 units last month as against 65,093 units a year ago.

Reflecting on January sales, Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer, Marketing & Sales, Partho Banerjee, said the company posted its highest-ever monthly total sales of 2,36,963 units.

The company's newly launched SUV Victoris achieved a milestone of 50,000 units in five months, he noted. Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles said its domestic sales

rose to 70,222 units last month against 48,076 units in January 2025, a growth of 46 per cent.

Mahindra & Mahindra said its dispatches to dealers in the domestic market were up 25 per cent year-on-year at 63,510 units in January, as compared with 50,659 units in January 2025.

Hyundai Motor India said its wholesales in the domestic market increased 9 per cent to 59,107 units last month as compared with 54,003 units in the year-ago period.

Toyota Kirloskar Motor reported sales growth of 17 per cent in domestic sales at 30,630 units last month as against 26,178 units in January 2025. Kia India reported a 10 per cent year-on-year increase in sales at 27,603 units in January. In the two-wheeler space, Hero MotoCorp reported a 26 per cent growth in dispatches to dealers at 5,20,208 units in January as compared with 4,12,378 units in the same month last year.

Royal Enfield reported a 16 per cent year-on-year jump in domestic sales at 93,781 units last month, as against 81,052 units in January 2025.

Automakers post sales growth in Jan



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GLOBAL UNCERTAINTIES

FPIs WITHDRAW ₹36K-CRORE IN JAN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) remained in a selling mode in January, withdrawing nearly ₹36,000 crore (about \$3.97 billion) as global uncertainties persisted.

Meanwhile, a higher securities transaction tax (STT) proposed in the Union Budget may weigh on overseas investor participation in the near future.

The recent flight of foreign capital followed the worst outflow of ₹1.66 lakh crore (USD 18.9 billion) recorded in 2025, triggered by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions and concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched market valuations.

Going ahead, the sharp increase of STT in futures and options is likely to act as a marginal negative for FPI flows in the near term, particularly for high-frequency and derivative-focused global funds, said Aakash Shah, Technical Research Analyst at Choice Equity Broking.

"While the STT hike may help boost tax collections, it risks dampening trading volumes and could slow tactical FPI participation. To meaningfully revive sustained FPI inflows, investors will be looking more closely at macro stability, the rupee movement, and consistency in tax policy rather than just growth optics," he added.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Budget speech for 2026-27, announced

a proposal to raise the STT on futures to 0.05 per cent from the present 0.02 per cent and STT on options premium and exercise of options to be raised to 0.15 per cent from the present rate of 0.1 per cent and 0.125 per cent, respectively.

According to data from NS-DL, FPIs pulled out ₹35,962 crore from Indian equities in January.

This continued selling pressure by FPIs reflects a combination of global and domestic drivers impacting foreign investor sentiment.

The key reasons for the FPIs sell-off include US tariff threats on Europe amid the Greenland dispute, which sparked global risk-off sentiment, alongside a stronger US dollar, elevated bond yields, rupee weakness to ₹90-92 levels, and stretched valuations, Vaqarjaved Khan, Senior Fundamental Analyst, Angel One Ltd, said.

At the same time, geopolitical uncertainties and ongoing tariff and trade tensions have weighed on emerging market risk appetite, further dampening overseas interest in Indian equities.

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PNB Bhubaneswar Zone holds Bankers' Marathon



**BHUBANESWAR:** Punjab National Bank, Bhubaneswar Zone, organised a Bankers' Marathon at Bhubaneswar, with enthusiastic participation from the Reserve Bank of India and all 12 Public Sector Banks. More than 350 bankers participated in the marathon, demonstrating strong unity and commitment towards health, fitness, and camaraderie within the banking fraternity.

Sarada Prasan Mohanty, Regional Director RBI Bhubaneswar, graced the occasion as the chief guest and appreciated the initiative aimed at promoting physical well-being and inter-bank cooperation. Addressing the participants, Bhushan Sharma, Zonal Manager, Punjab National Bank,

Stocks rebound over 1% on value buying after Budget day drubbing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 2:** Stock markets rebounded Monday with benchmark Sensex jumping by 943 points on value buying in blue-chip oil & gas, banking and auto shares after facing a massive drubbing on the Budget day.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 943.52 points or 1.17 per cent, to settle at 81,666.46. During the day, it surged 1,009.31 points or 1.25 per cent to a high of 81,732.25.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 262.95 points or 1.06 per cent to end at 25,088.40. During the day, it advanced 282.65 points or 1.13 per cent to 25,108.10.

Value buying after a sharp correction on Budget day and a steep decline in global crude oil prices helped key indices recover, experts said.

From the Sensex firms, Power Grid jumped 7.61 per cent and Adani Ports climbed 4.76 per cent. Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, Larsen & Toubro, InterGlobe Aviation, ICICI Bank and UltraTech Cement were among the other major gainers.

Axis Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Trent and Titan were the laggards.

Among indices, BSE Utilities jumped the most by 2.66 per cent, followed by power (2.54 per cent), services (2.38 per cent), energy (1.98 per cent), auto (1.98 per cent), oil & gas (1.92 per cent) and metal (1.90 per cent). IT, BSE Focused IT and healthcare were the laggards.

On Sunday, the BSE benchmark ended at 80,722.94, down 1,546.84 points or 1.88 per cent. The Nifty tanked 495.20 points or 1.96 per cent to settle at 24,825.45.

Smoking breaks get dearer after excise duty hike



**Tobacco products are among the few categories where small shopkeepers are still relevant. If this too is pushed into the hands of illicit networks, what will be left for honest retailers? This is not just about taxation-it is about survival**

India, cautioned that a sharp tax increase on legal sin products may harm the traditional, brick and mortar retail system, which are already facing a stiff competition from online platforms and quick-commerce giants.

An additional excise duty on cigarettes and tobacco products, and a health cess on pan masala, over and above the highest 40 per cent GST rate, has come into effect from February 1.

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# No Indo-Pak match: ICC stares at \$250mn loss

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** An India-Pakistan fixture in an ICC event generates revenue to the tune of a staggering "USD 250 million (over Rs 2200 crore)", as per some estimates and the absence of the cash-cow fixture from the upcoming T20 World Cup is certain to cause heavy losses to all stakeholders.

Such is the pull of the contest between the arch-rivals, who only play in multi team competitions due to the tense relations between the two countries, that the ICC places them in the same pool in every world event.

The Pakistan government announced its team's boycott Sunday of the marquee clash

in Colombo February 15.

If Pakistan remain adamant, they would risk losing millions in revenues and a no-show would cause significant financial damage to the ICC coffers and India media rights holder JioStar which is already trying to renegotiate a USD 3 billion deal with the world body.

The host broadcaster could incur advertisement revenue losses in the range of Rs 200 crore to Rs 250 crore for a marquee game whose 10 second commercial slot can cost up to Rs 40 lakh.

While a walkover would hand full points to India, the ICC retains the authority to impose financial penalties on the PCB.



A former ICC and PCB communications head, Sami-ul Hasan Burney, summed up the magnitude of the money riding on just one game.

"As regards the sanctions or the losses, as I said, the one match is costing USD 250 million (everything accounted for

not just broadcaster's loss). Pakistan's annual revenue is USD 35.5 million, so there is a big, big difference," he told PTI.

The Sydney Morning Herald quoted industry sources with knowledge of confidential negotiations on the costs involved in the game with a billion plus

audience.

Each game between India and Pakistan has an estimated value of around USD 250 million, it stated.

The tone and tenor of ICC's

## T20 WORLD CUP

statement following the Pakistan government announcement also underlined the undisputed value of the contest.

"This position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," the ICC said.

"ICC tournaments are built

on sporting integrity, competitiveness, consistency and fairness, and selective participation undermines the spirit and sanctity of the competitions."

Amid the drama, Pakistan left for Colombo to play its other games in the showpiece starting February 7.

With the ICC, PCB and BCCI agreeing to a hybrid model for the India-Pakistan games till 2027, the Pakistan board would find it tough to justify the selective pullout.

It all started with Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's removal from the IPL on BCCI instructions, leading to the withdrawal of the national team from ICC event co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

# ANAHAT SMASHES INTO RECORD BOOKS

*Seventh seed Anahat Singh defeats top seed and World No 10 in the Squash on Fire Open final, clinches maiden PSA Bronze-level title*

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Washington, Feb 2:** Teenage sensation and seventh seed Anahat Singh defeated top seed and World No 10 Georgina Kennedy of England with scores of 12-10, 11-5, 11-7 in the Squash on Fire Open final, earning her first PSA Bronze-level title.

This is the biggest title of young Anahat's career and her 15th overall on the PSA Tour, where the Indian world No 31 has competed in 26 tournaments.

Kennedy had beaten Singh 3-0 in their only previous encounter at this season's Canadian Women's Open, and she made a strong start here, too, bringing up two game balls at 10-8 in the first.

But Anahat, displaying more of the free-flowing squash we've seen all week, proceeded to reel off four points on the bounce to close out the game, letting out a big scream of emotion before the players headed off court.

She was then 3-2 down in game two, but from that moment on, barely took a step back, mixing her game up well with attacking boasts, sharp kills and well-placed lobs.

A run of four straight points moved the teenager 6-3 in front, and she would only lose another two points in the game, moving within one game of glory.

A fast start to game three was always likely to be key to



Kennedy's hopes of staging a comeback, but instead it was Anahat who charged out of the blocks, moving 5-1 in front in less than two minutes.

5-1 soon became 10-6 and four match balls, and while the first came and went, Anahat would not have to wait long for her moment of glory, with a clinical forehand boast winner providing a fitting finale to a sensational week.

"I'm extremely happy. I knew I wanted to do well in these events, get my ranking up and also put on a performance, and

I'm glad I was able to do that this time," Anahat said after her victory against the World No 10.

The 17-year-old reached her maiden PSA Bronze-level final at the Squash on Fire Open in Washington with a 3-1 win over US World No 23 Sabrina Sobhy (11-9, 11-3, 9-11, 11-5) in the semifinals and booked herself a date with England's Kennedy in the final.

Earlier in the tournament, Anahat staged a remarkable comeback from 2-0 down to defeat No 2 seed Sana Ibrahim (8-11, 8-11, 11-7, 11-8, 11-7), show-

casing her resilience and skill.

She has been in excellent form this season, reaching the semifinals of the Silver-level Canadian Women's Open, finishing runner-up at the British Junior Open Under-19, helping India win the first-ever Squash World Cup, and claiming the Daly College Cup PSA title in Indore.

At the British Junior Open, she lost a tight four-game final to France's Lauren Baltayan (9-11, 11-7, 3-11, 9-11), marking her ninth BJO final across different age groups and underscoring her rising stature on the PSA Tour.

## SAFF U19 C'ship Young Tigresses lose to B'desh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pokhara (Nepal), Feb 2:** The India U17 women's national team suffered a 0-2 defeat against Bangladesh in the SAFF U19 Women's Championship 2026 at the Pokhara Rangasala Stadium here Monday.

Bangladesh scored both their goals in the first half through Arpita Biswas (29') and Alpi Akter (40').

The India U17s, who are participating in the U19 championship, a higher age-group tournament, as part of their preparation for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup, saw two changes being made to their starting XI from the (1-0) win over Nepal by head coach Pamela Conti.

Thandamani Baskey replaced Anushka Kumari in midfield, while Pritika Barman got the start instead of fellow forward Valaina Fernandes.

## Mbappe's last-gasp penalty lifts Real

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Madrid, Feb 2:** Kylian Mbappe came through for Real Madrid again, converting a penalty kick 10 minutes into second-half stoppage time to salvage a 2-1 win over Rayo Vallecano and move Madrid back within a point of Spanish league leader Barcelona.

Vinicius Junior also scored for Madrid Sunday after again being jeered by fans early on at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Jude Bellingham, also booed when the lineup was announced, had to be replaced 10



minutes into the match because of a left hamstring injury.

Madrid was coming off a 4-2 loss at Benfica that dropped the team out of the eight automatic spots for the round of 16 of the

Champions League. It will face Benfica again in the playoffs.

It was a thriller at the Bernabeu Sunday, with Mbappe giving Madrid the victory by coolly converting the last-gasp penalty for his eighth goal in five matches. The result allowed Alvaro Arbeloa's side to keep pace with Barcelona, which won 3-1 at Elche Saturday.

The boos toward Vinicius were subdued after he scored a superb goal in the 15th minute. The Brazil international cleared a couple of defenders before curling a right-footed shot into the top corner.

## INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE

# Chhetri-led Bengaluru FC players agree to pay cuts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** Bengaluru FC players, including India legend Sunil Chhetri, have accepted pay cut for the truncated Indian Super League (ISL) season beginning February 14, club owner Parth Jindal said while appreciating the footballers for making the "sacrifice" in the best interest of the franchise and the sport.

Jindal said the club's management has had open, honest conversations with all first team players about "navigating the situation the sport finds itself in."

The delayed ISL, which has been paused for more than four months, will restart February 14 in a truncated version.

"Everyone is well aware of the challenging phase Indian Football is going through. For me, as BFC team owner and someone who is deeply passionate about the sport and the club, this has been one of the toughest periods ever," Jindal



wrote on 'X'.

"I am grateful to all the first team players who have agreed to reduce their remuneration during this phase. Without a doubt, this was one of the toughest decisions we have had to make as a club, and I truly appreciate that the players have made this sacrifice in the best interests of the club and the sport," he added.

Jindal was among the first ISL club officials to have mooted the necessity of voluntary pay cuts by the players, when he last month called on the players to "make sacrifices" in view of the "financial burden" the club will shoulder to participate in the delayed ISL.

# Sports Ministry keen to revive F1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** The Sports Ministry is keen to bring Formula 1 back to the Buddh International Circuit in the near future and has already initiated dialogues with the track authorities to revive the race last held in India in 2013.

According to a ministry source, Sports Minister Manukh Mandaviya has already visited the circuit in Greater Noida and held talks with officials from Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority, the state run body which took control of the facility from the owners -- the now bankrupt Jaypee Group.

Adani is in fray to buy the troubled Jaypee Group and once that happens, the whole

process of trying to get the race back in India may gain momentum. What is clear for now is that the central government wants the high-profile sport to return to the country.

The India round was held for three seasons from 2011 to 2013 before being dropped from the Formula 1 calendar due to tax and bureaucratic issues.

"The minister went to see the F1 track in Greater Noida recently and held discussions with promoters about when latest the race can be restarted. He has told the track owners to hand over the track to any sports management company for 2-3 years, who will work on the sport's comeback to India," the source said.

"Tax issue is there in hosting F1 but this will be resolved soon. The minister has told the promoters to re-



start F1 as soon as possible," the source added.

Former chief of Indian motorsport federation FMSCI and member of the current council, Vicky Chandhok, played a part in bringing Formula 1 to India back in 2011. He observed the central government showing interest in the sport as a step in the right direction. "It's great to see a proactive government represented by our sports minister showing renewed interest in motorsport and Formula 1.

"Having been involved in every aspect of the BIC build-up and in bringing F1 to India for 3 years I would be only too happy to dedicate all my time & effort to see it happen again," Chandhok told PTI.

However, it would take a concerted effort from all stakeholders to bring Formula 1 back to India.

Already dealing with a record 24-race calendar and the growing interest from countries to host the globally followed event, Formula 1 is spoilt for choice when it comes to awarding races.

# AI set to transform Indian athletes' training

*FROM INJURY TO DIET TO AGE VERIFICATION; HOW AI IS RESHAPING THE QUALITY OF PERFORMANCE*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 2:** From dietary recommendations to injury predictions and from age verification to psychological mapping -- Artificial Intelligence is set to become a force of change in Indian sports with a centralised data management system that would not just customise training but also track athletes' progress like never before.

At the Sports Ministry's National Centre for Sports Science and Research (NCSSR) here, India's first Athlete Management and Sports Science platform has been developed and put into operation.

It covers the elite athletes

vigorously for now but is intended to penetrate the junior-most level going forward so that "catch them young" becomes a planned reality of Indian sports.

It allows coaches and sports science experts to track the smallest details of an athlete's day, right down to the quantity of their lemon water intake or the number of soaked almonds consumed in the morning.

It's a platform developed by NASSCOM Deeptech startup Darwin, incubated with IIT Bombay, which is also a shareholder in the company.

Designed "specifically for Indian training needs", SPEED AI (Sports Performance Enhancement and Evaluation



through Digitization) has myriad data from Sports Authority of India's (SAI) 14 National Centres of Excellence (NCOE), covering over 6000 athletes right now. Every NCOE head has access to the data of the athletes based there while the collated information is available only to the top leadership

of NCSSR in Delhi.

"We want to map everything from the baseline, whether it is wrist strength, shoulder strength, or postural balance because only then we start the training in areas where there is scope for improvement," NCSSR head Brigadier (Retd) Bibhu Kalyan Nayak told PTI at

the centre, which held a workshop on sports sciences in precision disciplines (shooting and archery) just last week.

Nayak has previously served as the head of International Hockey Federation's (FIH) Health and Safety Committee, was in-charge of the Safdarjung Hospital's Sports Injury Centre and travelled with the Indian contingent to the Tokyo Olympics as its Medical Officer during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. He took over as NCSSR's first head in 2022 and can barely hide his excitement while talking about the possibilities that AI will open up.

Early detection of injury risk would not just reduce downtime to prevent loss of training

days but also enhance athlete longevity.

The company that has developed the platform, promising a 360 degree Athlete Performance System, says the biggest benefit would be injury detection and management.

## Tackling Age fraud

Age fraud has been a bane of Indian sports for decades now with manipulation of paper records being rampant despite the introduction of The Tanner-Whitehouse 3 (TW3) test, that assesses skeletal maturity to verify age.

The AI-driven age verification system promises to automate TW3 methods for "highly accurate growth-plate assessment."