

HERE . NOW

# orissa POST



## Sanya's commitment

Actor Sanya Malhotra promises to represent women more honestly and responsibly on screen in the future

LEISURE | P2



## Iran-US tensions

Iran will strike US bases in the Middle East if it is attacked by US forces, says Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Tapping market

South Korean firms in exploratory talks about entering India's \$130 billion insurance market

BUSINESS | P11



## ₹7.5cr for champs

BCCI announces a total cash award of ₹7.5 crore for the U20 Men's Cricket World Cup winning team

SPORTS | P12

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 308 | www.orissapost.com

BHUBANESWAR | SUNDAY | FEBRUARY 8, 2026

12 PAGES+SUNDAY POST | ₹5.00

\*\*\*

## Latecomer student slaps teacher, brings mob to threaten her

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Panchmahal, Feb 7: A mild reprimand for arriving late for a Class XII preliminary test triggered an outburst of anger in a student who allegedly slapped the woman invigilator, for "daring" to question his behaviour in Panchmahal district.

Later, the student returned to the premises of the school with his father and a group of people, and allegedly threatened to harm the teacher who lives alone, police said. Amid an outrage after CCTV footage of the January 24 slapping incident went viral, police paraded the accused in public, an official said.

Police Inspector Ankur Chaudhary, however, said the police "reconstructed" the crime to understand the sequence of events, leading to the incident which occurred January 24 at SJ Dave High School in Shehra town, Panchmahal district. An FIR was registered February 3.

The 18-year-old was subsequently arrested and produced in a court, which released him on bail Friday, said Chaudhary.

Police said the student, identified as Mohammed Khan Ansari, reported late for the second preliminary test for Class XII January 24. When the female invigilator questioned the reason, he allegedly retorted, saying, "No one asks me anything at home, so who are you to question me?"

He slapped the teacher, pushed her, and fled the classroom.

The incident was captured on a CCTV camera, police said, adding that the father of the accused apologised to the teacher and the in-charge principal, Vilup Pathak, on the same day.

However, January 27, the student returned to the school premises along with his father and a group of 15 to 20 people. He allegedly told the teacher that she lived alone in the town and threatened to harm her, police said.

## RAJASTHAN FARMER KILLS LEOPARD WITH AXE IN SELF-DEFENCE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jaipur, Feb 7: A farmer Saturday killed a leopard with an axe after the animal attacked him in Rajasthan's Kotputli-Behror district, officials said.

The incident occurred in Kharkadi village under the Narayanpur area. The injured farmer has been admitted to a government hospital in Alwar.

According to villagers, Shrawan Gurjar, 48, had gone to his field to collect fodder for his goats. While he was cutting tree branches, a leopard hiding in the nearby bushes attacked him.

The farmer sustained serious injuries after being clawed and bitten by the animal. During the struggle, he struck the feline on the head with an axe in an attempt to save himself, killing it on the spot, they said.



**SIMMERING DISCONTENT:** Members of the Kuki Students Organisation Delhi & NCR stage a protest at Jantar Mantar demanding justice, rehabilitation and accountability for victims of ethnic violence in Manipur and that Kuki-Zo MLAs be involved in government formation only thereafter, in New Delhi, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

## India, US unveil interim trade pact

*The India-US interim trade pact signals a thaw in a relationship marred by punitive tariffs imposed on New Delhi by the Trump administration. For India, this pact indicates improved access to the country's biggest exports market, the US. On the other hand, for the US, the deal offers a foothold in India's fast growing consumer market and leverage in industrial and agriculture goods as India would eliminate or reduce tariffs on all American industrial goods and a wide range of food and agricultural products. This leaves unanswered questions on whether Indian farmers and small manufacturers will have to bear the cost of "strategic" concession*

AGENCIES



Donald Trump in an executive order removed the additional 25% tariff imposed on Indian goods for Russian oil purchases as New Delhi "committed to stop directly or indirectly importing" Russian oil.

However, US officials will monitor and recommend reinstating the tariff if India resumes oil procurement from Russia, the order said.

The joint statement did not mention India's Russian oil purchases or a formal pledge from India to confirm the move.

The statement indicated that New Delhi resisted Washington's push to broadly open its agricultural market.

Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said the agreement safeguards farmers' interests and rural livelihoods by "completely protecting sensitive agricultural and dairy products."

Imports of genetically modified agricultural products would not be directly allowed as there was no such provision in the pact, while fruits like apples would be allowed under a tariff quota, he said at a press briefing.

The joint statement confirms that India will purchase \$500 billion in US goods over a five-year period, including oil, gas, cooking coal, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, and technology products.

The last category includes graphics processing units, typically used for AI applications, and other goods used in data centers.

It said India would eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains and red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits.

But the deal will apply an 18% tariff rate on most imports

## FARMER OUTFITS CALL FOR PROTESTS

**New Delhi:** Several farmer organisations, including SKM, its non-political breakaway faction and AIKS, criticised the India-US trade deal Saturday and said protests against it will be held across the country. In a statement issued here Saturday, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) alleged that the proposed interim trade agreement framework between India and the United States amounted to a "total surrender" of Indian agriculture to American multinational corporations and demanded the immediate resignation of Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. Addressing an online press conference, SKM leaders said protests would be held across the country in villages, and they would burn effigies of US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The SKM also extended its support to the February 12 general strike. All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) leader Krishna Prasad said the trade deal will have a deep impact on the agriculture sector by opening market for items like dried distillers' grains, red sorghum for animal feed and soybean oil, and also claimed it would impact the dairy sector.

to the US from India, including textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastic and rubber, organic chemicals, home decor, artisanal products and certain machinery.

Goyal hailed the framework agreement as opening a market worth \$30 trillion - the US annual GDP - to Indian exporters, especially farmers, fishermen, and micro and small-to-medium enterprises. India also agreed to address longstanding non-tariff barriers on imports of agricultural products, medical devices and communications gear, with negotiations to be completed within six months on an agreement to accept US or international safety and licensing standards for product imports.

## CM launches roadmap for new economic region



PNN &amp; AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 7: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday unveiled an economic plan for Bhubaneswar-Cuttack-Puri-Paradip Economic Region (BCPPER) and said this initiative would be the state's laboratory for development and prosperity.

Launching BCPPER, the CM said that this region will be developed as a centre of economic growth of the state. "The BCPPER will play an important role in the economic growth of the state as well as the country," Majhi said.

Describing the proposed region as a new star in the growth sky of India, Majhi said that all the cities of this region have their own potentialities and uniqueness.

While Bhubaneswar is developing in the field of technology, Cuttack is the business centre of the state. Puri is known for its cultural heritage and tourism potential, while Paradip has emerged as a port-based economy.

"Now our plan is that this region will be connected with modern infrastructure, and var-

ious projects will be undertaken in each city. More than 80 projects have been planned, such as metal downstream, biotech, textiles, chemicals, tourism, education and IT," the CM said.

Noting that NITI Aayog has prepared the economic plan for BCPPER, Majhi said more than 30 policy initiatives will be taken up to bring development and prosperity to the entire region.

The CM said that the Union government in its 2026-27 annual Budget has earmarked ₹5,000 for each City Economic Region (CER) in the country. "The NITI Aayog has already approved our plan and included the BCPPER in the CER initiative," Majhi said.

The CM noted that at present, the economy of this region (four existing cities) is 19 per cent of the entire Odisha economy. "The target is to make the economy of the region 500 billion dollars by 2047," the CM said.

He said the Central government and NITI Aayog will develop this region as a centre of economic transformation.

## Korean crypto firm accidentally sends \$40bn in bitcoin to users



that was lost in the incident.

It admitted the error briefly caused "sharp volatility" in

bitcoin prices on the platform as some recipients sold the tokens, adding that it brought the situation under control within five minutes.

But South Korea's financial regulators, including the Financial Services Commission, said the incident "has exposed the vulnerabilities and risks of virtual assets."

After an emergency meeting, the regulators said in a statement they would launch an on-site inspection of Bithumb and other crypto exchanges if irregularities are found during reviews of their internal control systems, as well as their holdings and operations of virtual assets.

Bitcoin prices briefly

slumped 17 per cent to 81.1 million won Friday evening on Bithumb, charts from the exchange show. It later recovered and last traded at 104.5 million won.

Bithumb trails Upbit, a dominant player in the South Korean crypto space.

The platform stressed that the incident was "unrelated to external hacking or security breaches."

Bitcoin, the world's biggest cryptocurrency, sank last week, wiping out gains sparked by US President Donald Trump's presidential election victory in November 2024.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Seoul, Feb 7: A South Korean cryptocurrency exchange apologised Saturday after mistakenly transferring more than \$40 billion worth of bitcoin to users, which briefly prompted a selloff on the platform.

Bithumb said it accidentally sent 620,000 bitcoins, currently worth more than \$40 billion, and blocked trading and withdrawals for the 695 affected users within 35 minutes after the error occurred Friday.

According to local reports,

Bithumb was meant to send about 2,000 won (\$1.37) to each customer as part of a promotion, but mistakenly transferred roughly 2,000 bitcoins per user.

"We sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused to our customers due to the confusion that occurred during the distribution process of this (promotional) event," Bithumb said in a statement released Saturday.

The platform said it had recovered 99.7 per cent of the mistakenly sent bitcoins, and that it would use its own assets to fully cover the amount

that was lost in the incident.

It admitted the error briefly caused "sharp volatility" in

bitcoin prices on the platform as some recipients sold the tokens, adding that it brought

Bitcoin prices briefly

## leisure

**BELLA HADID, ADAN BACK TOGETHER**

Bella Hadid and Adan Banuelos have reconciled, just weeks after calling time on their relationship. The split was brief but needed. They have been up and down since December, but she still cares deeply about him and wants to make it work, a source revealed.

**HALLE ON HER PIXIE HAIRCUT**

Hollywood star Halle Berry is crediting her famous pixie haircut for helping her bag her first major television role in the 1980s. Speaking about the pixie cut she wore for decades in the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond, the actress told *Vogue*'s podcast that the hairstyle 'defined my life and my career for a time.'

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

**GaneshaSpeaks.com**  
accuracy • reliability • trust

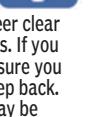
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**

Today you may try to make your loved one happy, and perhaps even try to woo the person in a fresh manner. You may not be too satisfied with your friends and relatives, but, Ganesha says, you can expect to go to a party in the evening and make new friends.

**TAURUS**

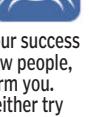
This opt a good day for being too firm or demanding. Ganesha advises you to steer clear of conflicts, arguments disputes. If you cannot avoid confrontation be sure you are the one who will have to step back. Loss of face and self esteem may be unavoidable. You need to face the fact that this is not your day. Don't meddle in extraneous issues. Maintain a low profile and stick to your own work.

**GEMINI**

You will be in the mood to pursue your heart's many desires today. You will want to spend more time with your family and your children. You need to translate desires into action by better balancing your schedule, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**

It is likely that you will reach an important milestone in life today. Keep in mind that your success may be a cause of envy for a few people, some of whom may want to harm you. You are left with two choices: either try to help them out of their troubles and miseries, or prepare for a battle.

**LEO**

Forget the weather. Today, the only thing shining bright are your chances of spending some quality time with your near and dear ones. Going along these lines, Ganesha wonders how long has it been since you last did the same. So, make the most of this lucky day. Chances are that you shall make new friends, who might turn out to be very supportive in the future.

**VIRGO**

Business acumen is natural to you. Your management skills are immaculate. Move with imagination, innovation and motivation to further your enterprise, advises Ganesha. Feel free to express and exercise your sense of judgement, says Ganesha.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says you will be more aware about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor. You will spend most of your time looking after your external beauty. Due to this you will not be able to pay attention to anything else other than your looks.

**SCORPIO**

Retail therapy with your loved ones is a perfect recipe to have a good time! You will be more than willing to buy things of their choice. Haggling will be a trait you have closeted today as you go about being lavish in your expenses, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Staying away from home, for a long business trip may be painful. But, when you strike great deals, it's worth it. Besides good returns from business, Ganesha also has many other surprises in store for you. Be hopeful!

**CAPRICORN**

You will walk down the memory lane, cherish those lost moments and later feel an urge to meet or contact old friends, says Ganesha. Expectations of your near and dear ones, however, may seem burdensome. You will still see the brighter side of everything, and spending quality time with your sweetheart will certainly re-energise your powers to deal with difficulties.

**AQUARIUS**

Your will finally end today and you will enjoy the fruits of your hard-work. You are very good a considering all the pros and cons of every situation/project, drawing a plan on paper and distribution of responsibilities, however, execution of those plans is a problem area for you.

**PISCES**

In spite of the hardships that you will encounter on your way, your high spirits, enthusiasm and innate confidence will overcome all obstacles. And no matter how troubled the day starts, it ought to end on a cheerful note, says Ganesha.

**SARA'S SPECIAL PROJECT**

**Mumbai:** Young actress Sara Arjun has described her latest film *Euphoria* as a deeply personal and special project, saying it came into her life at a time when 'nothing felt certain, yet everything felt possible.'

Taking to Instagram after attending the film's premiere, Sara reflected on her emotional journey with the project and expressed gratitude to filmmaker Gunasekhar and producer Neelima Guna for trusting the story and telling it with honesty.

She wrote: "#euphoria premier. Some stories don't just choose you, they stay with you long after the moment passes. This film found me at a time when nothing felt certain, yet everything felt possible."

"To @gunasekhar1 garu, @neelima\_guna garu, and their family, thank you so much for trusting this story, for believing in its heart, and for having the courage to tell it with honesty. Your belief made space for something real to be felt and seen," Sara wrote.

The actress thanked her father for giving her the freedom to choose her path.

"To my own family, especially my dad, thank you for always holding my hand, for listening, and still giving me the freedom to choose my path. That trust has shaped me more than you know," IANS

# Sanya's promise

**Mumbai:** Sanya Malhotra's *Mrs* started a heated debate on social media regarding the actual meaning of feminism and the representation and role of women in Indian society.

As the project completed one year of release Saturday, Sanya expressed gratitude to the viewers for continuing to love the story of Richa, even after a year.

She further promised to keep learning, listening, and unlearning, and representing women more honestly and responsibly on screen.

Her heartfelt note on social media read, "Mrs ko ek saal hogaya and everytime someone tells me how deeply the film moved them it stays with me long after the conversation ends. I may not always have the right words but as a performer I carry these stories with me. (sic.)"

"And I promise to keep learning, listening, unlearning, to represent women more honestly and responsibly on screen. Thank you so much for watching, sharing and loving Mrs," she went on to add.

Ahead of the release, *Mrs* was showcased at

the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne, the New York Indian Film Festival, and IFFI Goa. IANS



# Tara on finding inner peace

**Mumbai:** Tara Sutaria has found herself in the spotlight following reports of her breakup with Veer Pahari. While the rumours continue to circulate, the actress has reflected on the importance of maintaining inner calm, staying dedicated to her craft, and holding a balanced perspective on success.

During her chat with *Elle India*, Tara opened up about her idea of success and the importance of mental peace.

She shared, "I've always believed success is internal... Peace of mind, a handful of people who love you, knowing yourself, that's always been the goal."

Speaking about her personal growth, Tara explained that being in the spotlight from a young age taught her how to stay calm and centered over time. She said, "I've learned how to protect my peace," she said, adding that self-reflection has become her go-to method for grounding herself. As she put it, "Only we know how to calm our nervous systems."

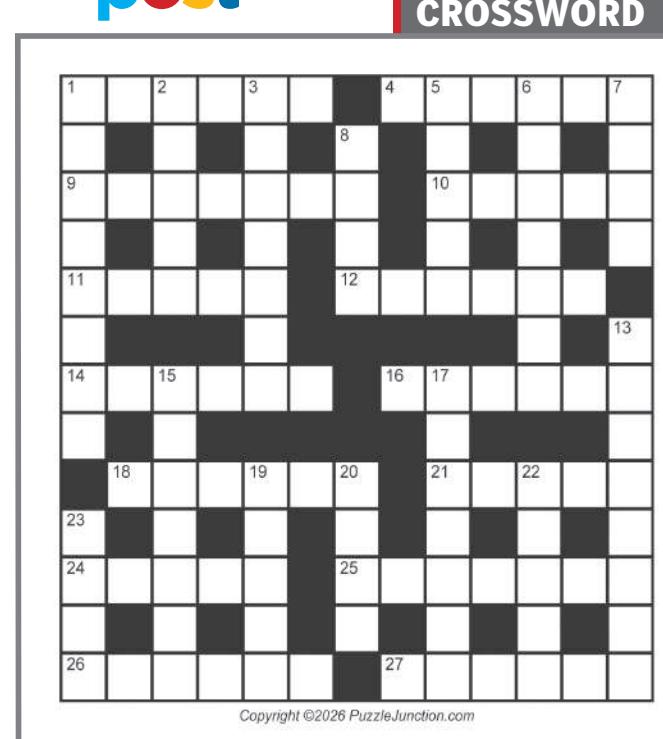
Although actors are often misjudged by the public, Tara no longer feels compelled to set the record straight. "As long as I know the truth, and the people closest to me do, that's enough," the actress said.

AGENCIES

**LABANYA NATYA MAHOTSAV COMES TO AN END**

On the third and final evening of the event the students of Labanya Theatre presented Odia play *January 30* at Bhanjakala Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Saturday.

OP PHOTO

**PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****FUN POST**

Copyright ©2026 PuzzleJunction.com

**ACROSS**

- 1 Under the weather
- 2 Wiggle room
- 4 Inelegant
- 9 Final result
- 10 Swelter
- 11 30-day month
- 12 Highest point
- 14 Munificent
- 16 Guiding light
- 18 Conundrum
- 21 Fuse
- 24 Shrimp-like decapod

- 25 Make a face
- 26 Make like
- 27 Sherlock

- 7 Diminutive suffix
- 8 Last name in German cars
- 13 Involvement
- 15 Wine date
- 17 Slippery
- 19 Columbus's birthplace
- 20 Mythical ship to Colchis
- 22 Fatuous
- 23 Milky white gem

**DOWN**

- 1 Adjective used for many a baby
- 2 Procrastinator's word
- 3 Pasta
- 5 Cook's wear
- 6 All over the place

**CROSSWORD****SUDOKU**

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

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

**SOLUTIONS**

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

**SUDOKU**

# downtown

## Excise Min: Bodycams to boost evidence collection



Altogether 48 body cameras were provided to officers from Khurda and Bhubaneswar Excise districts in the first phase

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar/Cuttack, Feb 7:** With drug peddlers often availing bail due to lack of evidence, body cameras worn by Excise personnel will serve as a powerful tool in securing convictions, said Excise Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan, on the sidelines of the 51st Annual Sports Festival of the department in Cuttack, Saturday.

Speaking to media, Harichandan emphasised that video documentation will help curb loopholes in cases against liquor and narcotics traders involved in illegal operations.

"Illegal liquor and narcotics traders often get bail due to lack of evidence. If body cameras are

available, complete video evidence of the incident can be presented in court. It will serve as a powerful tool in securing convictions, particularly in cases where traders exploit technical gaps to escape legal consequences," Harichandan said.

Noting that staffers only in some places have been equipped with body cameras, Harichandan, who also holds the Law and Works portfolios, said the government plans to gradually extend this facility across the state.

According to Excise department, the introduction of body cameras for the personnel is expected to enhance transparency and accountability during raids, while also protecting officers from false allegations.

Earlier in the day, Harichandan inaugurated the two-day event at Satyabrata Stadium in the Silver City that brought together officers and staff from across Odisha.

During the ceremony, Harichandan unveiled a booklet

highlighting the department's achievements and launched an IEC video aimed at raising public awareness about the misuse of intoxicants and narcotic substances. To further strengthen operational efficiency and field-level technology, 48 body cameras were provided to officers from the Khurda and Bhubaneswar Excise districts in the first phase, with plans to provide them to officers in all districts in the coming days.

He also recognised the exemplary performance of the districts of Balasore, Mayurbhanj, Bhubaneswar, Bhadrak, Ganjam and Puri, along with the Excise Intelligence and Enforcement Bureau (EI&EB), Unit-II in Samalpur, for their outstanding enforcement activities.

The two-day event has attracted participants from all 33 Excise districts of Odisha and four EI&EB units. As many as 809 male athletes across 16 categories and 181 female athletes across 11 categories are competing in track and field events such as the 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m, and 3000m races, along with long jump, high jump, triple jump, shot put, discus throw, and javelin throw. Competitions are also being held in volleyball, badminton, and other sports.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Excise department Principal Secretary Bhaskar Jyoti Sarma, Excise Commissioner P Anvesha Reddy.



Governor Hari Babu Kambampati, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Chief Secretary Anu Garg see off President Droupadi Murmu in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO

## Prez to lay stone for Jagannath Temple in Jamshedpur Feb 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jamshedpur, Feb 7:** President Droupadi Murmu will lay the foundation stone of Sri Jagannath Temple and a spiritual centre here February 26.

SK Behera, managing trustee of the Sri Jagannath Spiritual and Cultural Charitable Centre Trust, in a statement Saturday, said that the President will

perform the 'Bhoomi Pujan' (ground-breaking ceremony)

and lay the foundation stone for the temple complex February 26.

Behera said the spiritual centre will be the cornerstone of the trust's upcoming landmark project. "While the final temple structure will take approximately four years to complete, the trust has prioritised the spiritual centre so that it

can be functional much earlier," he said.

It will serve as a hub for research scholars and students to explore spiritual sciences and cultural heritage, providing a moral and intellectual foundation for their future, Behera said.

Spread across 2.5 acres, the temple will be constructed entirely of stone, showcasing exquisite craftsmanship and tra-

ditional temple architecture, he said. Behera said construction work is currently underway in full swing to ensure the timely completion of the spiritual centre and the temple sanctum. Behera said the roots of this project go back to the time when Murmu was the Governor of Jharkhand, when this land was originally allotted.

## City woman ends life over dowry demand; husband arrested

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Mancheswar Police arrested a 37-year-old man in connection with a reported suicide of his wife following an alleged domestic abuse and dowry harassment at Mancheswar here.

The accused has been identified as Amit Kumar Behera (37) and the deceased as Liza Sahu, both residents of Kalarahanga village under Mancheswar police station limits, police said Saturday.

As per reports, Amit allegedly subjected his wife to physical and mental cruelty, demanding additional dowry from her parental home.

Friday evening, Amit returned home from work and went to sleep. When Liza tried to wake him up at around 11.30 pm, an argument broke out between the couple. During the altercation, Amit allegedly assaulted her.

Police said Liza, who was already under mental stress, lost emotional balance following the incident and later died by suicide by hanging herself with a scarf inside the guest room of the house.

## AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOUSING PLAN Identification of vacant govt buildings begins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The state government has initiated the process to identify vacant and unutilised state-owned buildings in urban areas for converting them into affordable rental housing (ARH), according to an official document.

The decision is aimed at expanding affordable housing options for the urban poor and working population, Housing & Urban Development department Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee said in a memo to key departments, directing them to identify such vacant and unutilised assets under their administrative control and share the details with the Odisha Urban Housing Mission (OUHM).

Noting that housing is a key component of urbanisation and has a direct impact on health, well-being, stability, education and economic opportunities of families, Padhee noted that earlier housing policies primarily promoted ownership models.

However, PM Awas Yojana-Urban 2.0 has introduced 'Affordable Rental Housing' as a dedicated vertical to address the needs of a large segment of the

urban population, particularly urban migrants, industrial and informal sector workers, and working women, who are not in a position to own a house immediately, she said.

As per the operational guidelines of PMAY-U 2.0, ARH will be implemented through two models – existing government-funded vacant buildings can be converted into rental housing through PPP mode or by public agencies, or private and public entities may construct, operate and maintain rental housing units and recover costs through rental income, she added.

Under the scheme, the initial rent will be fixed by the local authority based on a survey. Rent enhancement is allowed biennially by 8 per cent, subject to a maximum increase of 20 per cent in aggregate over a period of five years, ensuring affordability and transparency.

Padhee said the initiative is expected to help transform unutilised public assets into long-term rental income-generating housing units, while simultaneously supporting urban workforce stability, strengthening local economies, and preventing the growth of informal settlements.

## VC posting delay: BJD warns of statewide agitation

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Saturday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led Odisha government over what it termed an 'unwarranted and alarming delay' in appointing vice-chancellors (VCs) in 13 state universities, warning of a statewide agitation if the issue is not resolved.

BJD MLA and former Higher Education minister Arun Sahoo, Biju Yuva Janata Dal (BYJD) president Chinmay Sahoo, and Biju Chhatra Janata Dal leader Ipsita Sahoo accused the state government of systematically undermining the higher education system and attempting to 'saffronise' academic institutions. Arun Sahoo recalled that the University Amendment Bill of 2020 was introduced to remove existing anomalies in the higher education system and, based on the recommendation of the then Governor Ganeshi Lal, the OPSC was entrusted with the responsibility of recruiting teachers.

However, after assuming power, the BJP government, he said, introduced a fresh University Amendment Bill in 2024, followed by another amendment in 2025.



He alleged these amendments significantly altered the rules governing the constitution of search committees for VC appointments. While earlier selections were made strictly on merit, the revised provisions allow the appointment of so-called 'persons of eminence', a move, he said, compromises transparency.

Under the new rules, he said the state government forwards three names to the Governor, one of whom is appointed chairperson of the search committee. He alleged that the process lacks clarity, as there is no defined criterion for shortlisting the three names, making impartial appointments impossible. He said even after 18 months of BJP rule, 13 universities continue to function without full-time VCs, pushing Odisha's higher education system into a critical state. He demanded immediate appointments to all vacant posts.

The BYJD president said although notifications for VC appointments were issued and the process was expected to be completed by July 2025, no appointments have been made so far. He noted that while the 2020 amendment enabled transparent appointments, subsequent changes have raised serious concerns over fairness. Highlighting the staffing crisis, he said that across 17 universities, 706 assistant professor posts, 458 associate professor posts, 261 professor posts, and 2,325 non-teaching posts remain vacant. Warning of intensified protests, he said if VC posts are not filled by the last week of February, they would launch statewide agitations.

Student wing president Ipsita criticised the government for focusing on changing names and colours of institutions while ignoring fundamental issues in higher education.

She alleged that despite coming to power in the name of Odia pride, the BJP government has failed to appoint a VC at Odia University, while spending crores on publicity to project 'false success stories'. She demanded immediate appointments in all universities and warned that failure to act would force them to intensify its agitation programme across the state.

## PLATINUM JUBILEE

Dignitaries, including Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari and noted physician Jayanta Kumar Panda, unveil a souvenir on the occasion of 75th Annual Conference of Indian Medical Association, at IMA House in Cuttack, Saturday



ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF Indian Medical Association



## ସୁନ୍ଦର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିକଣ୍ଠିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା

### ଜାତୀୟ କୃମିନାଶକ ଦିବସ

୧୦ ଫେବ୍ରୁଆରୀ ୨୦୨୭

### କୃମି ମୁକ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ରୋଗ ମୁକ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ

ଆପଣ ଜାଣନ୍ତି କି ଯେଉଁମାନେ କୃମି ଦ୍ୱାରା ସଂକ୍ରମିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ, ସେମାନେ

- ପୁଣିହାନତା ଓ ରକ୍ତହାନତା ଯୋଗୁଁ ସରଦା କ୍ଲାନ୍ଟ ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତି ।
- ତାଙ୍କର ଶାରାରିକ, ମାନସିକ ଓ ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ବାଧାପ୍ରାୟ ହୁଏ ।

କୃମି ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଉପାୟ ଅତି ସହଜ



କୃମି ମୁକ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି  
ରୋଗ ମୁକ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ










୧ ରୁ ୧୯ ବର୍ଷ ବୟବର ସମସ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ ତଥା ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅଜାନ୍ତ୍ରିତ ଓ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳ୍ୟରେ ବିନାମୂଲ୍ୟରେ  
କୃମିନାଶକ ଔଷଧ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦିଆଯିବ । ଅଣପଞ୍ଜୀକୃତ ଓ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳ୍ୟ ଯାଉନଥ୍ୟବା ପିଲାମାନେ ଏବଂ  
ପ୍ରଜନନକ୍ଷମ ମହିଳାମାନେ (୨୦ରୁ ୨୪ ବର୍ଷ ବୟବ) ଅଜାନ୍ତ୍ରିତ କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ଔଷଧ ଖାଇବେ ।

ଏହି ଦିନ ଗର୍ଭବତୀ ଓ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି ମହିଳା କୃମିନାଶକ ଔଷଧ ଖାଇବେ ନାହିଁ ।

ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ୧୭ ଫେବ୍ରୁଆରୀ ୨୦୨୭ ଦିନ ଔଷଧ ଦିଆଯିବ ।



ପ୍ରାସ୍ତୁତି ମୁକ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ ସରକାର  
ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା

ପାଇଁ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା  
ପାଇଁ ପରିବାର କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା





OIPR-10001/10003/2/25-26/0012

## NAT'L WORKSHOP ON PULSE CROPS

# Odisha agri sector seeing major growth: Singh Deo

Attending the workshop in Madhya Pradesh, Agriculture Minister Singh Deo says Odisha is poised to emerge as an agricultural hub among Purvodaya states

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 7:** Odisha's agricultural sector is witnessing significant growth and transformation, driven by strategic policy initiatives, technological adoption and climate-resilient practices. Agriculture Minister and Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Varadar Singh Deo said during a national workshop on pulse crops under the Rashtriya Dalhan Atmanirbharata Mission in Madhya Pradesh Saturday.

Organised under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Singh Deo participated in the above workshop and highlighted the state's scenario.

The meeting was chaired by Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan where he stated that for the self-reliance of the country, for the welfare of farmers, 'Dalhan Atmanirbharata Mission' was launched. "Importing pulses from abroad is not acceptable and it is a matter of shame. Dalhan Atmanirbharata



**SINGH DEO SAYS ODISHA PROVIDES INPUT ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS FOR PADDY CULTIVATION, STRENGTHENING THEIR CAPACITY AND PRODUCTIVITY**

**HE ADDS THAT THE STATE IS IMPLEMENTING THE COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT ON RICE FALLOW MANAGEMENT (CRFM) TO PROMOTE SELF-RELIANCE AMONG FARMERS**

ta Mission is not just a mission to increase pulse production but also a campaign to empower our farmers," he said.

Sharing his views, Singh Deo shared that in one hand, Odisha provides input assistance to farmers for paddy cultivation and empowers them, and on the other hand to make them self-re-

liant, the state also practices Comprehensive Project on Rice Fallow Management (CRFM).

"It is a flagship initiative of the state government, which aims to convert vast rice fallow lands into productive areas growing short-duration pulses and oil seeds during Rabi season. It is worth noting that, in Rabi 2025-26, 3.5 lakh Ha demonstrations have been programmed in all the districts of the state," he noted.

With all the progressive steps, Odisha is going to be the developmental hub among the Purvodaya states in agriculture, Singh Deo added. Agriculture ministers from various other states, along with OUCAT VC Pravat Kumar Roul, and representatives from ICAR and ICARDA also attended the workshop.

## BGU HOSTS SPECTRA 2026



POST NEWS NETWORK

interdisciplinary collaboration among participants.

Adding to the festive spirit, the inter-college main-stage events — Solo Dance, Group Dance, Solo Singing, Nukkad Natak and Ramp Walk — electrified the evenings, drawing large audiences and showcasing remarkable student talent.

An electrifying DJ Night by DJ Tushar turned the campus into a vibrant musical arena, with pulsating beats and dynamic lighting drawing enthusiastic student participation. The celebrations peaked with a Star Night featuring Bollywood playback singer Nikhita Gandhi, whose live performance captivated the audience and created an atmosphere of melody and celebration.

SPECTRA 2026 concluded on a high note, reaffirming BGU's commitment to promoting creativity, academic excellence, cultural enrichment and holistic student development through inclusive and engaging campus initiatives.

## CLASSIFIED

### LOST

A R.S.D. No. 1914 registered in the name of Motilal Sahu has been lost in Barpali to Ainlapali Road. If anyone find this contact on 7749841888.

I, BHAGIRATHI SENAPATI, aged about 59 years, S/o. Baban Senapati, resident of At-Hasanpur, Post-Bhaganai, P.S.- Ramachandrapur, Dist.- Keonjhar, Odisha, PIN- 758043, Aadhaar No.- xxxx xxxx 1679, Mobile No.- 9438372895. Wish to create a mortgage on the property Dist.- Jajpur, Tahasil- Byasanagar, P.S.- Korei, P.S. No.- 37, Sub-Registrar- Dolipur, Mouza- Chandama, Mutation Khata No.- 771/178, Plot No.- 473/2689, Area Ac.0.060 decs, Status- Sthitibhan (Freehold), Kisam- Gharabari (Homestead) Loan from AU Small Finance Bank Ltd. the previous link deeds are as follows: 1). Original Regd. Sale Deed bearing Document No.- 10821103573, dated 12.08.2011, executed by Smt. Juli Dash, wife of Sri Bhagirathi Senapati, in favour of Sri Himansu Sekhar Dwibedi, S/o. Sri Rajkishore Dwibedi & 2). Original Mutation ROR of Mouza- Chandama issued in the name of Sri Himansu Sekhar Dwibedi, S/o. Sri Rajkishore Dwibedi in respect of Khata No.- 771/178 of my property, Dist.- Jajpur, Tahasil- Byasanagar, P.S.- Korei, P.S. No.-37, Sub-Registrar-Dolipur, Mouza- Chandama was lost on dtd. 30.01.2026 at KOREI area in this regard, I filed a Lost Report at KOREI Police Station, Jajpur, vide GD No.- 031 dtd.- 05.02.2026.

The mela features around 400 stalls with participation from all 30 districts of Odisha, showcasing products by Producer Groups (PGs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). The event is jointly organised by ORMAS with 150 stalls, Subhadra Shakti with 150 stalls, and the Handicrafts department with 100 stalls.

The event aims to provide a strong marketing platform for rural producers, artisans, women-led SHGs and farmer collectives, promoting self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. The stalls showcase a wide range of products, including handcrafted items, handloom and textile goods, millet-based

A special attraction of the mela is the National Awardee stalls, where nationally recognised master artisans are showcasing their exceptional craftsmanship. These stalls highlight innovation and excellence while underscoring efforts to preserve traditional art forms at the highest level.

Jute Mark India products are also being featured, promoting eco-friendly and sustainable

alternatives. These products assure quality standards while supporting artisans and farmers, reducing environmental impact, and encouraging the use of biodegradable materials.

Products with ISO certification are also being showcased to assure consumers of internationally recognised quality, safety and management standards, thereby boosting confidence and expanding market opportunities.

All food-related stalls are strictly adhering to FSSAI licensing norms, ensuring food safety, hygiene and quality assurance for consumers.

and value-added foods, organic and natural products, bamboo and cane crafts, terracotta, tribal artefacts, spices, honey and traditional delicacies — reflecting the richness and diversity of Odisha's rural economy.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is highlighting GI (Geographical Indication) tagged products that signify the unique identity and regional origin of traditional goods. GI tagging ensures authenticity, protects indigenous knowledge and enhances market value, directly benefiting local producers through greater recognition and income.

The participation of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) enables farmers to directly engage with consumers and bulk buyers, helping improve incomes, reduce intermediaries and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

During the mela, the One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is being prominently showcased, highlighting unique products from each district of Odisha. These ODOP items are already displayed at railway stations across the state, helping provide national exposure and improved market access for district-level producers.

Additionally, the mela is

# Administrative vacancies mar education in Koraput

Lone ABEO oversees 197 institutions across 23 panchayats

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nandapur, Feb 7:** A severe shortage of education officers has exposed serious administrative gaps in the school education system across Koraput district, with a single Assistant Block Education Officer (ABEO) overseeing nearly 200 institutions in Nandapur block alone.

The lone woman ABEO is currently responsible for 197 educational institutions spread across 23 panchayats in Nandapur block, catering to more than 16,000 students. These institutions include 137 primary schools, 34 upper primary schools, 21 high schools, five higher secondary schools and one Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya.

As the block resource centre coordinator, the officer supervises 13 clusters, oversees more than 700 teachers, monitors mid-day meal (MDM) operations in 190 schools, conducts school inspections and manages departmental training programmes, meetings and other administrative responsibilities.

The situation reflects a broader staffing crisis in Koraput district, which has 14 blocks. Of these, only six blocks have regular Block Education Officers (BEOs), while the remaining eight are being managed by officials holding additional charge. Although provisions exist for appointing three ABEOs per block — 42 in total across the district — only



17 ABEOs are currently in position, leaving 25 posts vacant.

In several cases, Level-IV headmasters from upper primary and secondary schools have been assigned ABEO responsibilities in addition to their regular teaching duties. These include academic instruction, supervision of MDM, school monitoring and coordination of departmental training programmes. Educationists warn that such dual responsibilities highlight the fragile and understaffed condition of the education department in the district.

The problem has been exacerbated since May 2025, when the then Nandapur BEO Bhabani Nandan Pattnaik was transferred to Semiliguda block. No full-time replacement has since been appointed, and Pattnaik has been asked to hold additional charge. Two of the three sanctioned ABEO posts in Nandapur are also vacant following one retirement in April 2025 and another recent transfer, leaving the entire administrative burden on ABEO Mamta Gomang.

With teacher training under the National Education Policy having begun February 4 and

upcoming responsibilities related to the census and panchayat elections, education experts fear the acute staff shortage will adversely affect classroom teaching, school management, training schedules and MDM implementation.

District education office sources said eight blocks — Nandapur, Bandhugaon, Borigumma, Dasmantpur, Koraput, Narayanpatna, Laxmipur and Pottangi — currently have vacant BEO posts. To manage day-to-day operations, three additional district education officers (ADEOs), three BEOs from neighbouring blocks and two headmistresses of high schools have been assigned dual charge.

Officials said the staffing crisis and urgent requirements have been formally communicated to the District Collector and the state School and Mass Education (S&ME) department.

Local educationists, parents and civil society members have expressed hope that the state government will take immediate steps to address the crisis, particularly as the School and Mass Education Minister hails from the undivided Koraput district.

## 9,000 bottles of cough syrup seized, one held

**Sonepur:** Police in Subarnapur district Saturday seized 9,000 bottles of cough syrup during a raid in the Rourkela area and arrested one person, while three others managed to escape. Addressing correspondents at a press conference at the district police headquarters, Subarnapur Superintendent of Police Narayan Nayak said the seizure followed a specific intelligence input about illegal trafficking of cough syrup in Sahajabhal village under Mayabarha panchayat. Acting on the SP's direction, a police team led by Rourkela police Sub-Inspector Prakash Nanda conducted an early morning raid. On spotting the police team, three suspects fled the scene, while one was detained along with two vehicles — a pick-up van and a car — allegedly used to transport the contraband. The arrested person was identified as Gulshan Sahu, 24, of Satalma village under Barpali police station in Jharsuguda district. Police also seized a mobile phone from his possession.

## Poppy plantation on five acre destroyed

**Tensu:** Police and Excise officials Saturday destroyed poppy plants worth more than ₹30 lakh in the Koida area of Sundargarh district and detained two persons in connection with the illegal cultivation. According to police, the poppy crop was being cultivated on nearly five acre of forest land near the Gapatundi Pokhri forest area under Koida police station limits. The plants had grown fully and had begun flowering. Acting on a tip-off, the operation was carried out under the direction of Rourkela SP Nitesh Wadhwan. The raid was led by Koida PS OIC Rajendra Swain, K Balang Old Ashop Behera, Excise officials and Koida Tehsildar Nirmal Kumar Biswal. Police said preliminary investigation indicated that the illegal cultivation had links extending beyond Odisha to West Bengal and Jharkhand. The two detained persons are being questioned, and further investigation is underway, police said.

District education office sources said eight blocks — Nandapur, Bandhugaon, Borigumma, Dasmantpur, Koraput, Narayanpatna, Laxmipur and Pottangi — currently have vacant BEO posts. To manage day-to-day operations, three additional district education officers (ADEOs), three BEOs from neighbouring blocks and two headmistresses of high schools have been assigned dual charge.

Officials said the staffing crisis and urgent requirements have been formally communicated to the District Collector and the state School and Mass Education (S&ME) department.

Local educationists, parents and civil society members have expressed hope that the state government will take immediate steps to address the crisis, particularly as the School and Mass Education Minister hails from the undivided Koraput district.

## 15 Maoists surrender in Rayagada

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Rayagada, Feb 7:** In a boost to anti-Maoist operations in Odisha, 15 hardcore Maoists, including senior leaders carrying hefty cash rewards, formally surrendered before Additional Director General of Police (Anti-Naxal Operations) Sanjeeb Panda at a special function held at the District Police Office (DPO) in Rayagada.



Maoist base.

The ADG said all surrendered cadres would be extended benefits under the state government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, including financial assistance, vocational training and skill development programmes, to help them reintegrate into society with dignity.

Among the 15 Maoists were Nikhil and Indu, both state committee members, each carrying a reward of ₹55 lakh. The group also included a divisional committee member, five area committee members and eight party members, collectively carrying a reward of ₹1.98 crore.

The surrendered cadres handed over 14 weapons, including two AK-47 rifles, five SLRs, one INSAS rifle, one

Sten gun, one .303 rifle, four single-shot firearms and a large quantity of ammunition.

The reward linked to the recovered arms is estimated at around ₹1 lakh. The group belonged to the BGN Division (Banshadhara, Ghuman and Nagabali) and was active across Rayagada, Kandhamal, Gajapati and Kalahandi districts.

Nikhil, who joined the Maoist organisation in 2004 and became active in the BGN division from 2008, had risen to become one of the top Maoist leaders in the state following the killing of central committee member Ganesh Uike in Kandhamal in December 2025.

Officials noted that Nuapada, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri, Koraput and Boudh districts have now become completely Naxal-free.

## UCO Bank

**Zonal Office : C-2, Ashok Nagar, Unit-II, Bhubaneswar-751009, Ph.: 0674-2620423**

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**  
(Under SARFAESI Act 2002)

**E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 9(1)(b) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002**

**PUBLIC NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF MOBILE/IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES**

**LAST DATE & TIME OF SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS ON OR BEFORE 23.02.2026 upto 4.00 p.m.**  
Sale of Movable/Immovable Properties mortgaged to Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002). Whereas, the Authorized Officer of UCO Bank has taken possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Section 13(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 in the following loan account with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" AND "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis for realization of Bank's dues plus interest as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the Bank's dues by sale of the said property/ies.

### DESCRIPTIONS OF THE MOBILE/IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

Sl. No.	BRANCH & CONTACT NO. / Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors	Description of Movable / Immovable Properties	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession / Outstanding Amount	Reserve Price / EMD/BID Increase Amount	Date & Time of E-Auction
1.	<b>JEYPORE BRANCH (BHUBANESWAR ZONE), MOB.: 8820236265 /</b> Borrower: M/s. A to Z Collections, Prop.: Mr. Nirakar Pothal / Guarantor: Mrs. Laxmi Nayak, W/o: Mr. Amiya Kumar Nayak, At: Krishna Complex, Main Road, Jeypore	All that part and parcel of the property standing in the name of Mr. Nirakar Pothal, situated at Mouza: Ekamba, P.S.: Jeypore, Dist.: Koraput, Khata No.: 144/15, Plot No.: 483 (Sub Plot No.: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), Area: Ac.0.27dec., Bounded by East: 15' Road, West: Revenue Plot No.: 482, North: Sub Plot No.: 7, South: Revenue Plot No.: 481	09.03.2020 / 10.03.2021 /	₹11,43,600/- / ₹14,360/- / ₹8,12,969.97 + Interest & other expenses thereon	24.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. (With Unlimited Extension of 10 minutes each)
2.	<b>GANGADHARPUR BRANCH (BHUBANESWAR ZONE), MOB.: 9090191300 /</b> Borrower: M/s. Fashion Galaxy, Prop.: Mr. Basanta Kumar Pradhan / Guarantor: Mr. Basanta Kumar Pradhan, 2) Mr. Prafulla Pradhan, 3) Mr. Lalat Keshari Pradhan, All are S/o.: Rankanath Pradhan, At/P.O.: Bypass Road Nachuni, P.S.: Nachuni, Dist: Khordha (Odisha), Mouza: Nachuni, P.S.: Banapur-367, Tahasil: Banpur-367, Dist.: Khordha, 654, Plot No.: 1376/2503, Area: Ac.103 Dec., 2) Khata No.: 655, Plot No.: 1379/2502, Area: Ac.0.019 Dec., Total 2 Nos. of Khata & 2 Nos. of Plot, Total Area: Ac. 0.122 Dec i.e. 5314.32 Sqft., Kissam: Gharabari	All that part and parcel of the property standing in the name of 1) Mr. Basanta Kumar Pradhan, 2) Mr. Prafulla Pradhan, 3) Mr. Lalat Keshari Pradhan, All are S/o.: Rankanath Pradhan, At/P.O.: Odagaon, Dist.: Khordha (Odisha), Mouza: Nachuni, P.S.: Banapur-367, Tahasil: Banpur-367, Dist.: Khordha, 654, Plot No.: 1376/2503, Area: Ac.103 Dec., 2) Khata No.: 655, Plot No.: 1379/2502, Area: Ac.0.019 Dec., Total 2 Nos. of Khata & 2 Nos. of Plot, Total Area: Ac. 0.122 Dec i.e. 5314.32 Sqft., Kissam: Gharabari	02.02.2022 / 15.02.2023 /	₹1,00,28,000/- / ₹10,02,800/- / ₹29,521.02 + Interest & other expenses thereon	24.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. (With Unlimited Extension of 10 minutes each)
3.	<b>PAIKTIGIRI BRANCH (BHUBANESWAR ZONE), MOB.: 9853210341 /</b> 1) Borrower: M/s. Bhai Bhai Matching Centre, Prop.: Mr. Rajkishore Kamala / Guarantor: Mr. Maguni Charan Kamala, Both are At: Plot No.: 411, Sanapalla, Dist.: Khurda, 2) Borrower: M/s. Annapurna Textiles, Prop.: Mr. Manas Ranjan Kamala / Guarantor: Mr. Maguni Charan Kamala, Both are At: Sanapalla, Pallahat, Paiktigiria, Dist: Khurda	All that part and parcel of the Property standing in the name of Mr. Maguni Charan Kamala, Mouza: Sanapalla, PS/Tahasil: Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, Khata No.: 277/245, Plot No.: 411/1161, Area: Ac. 0.036 Dec., Khata No.: 277/362, Plot No.: 411/1127, Area: Ac. 0.035 Dec., Kissam: Gharabari, Bounded by East: Road, West: Private Plot, North: Road, South: Road	17.01.2020 / 14.01.2022 /	₹51,89,000/- / ₹5,18,900/- / ₹ 4,52,603.81 + Interest & other expenses thereon	24.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. (With Unlimited Extension of 10 minutes each)
4.	<b>KHURDA BRANCH (BHUBANESWAR ZONE), MOB.: 9861470529 /</b> Borrowers: 1) Mr. Sanjay Kumar Hota, 2) Mr. Hari Krishna Hota / Guarantors: 1) Mrs. Sailalabha Hota, 2) Mr. Anjaya Kumar Hota, All are At: Chintamani Nagar, P.O.P.S.: Jatni, Dist.: Khurda, Odisha, Bounded by North: Road, East: Pond Embankment, South: Road, West: Govt. Land	All that part and parcel of the immovable property Standing in the name of Mr. Sanjay Kumar Hota & Mr. Anjaya Kumar Hota, situated at Mouza: Chhanaghara, SRO/Tahasil: Jatni, Dist: Khurda, Khata No.: 1272/39, Plot No.: 2931/3278, Area: Ac. 0.068 Dec., South: Road, West: Private Plot, North: Road, South: Road	24.02.2015 / 21.07.2023 /	₹29,97,000/- / ₹2,99,700/- / ₹7,56,725.14 + Interest & other expenses thereon	24.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. (With Unlimited Extension of 10 minutes each)
5.	<b>NAYAGARH BRANCH (BHUBANESWAR ZONE), MOB.: 7437998151 /</b> Borrower: M/s. Rishita Agency, Prop.: Mrs. Jayalaxmi Pattnaik / Guarantor: Mrs. Jayalaxmi Pattnaik, W/o: Mr. Bikash Ranjan Pattnaik, Both are at Infront of NAC High School, Dist.: Nayagarh-752070	Land & Building standing in the name of Mrs. Jayalaxmi Pattnaik, W/o: Mr. Bikash Ranjan Pattnaik, Mouza: Khanguri, Tahasil: Nuagaon, P.S.: Nayagarh, Dist.: Nayagarh, Khata No.: 73/75, Plot No.: 42/482, Area: Ac. 0.20 Dec.	27.07.2023 / 09.10.2023 /	₹12,08,000/- / ₹1,20,800/- / ₹19,37,355.57 + Interest & other expenses thereon	24.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. (With Unlimited Extension of 10 minutes each)
6.	<b>BERHAMPUR BRANCH (BHUBANESWAR ZONE), MOB.: 8763415323 /</b> Borrower: M/s. Sri Sai Trader, Prop.: Mr. Upendra Kumar Behera / Guarantor: Mrs. Banita Behera, W/o: Mr. Upendra Kumar Behera, Both are At: Baikuntha Nagar, Second Lane, Berhampur, Dist.: Ganjam	All that part and parcel of the Land and Building in the name of Mrs. Banita Behera, situated at Mouza: Haridakhandi, Berhampur, Dist: Ganjam, Khata No.: 294/2187, Plot No.: 1676/2299, Area: Ac.0.038 Dec., South: Land of Damayanti Sahu & others, West: Land & House of Kedarnath Sahoo	27.11.2024 / 01.02.2025 /	₹75,94,000/- / ₹7,59,400/- / ₹ 33,25,719.96 + Interest & other expenses thereon	24.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. (With Unlimited Extension of 10 minutes each)

**Date & Time of Inspection of Properties: On or before 23.02.2026 during banking hours on any working day**

**Terms & Conditions:** (1) The auction sale will be "on-line" bidding through website <https://baanknet.com>. (2) All intending bidders shall register with E-Auction portal by navigating through <https://baanknet.com/eauction-psb-x-login> to create their USER ID and password. (3) All intending bidders are advised to go through the website <https://baanknet.com/eauction-psb-x-login> for detailed terms and conditions of auction sale before submitting their bids and taking part in E-Auction sale proceedings. (4) Prospective bidders may download the videos provided in <https://baanknet.com/eauction-psb-x-login> under selection (BUYER GUIDE FOR LOGIN & REGISTRATION) to know the process flow for the auction to be conducted. (5) Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) will be deposited in Wallet by generating challan (BY NEFT/RTGS ONLY) well before the date of auction and do not wait till the date of auction. Do not use any other mode of remittance otherwise the same will be refunded back by <https://baanknet.com>. (6) A copy of the Bid form along with the enclosure submitted online (also mentioning UTR Number) shall be handed over to the Chief Manager (Recovery), UCO Bank, Zonal Office, Bhubaneswar or soft copies of the same by E-mail to: [zobbsr.rec@ucobank.co.in](mailto:zobbsr.rec@ucobank.co.in). (7) The successful bidder shall have to pay 25% of the purchase amount (including earnest money already paid), immediately on closure of the E-Auction Sale proceedings on the same day of the Sale in the same mode as mentioned above. The balance 75% of the purchase price shall have to be paid within 15 days of acceptance/confirmation of sale conveyed to them. (8) The sale is subject to confirmation by the Bank. If the borrower/guarantor pays the dues to bank in full before sale, no sale will be conducted. (9) The property is sold in "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS" basis and the intending bidders should make discreet enquiries as regards on the property of any authority besides the bank charges and should satisfy themselves about the title, extent and quality of the property before submitting their bid. No claim of whatsoever nature regarding the property put for sale, charges, encumbrances over the property on any other matter etc. will be entertained after submission of the online bid. (10) The undersigned has the absolute right and discretion to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone/cancel the sale/modify any terms and conditions of the sale without any prior notice and assigning any reasons. (11) The purchaser shall bear the stamp duty charges including those of sale certificate registration charges, all statutory dues payable to Government, taxes and rates and outgoing both existing and future relating to the property. The sale certificate will be issued only in the name of successful bidder. (12) The sale is subject to conditions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act/Rules 2002. (13) For property related query may contact the respective Branch Head or Chief Manager (Recovery), Bhubaneswar, Mrs. Madhusmita Jena, Mob.: 9438335084, email: [zobbsr.rec@ucobank.co.in](mailto:zobbsr.rec@ucobank.co.in). (14) This Notice is also to the Borrowers/Guarantors in particular and the public in general. (15) All the Properties are under Symbolic Possession of the Bank. (16) This is a Statutory 15 days Sale Notice to the above mentioned Borrowers & Guarantors under Rule 9(1) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002





# J&K must harness full hydropower potential: Shah

The home minister stressed the importance of developing sports infrastructure and setting up sports academies to connect youngsters with development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 7:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the progress of development projects in Jammu and Kashmir Saturday, highlighting the need to utilise the full potential of hydropower projects in the Union Territory.

Chairing a high-level review meeting at the Lok Bhawan here, Shah said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, the Centre is firmly committed to the vision of building a developed and prosperous Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting continued for nearly two hours and was attended by Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Chief Secretary of the Union Territory Atal Dullo and Director General of Police (DGP) Nalin Prabhat, among others, officials said.

"Due to the continuous and dedicated efforts of the Modi



**Marking a significant step, Jammu and Kashmir has been brought under the ambit of the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASI) scheme for the first time in Financial Year 2025-26, enabling access to 50-year interest-free loans for capital projects**

government to accelerate development, the development projects in Jammu and Kashmir have made unprecedented progress. Jammu and Kashmir needs to develop the full potential of its hydropower projects," the home minister said.

Shah arrived here late Thursday evening and kicked off his two-day visit to the region by touring the forward outposts of the Border Security Force (BSF) at Gurnam and Bobiyani along the International Border

in Kathua district Friday.

On his return from Kathua, he chaired a security review meeting, which, among others, was attended by Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi, with a focus on freeing Jammu and Kashmir from terrorism.

During the meeting on projects, Shah undertook a comprehensive review of key sectors, such as road infrastructure, power, industry, tourism, 4G and optical-fibre connectivity.

He said a special focus should

be laid on achieving 100 per cent saturation of the government's welfare schemes and ensuring that the benefits of all development projects reach the intended beneficiaries. The home minister stressed the importance of developing sports infrastructure and setting up sports academies to connect youngsters with development.

"In this regard, efforts will be made to secure an investment of about Rs 200 crore by engaging with various sports bodies," he said. Shah also said efforts should be made to promote the dairy sector in Jammu and Kashmir through the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB).

Marking a significant step, Jammu and Kashmir has been brought under the ambit of the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASI)

scheme for the first time in Financial Year 2025-26, enabling access to 50-year interest-free loans for capital projects.

Shah underlined that strong fiscal discipline would assist in stabilising the Union Territory's fiscal deficit over time.

"India is steadily progressing towards the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047, marking 100 years of Independence, and the government will continue to extend wholehearted support to Jammu and Kashmir in the pursuit of this goal," he said.

Shah's visit highlights the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre's firm resolve to make Jammu and Kashmir's development, peace and security a foremost national priority, an official spokesperson said.

During his two-day tour, the home minister met the families of several police personnel who were killed fighting terrorism and handed over job letters to them. A BJP delegation also called on the home minister Friday.

"I held meetings in Jammu with the state office-bearers and MLAs and MPs of Jammu and Kashmir BJP. The BJP will continue working to ensure the ground-level reach of Modiji's development initiatives, while expanding the organisation to realise the vision of a developed Jammu and Kashmir, a secure Jammu and Kashmir," Shah said in a post in Hindi on X.

# Army chief visits forward areas along LoC in Poonch



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 7:** Army chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi Saturday visited forward areas of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch sector and assessed deployment posture, surveillance measures and readiness of deployed formations.

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Friday attended a high-level security review chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and also visited the headquarters of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps to assess the operational preparedness in the region.

"The COAS visited forward areas of Poonch sector to review operational preparedness. He assessed deployment posture, surveillance measures and security arrangements, and reviewed the overall readiness of formations deployed in the sector," Addi-

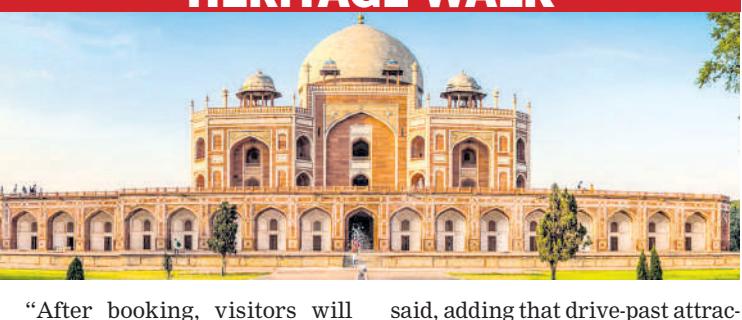
tional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Army wrote on X.

During the visit, Gen Dwivedi interacted with troops and lauded the high standards of professionalism and readiness demonstrated by the soldiers deployed in the challenging terrain, commanding their unwavering dedication and exceptional preparedness.

Officials said the Army chief visited the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri and was briefed by senior officers on the ground. Gen Dwivedi met with field commanders of the Army and officers of other security agencies, officials said, adding that he took stock of the security situation, both along the LoC as well as in hinterland areas, in view of ongoing counter-terror operations in Poonch.

# Delhi to roll out four curated tourism circuits

## HERITAGE WALK



The initiative includes four themed circuits – 'Dilli Ki Dharohar', 'Dilli ka Dil aur Virasat', 'Dilli ka Rahasya' and 'Dilli Dekho Dil Se' – which will operate daily except Mondays

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** To mark the completion of its first year in office, the Delhi government will roll out four curated tourism circuits along with a guided heritage walk from February 20, aiming to offer residents and visitors a systemic tour exploring the capital's historical, cultural and architectural landmarks.

An official of the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) said the initiative includes four themed circuits – 'Dilli Ki Dharohar', 'Dilli ka Dil aur Virasat', 'Dilli ka Rahasya' and 'Dilli Dekho Dil Se' – which will operate daily except Mondays.

The circuits have been designed as half-day guided tours, covering prominent monuments, museums and public spaces across the capital, he said. The official said tickets for the tours can be booked online, following which tourists will receive detailed instructions regarding the reporting point and schedule.

"After booking, visitors will be informed about a designated assembly location from where DTTDC will provide an organised bus service. The same bus will take tourists to all sites included in the selected circuit," the official added.

According to him, the 'Dilli Ki Dharohar' (Delhi's legacy) tour will operate in the morning – from 8 am to 2 pm – and cover Agrasen ki Baoli, Purana Qila and Akshardham Mandir, with drive-past views of landmarks such as India Gate, Rashtrapati Bhavan, Parliament House and Bharat Mandapam. Ticket prices have been fixed at Rs 315 for adults and Rs 157 for children.

Similarly, the 'Dilli ka Dil aur Virasat' (Delhi's soul and heritage) circuit, scheduled in the evening from 4 pm to 9.30 pm, will include visits to the Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya, National War Memorial and Kartavya Path, Qutub Complex and Dilli Haat at INA, the official

said, adding that drive-past attractions include 11 Murti, the embassy area and illuminated government buildings. Ticket prices are Rs 420 for adults and Rs 210 for children.

He said the 'Dilli ka Rahasya' (Mysteries of Delhi) circuit will be a morning tour covering Jantar Mantar, the National Museum, Lodi Garden and Safdarjung Tomb, along with drive-past views of central Delhi landmarks. The 'Dilli Dekho Dil Se' tour will be held in the evening and feature the National War Memorial, India Gate, Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya and a Hindi light-and-sound show, followed by a visit to Dilli Haat, the official said.

Additionally, the DTTDC will launch a Haunted Heritage Walk at Malcha Mahal from February 20. The guided walk will be held on weekends and on group demand with a minimum of six participants, and tickets will be priced at Rs 550 per person, he added.

# Tourist footfall in J&K crossed 1.77cr

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



**Jammu, Feb 7:** The Jammu and Kashmir government Saturday informed the Legislative Assembly that 1.77 crore tourists, including over 36,000 foreigners, visited the Union Territory in 2025.

In reply to a question by National Conference MLA Hasnain Masoodi, the government said that Jammu and Kashmir received more than 1.77 crore tourists in 2025, including over 36,000 foreign visitors.

The Tourism Department said

that 1,77,65,390 tourists visited the Union Territory between January 1 and December 31, 2025. Of them,

36,410 were international travellers, while 1,77,28,980 were domestic tourists. The government said it has not set specific targets for tourist arrivals in 2026, but stressed that sustained promotional and developmental measures are under way to boost both domestic and foreign inflow.

On the resumption of international flights from Srinagar airport, the government said the airport is fully equipped with immigration, customs, security and passenger-handling facilities.

# First consignment of exotic bulls reaches Kashmir

**Jammu:** In a first-of-its-kind initiative, bulls of exotic breeding were transported from Bangalore to Jammu and Kashmir through railway parcel vans, with the consignment reaching Budgam railway station in the valley Friday, officials said. The transportation of 23 bulls was carried out under the breeding development programme of the agriculture and animal husbandry department and facilitated by the Northern Railways' Jammu division, marking the first time that livestock has been moved over such a long distance to Kashmir via rail. Officials said that six bulls were unloaded at the Bari Brahma goods shed in Jammu, while the remaining 17 were offloaded at the Budgam goods shed in central Kashmir. "The parcel train, which departed from Bangalore in Karnataka, passed through several states before reaching the Valley via the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBR)," officials said. They further informed that strict Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) norms and special chambers were enforced to ensure the safety and welfare of the animals during transit. Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Jammu, Uchit Singh, said that the initiative is expected to boost the region's dairy sector. "The arrival of these high-quality exotic bulls will help improve local cattle breeds in Kashmir and significantly enhance milk production capacity," Singh said.

## GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, RWS&S DIVISION, MALKANGIRI

E-mail : [eerwss\\_mal@nic.in](mailto:eerwss_mal@nic.in), [eerwssmlkg@gmail.com](mailto:eerwssmlkg@gmail.com)

### INVITATION FOR BIDS NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING

**Bid Identification No. : RWSS\_MKG\_ONLINE\_06/2025-26**

No.2500124/2526 : The Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites bids from eligible Authorised Manufacturers / Dealers / Distributors / Firms for the work detailed in the table below to be eventually drawn up in P-1 contract.

1. Name of the Work : Supply & Installation of Equipments, Glassware, Furniture with deskings etc. at Sub-Divisional Water Testing Laboratory, Mathili under RWS&S Division, Malkangiri in Malkangiri District (As detailed in TCN) 2. No. of Works : 01 No. 3. Estimated Cost : ₹ 11.61 Lakhs

4. Tender Paper Cost : ₹ 800/- each, 5. Class of Contractor : Authorised Manufacturer / Dealer / Distributor / Firm, 6. Period of Completion : 01 (One) calendar month, 7. Critical dates :

Procurement Officer Bid Identification No Availability of Tender Online for Bidding From To Last Date of seeking tender Clarification Date of opening the Bid

Superintending Engineer, RWS&S Division, Malkangiri RWSS\_MKG\_06/2025-26 11.02.2026 at 09.00 Hours 19.02.2026 up to 17.00 Hours 18.02.2026 20.02.2026 At 11.00 Hours

♦ Further details can be seen in the bidding documents, which is available in the e-procurement portal <http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in>.  
♦ Subsequent enclosures if required shall be appeared in the website.  
♦ Authority reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Superintending Engineer  
RWS&S Division, Malkangiri

OIPR-25001/25044/1/25-26/0024

# Army chief visits forward areas along LoC in Poonch



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, Feb 7:** Army chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi Saturday visited forward areas of Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch sector and assessed deployment posture, surveillance measures and readiness of deployed formations.

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Friday attended a high-level security review chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah and also visited the headquarters of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps to assess the operational preparedness in the region.

"The COAS visited forward areas of Poonch sector to review operational preparedness. He assessed deployment posture, surveillance measures and security arrangements, and reviewed the overall readiness of formations deployed in the sector," Addi-

tional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) of the Army wrote on X.

During the visit, Gen Dwivedi interacted with troops and lauded the high standards of professionalism and readiness demonstrated by the soldiers deployed in the challenging terrain, commanding their unwavering dedication and exceptional preparedness.

Officials said the Army chief visited the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri and was briefed by senior officers on the ground. Gen Dwivedi met with field commanders of the Army and officers of other security agencies, officials said, adding that he took stock of the security situation, both along the LoC as well as in hinterland areas, in view of ongoing counter-terror operations in Poonch.

## OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, BARGARH CORRIGENDUM NOTICE

No. 766/Date 06.02.2026

**No.10001/21/2526 :** In refer to the tender call notice No.382/date.19.01.2026 published on dt.22.01.2026 in Newspaper "The Prameya" and "The Times of India", the EMD should be submitted in form of TDR/FDR or Bank Guarantee pledged in favour of CDM & PHO, Bargarh and the annual turnover will be calculated in average for three year. The last date of receiving of tender document will be 13.02.2026 upto 5 P.M and the opening of tender call notice will be 17.02.2026 at 11 A.M.

Sd/- Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Bargarh

## OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, CHOURDWAR CORRIGENDUM NOTICE

No. 766/Date 06.02.2026

**No.13001/21/2526 :** Sealed quotations are invited from intending Authorized Firms/Suppliers & Agencies having up to date GST Registration copy, PAN card copy and valid registration copy for supplying fitting and fixing of FRP Sculpture depicting the Boita (Traditional Kalinga Type) along with 21 Nos Sadhaba Male & Female symbol in Boita Yatra in Ward No 12 of Choudwar Municipality as per the description as follows.

Govt. of Odisha (H&U.D Deptt.) CUTTACK (ODISHA) PIN-754071  
Phone No. : 0671-2394272(O), e-mail : [choudwarcitymunicipality@gmail.com](mailto:choudwarcitymunicipality@gmail.com)  
No.Dev/1786 Date : 04.02.2026

Quotation Call Notice

No.13001/21/2526 : Firms/Suppliers & Agencies having up to date GST Registration copy, PAN card copy and valid registration copy for supplying fitting and fixing of FRP Sculpture depicting the Boita (Traditional Kalinga Type) along with 21 Nos Sadhaba Male & Female symbol in Boita Yatra in Ward No 12 of Choudwar Municipality as per the description as follows.

SI.No Description  
1 FRP Sculpture Boita (Traditional Kalinga Type) along with 21 Nos Sadhaba Male & Female symbol in Boita Yatra Size (35'x16') and Base Size (42'x10'x2.5')

The prescribed quotation schedule can be obtained from the Office of the Choudwar Municipality, Choudwar during office hours on all working days from dt.06.02.2026 to 18.02.2026 within 1.00 PM on payment of Rs.1000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand) only in the shape of cash from Office of the Executive Officer, Choudwar Municipality towards the paper cost which is non-refundable. The Quotation paper will be received upto 1.00 PM by this office within dt.18.02.2026 through Regd. Post/Speed post or in person and the same will be opened on the same date at 3:00 PM in the Office of Choudwar Municipality in the presence of the quotainer or their authorised representative who wishes to remain present. The quotation delay in postal delivery after due date and time will not be taken into consideration.

The authority reserves right to reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason thereof.

OIPR-13001/13138/1/25-26/0012

Sd/- Executive Officer  
Choudwar Municipality

## GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA ST & SC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT PROJECT ADMINISTRATOR, ITDA, PHULBANI INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Tender Call Notice (TCN) No. 182 / Date. 30.01.2026

# national

of the day quote

India has successfully carried out an international translocation of a wild species that had gone extinct in the country, with the project now reaching the third India-born generation of cheetahs. A new batch of cheetahs from Botswana is expected to arrive around February-end



BHUPENDER YADAV | UNION ENVIRONMENT MINISTER

The enthusiasm of tourists from across the country to visit Jammu and Kashmir has not diminished. There is a need for aggressive marketing of Jammu and Kashmir's tourist destinations in other states to explore the tourism potential available



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Today, elderly pensioners and even government employees suffering from illnesses are struggling to get medicines



ASHOK GEHLOT | FORMER RAJASTHAN CM

## SHORT TAKES

### Heroin worth over ₹13 crore seized

**Thane:** Police in Maharashtra's Thane city have seized more than 4 kg of heroin worth over ₹13 crore and arrested three persons in connection with the drug during a special operation, officials said. One of the arrested accused allegedly had links with Mumbai's underworld, and his name had also cropped up during the probe into the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, a senior official said. In a crackdown in the early hours of February 3, a crime branch team seized heroin, a highly addictive drug, valued at ₹6.9 crore, said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Amarsingh Jadhav Friday evening.

### Pappu Yadav sent to judicial custody

**Patna:** Independent MP Rajesh Ranjan, popularly known as Pappu Yadav, was sent to two-day judicial custody by a court in Patna Saturday after he was arrested in connection with a case dating back to 1995. The Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Court said his bail plea will be heard Monday, and till then, he will be kept at Patna Medical College and Hospital for treatment. Yadav was arrested Friday night at his residence in Mandir after a warrant was issued against him by the MP/MLA court in connection with a case lodged under Section 467 (forgery of documents) of the IPC.

### Wild elephant kills five in two days

**Bokaro:** A wild elephant, which strayed into a village in Jharkhand's Bokaro district, has killed five people over two days, officials said. The female elephant trampled two persons to death and injured four others Friday night. It killed three people Thursday morning, they said. "The jumbo is part of a herd of five elephants. But, she is the only one causing trouble," Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Sandeep Sinde told PTI.

### Massive fire breaks out at tar factory

**Raipur:** A massive fire broke out at a tar factory in the Bhanpuri industrial area of Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur Saturday, officials said. Thick black smoke billowing from the premises was visible from a long distance. No casualties were reported in the incident, they said.



**The Brahmin community is vocally protesting its neglect ('upeksha'), insecurity ('asuraksha') and disrespect ('asamman'), a fact that is being discussed nationwide. The BJP appears to be somewhat uneasy and concerned about its impact**

MAYAWATI | BSP CHIEF

### SALMAN KHAN ATTENDS BHAGWAT'S RSS EVENT

Bollywood star Salman Khan was Saturday seen deeply engrossed in Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwati's speech at an event in Mumbai to mark the organisation's centenary celebrations



# BJP's Ritu Tawde set to become Mumbai mayor

Though largely ceremonial, the mayor's post carries enormous political and symbolic significance in Mumbai's identity-driven politics. Tawde's elevation marks the BJP's return to the post after 44 years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 7:** BJP's Ritu Tawde is all set to become the mayor of Mumbai and the party's first in four decades after Shiv Sena (UBT) decided against fielding a challenger, making the contest unopposed and ending the Thackeray family's 25-year dominance over the richest civic body.

Though largely ceremonial, the mayor's post carries enormous political and symbolic significance in Mumbai's identity-driven politics. Tawde's elevation marks the BJP's return to the post after 44 years.

On the final day of filing nominations, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, a BJP ally in the ruling Mahayuti, named Sanjay Ghadi as its candidate for deputy mayor. The party announced that the deputy mayor's term would be split, allowing four or more corporators to serve during the tenure.

Tawde's elevation means the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena will not be able to occupy the mayor's post after 25 years. The undivided party controlled the BMC from 1997 to 2022.

The Mumbai mayoral election is scheduled for February 11, which is the last day to withdraw the nominations.

Tawde and Ghadi filed their nominations at the municipal secretary's office in the presence of Minister Mangal Prabhat Lodha, BJP's Mumbai unit chief Ameet Satam, former Shiv Sena MP Rahul Shewale, and other leaders of Mahayuti.

A senior BMC official told PTI that they have received just one nomination from BJP's Tawde for the mayor's post



**Shiv Sena, BJP's ally, declares Sanjay Ghadi as their candidate for the deputy Mayor position**

**The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance holds a majority in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation**

**The BMC is one of the richest civic bodies in India, with a substantial budget**

and another from Ghadi for the deputy mayor's post before the 6 PM deadline for filing nominations.

Although Opposition parties have not filed nominations, the Mayoral election process will be completed as per procedure February 11.

According to a draw of lots by the Urban Development Department, the Mumbai mayor's post became reserved for a woman candidate from the open category.

Tawde, a corporator from suburban Ghatkopar, told media persons that a safer and developed Mumbai is her vision. She wanted to work for the citizens of Mumbai, which is a cosmopolitan city.

Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) was expected to file a nomination against the BJP candidate, but decided against it after a meeting was convened at Thackeray's residence.

Former Mayor and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader in the BMC, Kishori Pednekar, described the development as a victory of Marathi manoos.

"The BJP had to accept that Marathi manoos is a Hindu.

If the mayor of Mumbai is Marathi manoos, we won't do anything that amounts to a bad omen. Our victory in the elections was for Marathi manoos. We have accepted the arithmetic and will play the role of a strong Opposition and fight for Mumbai," she said, adding that we are committed to whatever is good for Mumbai.

The Sena (UBT) had raised the emotive "Marathi identity" plank in last month's Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation elections, where the party had allied with MNS. However, the BJP and Shiv Sena, led by Shinde, emerged victorious.

The BJP emerged as the single largest party in the 227-member BMC by bagging 89 seats, while Shiv Sena won 29 seats.

The ruling alliance, with a combined strength of 118 corporators, is well past the halfway mark of 114 and is well-placed to secure the posts of mayor and deputy mayor.

In the Opposition camp, the Sena (UBT) secured 65 seats, while its allies, the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) won six and one seat, respectively.

Ritu Tawde, who was earlier with the Congress, joined the BJP in 2012 and was elected as a corporator the same year.

During her first term as a member of the BMC, she chaired the Education Committee and was actively involved in raising issues related to local infrastructure, water supply, and public safety.

## BIKER DEATH CASE

# Delhi cops arrest subcontractor for not reporting fall

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** The Delhi Police has arrested a subcontractor for allegedly withholding the fact that a biker had fallen into a pit dug by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) in Janakpuri area despite being aware of the incident, thus delaying police and emergency response, an official said Saturday.

The police also noted that the authorities concerned with the excavation work were aware of the threat posed by the nearly 15-foot-deep pit "in the middle of the road", and yet failed to ensure basic safety measures, including installation of barricading or warning signs, at the site.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (West) Darade Sharad Bhaskar said, the investigation has revealed that the accused -- Rajesh Kumar Prajapati (47) -- knew that someone had fallen into the pit hours before the matter was reported to the police. According to the official, an eyewitness -- Vipin Singh, who was returning to his home in Sagarpur after attending a wedding -- saw a motorcycle had fallen into the ditch and informed a security guard at a nearby garage.

Call detail records showed that Yogesh informed Prajapati about the incident at 12:22 am, following which the subcontractor reached the spot within 15-20 minutes, he said.

However, Prajapati neither informed police nor the emergency services at that time. The incident was reported to the authorities around 8 am the following morning, the DCP added. According to police, Prajapati, a B Com graduate and resident of north Delhi's Tri Nagar area, has been arrested, while teams have been dispatched to trace Yogesh, who is believed to be a resident of Uttar Pradesh. The FIR states the pit had been dug by the DJB and its contractor on Professor



Joginder Singh Marg near the Andhra School, and left open without any safety arrangements to alert road users.

Advocate Astha Chaturvedi, the counsel for the family of the deceased, alleged delays by police in collecting crucial evidence, including CCTV footage.

She said an FIR has been registered against the DJB and the contractor concerned over alleged negligence suggested by the absence of barricades and adequate lighting.

Chaturvedi claimed the deceased's family had not been informed about the suspension of any official so far. She also raised concerns over the pace of the investigation, alleging that CCTV footage from the scene has not been provided even after more than 24 hours since the incident.

A Janakpuri resident, Jaspreet Singh, alleged that safety measures were put in place only after the fatal accident.

"This is not a one-day issue. After the boy died, they (authorities) suddenly remembered to put up barricades. There were no signs or barricading earlier," he said. According to a senior government official, an ex-gratia of ₹10 lakh is likely to be provided to the victim's family soon. In the wake of the incident, the Delhi government has directed DJB engineers to visit all ongoing construction sites and take corrective measures by Saturday evening.

"Site visits are ongoing, engineers have been directed to identify shortcomings and take corrective measures by evening at all ongoing construction sites," a senior DJB official said.

### Churachandpur limps back to normalcy after two days of protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Imphal/Churachandpur, Feb 7:** Normalcy began returning to parts of Manipur's Churachandpur district Saturday morning after two days of protests, police said.

The violent protests began Thursday after three BJP legislators from the Kuki-Zo and Hmar communities joined Meitei MLAs to form a government in the ethnic strife-torn state.

MLA Nemcha Kipgen joined the Y Khemchand Singh-led government as deputy chief minister, while L M Khaute and N Sanate supported her.

The demonstrations were largely confined to the stretch between Tuibong and Kangvai in Churachandpur town, unlike earlier instances when disturbances had spread across the district headquarters, police said.

While most areas of Churachandpur town witnessed resumption of business activities, several shops in the Tuibong area remained closed, they said.

Additional security forces have been deployed to prevent any untoward incident.

Two tribal bodies had imposed a "total shutdown" in Kuki-dominated Churachandpur, while rallies were held in Kangpokpi and Tengnoupal districts, alleging that the legislators betrayed their community.

The Kuki-Zo groups have been demanding a separate administrative unit for them, as the violence that broke out in May 2023 deeply divided the state on ethnic lines, with members of the two communities not venturing into each other's areas.

Over 260 people have been killed and thousands displaced in the ethnic clashes. The state had been under President's Rule for one year, before Singh took oath as the chief minister Wednesday.

### Kerala HC: Laws, rules should not create discord between religions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 7:** The Kerala High Court has said that statutes, rules and regulations should not become instruments for creating discord or disharmony between religious, castes or communities, instead they should function as a unifying force.

The observation by the High Court came while dismissing a plea seeking a declaration that entry of two Christian priests into the Adoor Sree Parthasarathy Temple in Pathanamthitta district in 2023 was violative of the Kerala Hindu Places of Public Worship (Authorisation of Entry) Act, 1965.

Dr Zacharias Mar Aprem and another priest, were invited to the temple to attend a function in connection with the Sreekrishna Jayanthi celebration on September 7, 2023.

The plea by Sanil Narayanan Nampoothiri, a teacher by profession, had also sought a direction to the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) and the temple authorities to prevent entry of non-Hindus into the Sree Parthasarathy shrine.

A bench of Raja Vijayaraman and Justice K V Jayakumar referred to the sacred Sanskrit mantra from the 'Taittiriya Upanishad' -- 'Matru Devo Bhava Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava, Atithi Devo Bhava' -- and said that it signifies that mother, father, teacher, and guest are equivalent to God and are to be treated with respect and honour.

The court said that in the instant case, the Christian priests were allowed to enter the temple as guests by the tantris "which is fundamentally distinct from an entry claimed as a matter of right".

"Such a permissive and ceremonial entry, in our considered view, cannot be construed as a violation of the provisions of the Act, the rules framed thereunder, or the established rites, usages and customs governing the temple," it said.



Skaters at the ice skating rink at Lakkar Bazar, in Shimla

PTI PHOTO

### App-based cab, auto drivers strike

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

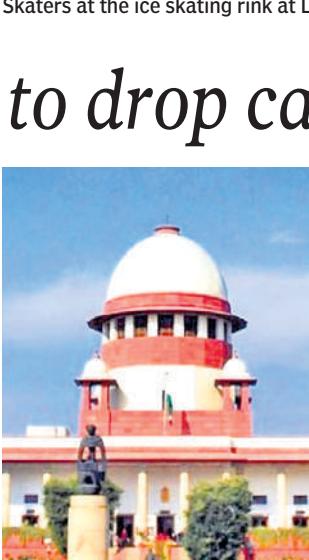
**New Delhi, Feb 7:** Ride-hailing apps such as Ola, Uber and Rapido were sporadically impacted Saturday as drivers went on a partial strike across several cities in the country.

Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) had called for a "breakdown" February 7 to protest against existing rules and practices of app-based transportation platforms.

It has demanded that the Centre and state governments should notify minimum base fare app-based transport services and bar the use of non-commercial vehicles for commercial passenger and goods transport. "We received one of the biggest responses to

our call for breakdown today. We had planned to sit with heads and our leaders of 20 states to protest against the practices of app-based transport services firms and unexpected driver partners also turned up at Jantar Mantar," TGPWU founder state President Shaik Salauddin told PTI.

"We can see data online. Therefore, whenever the demand surged our partners declined to accept booking. We want the government to come up with its own fare slab including deciding a minimum base fare so that it is convenient for both drivers and consumers. When there is a surge in demand, apps increase prices 2-3 times which makes it inconvenient for users. We are against such practices," Salauddin said.



infection of disease dangerous to life), 353 (assaulting or using criminal force against a public servant to deter them from discharging their duties), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace), and 506 (criminal intimidation) of

■ The high court partly allowed the plea of the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress government to withdraw only 15 cases recommended for withdrawal

■ The high court noted that out of the 65 cases recommended for withdrawal by the home department, five, including one against Chief Minister Sukhu, have been disposed of during the pendency of the petition

decision of the Supreme Court in the Ashwani Kumar Upadhyay vs Union of India (2020) case, where the accused were sitting former MLAs.

It noted that the 2020 decision of the apex court said that the public prosecutor may withdraw from a prosecution not merely on the ground of paucity of evidence but also to further the broad ends of public justice.

The high court added that the apex court said the public prosecutor must formulate an independent opinion before seeking the consent of the court to withdraw from the prosecution and that the power vested under Section 321 of the CrPC is a responsibility which is to be utilised in public interest and cannot be used for extraneous and political considerations and has to be used with utmost good faith to serve the larger public interest.

# national



After taking blessings of Lalu ji, I have taken a firm resolve to work, with everyone's cooperation, to strengthen the party and give it recognition not only at the state level but also at the national level

TEJASWI YADAV | RJD'S NATIONAL WORKING PRESIDENT

## INTERNATIONAL OIL CARGO SMUGGLING RACKET BUSTED

The Indian Coast Guard Saturday said it has busted an international oil smuggling racket by apprehending a set of vessels linked to it, about 100 nautical miles west of the coast of Mumbai, as part of a mid-sea operation



of the day quote

“

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kuala Lumpur, Feb 7:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi Saturday said India is seen as a "trusted partner for growth" and it was reflected in the recent trade deals it has agreed with various countries, including the UK, USA and the EU.

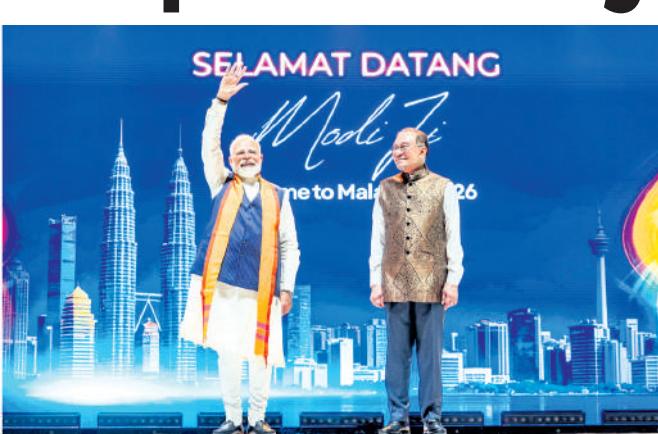
Addressing a community programme here, Modi said the Indian diaspora served as a living bridge between India and Malaysia and announced a new consulate in the archipelago nation and the Thiruvalluvar Scholarship to enable students to study in India.

Modi, who arrived in Kuala Lumpur Saturday on a two-day visit, referred to the trade deals India agreed with various countries and said India is seen as a "trusted partner for growth".

"Trust has become India's strongest currency," Modi said, citing trade deals with the UK, UAE, Australia, New Zealand, Oman, the EU and the US.

Malaysia is home to nearly three million people of Indian descent, the second largest in the world, with an overwhelming majority of Tamil origin.

Greeting the Indian community members in different languages, the prime minister made it a point to highlight the singing abilities of his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim, particularly his love of Tamil songs of legendary actor-politician M G



Ramachandran (MGR).

"Tamil is India's gift to the world. Tamil literature is eternal, and Tamil culture is global. Tamil people have served humanity with their talents," Modi said, recalling that India's Vice President C P Radhakrishnan and Union ministers S Jaishankar, Nirmala Sitharaman and L Murugan, were from Tamil Nadu.

"The Tamil diaspora has been here for many centuries. Inspired by this history, we are proud to have established the Tiruvalluvar chair at the University of Malaya. We will now set up our Tiruvalluvar Centre to further strengthen our shared heritage," the prime minister said.

Modi said he was very delighted to be in Malaysia which is his first foreign visit in 2026.

"India will always embrace you with open arms. That is

■ Trust has become India's strongest currency, Modi said, citing trade deals with the UK, UAE, Australia, New Zealand, Oman, the EU and the US

■ Malaysia has nearly three million people of Indian origin, mostly Tamils, the second largest globally

■ The PM said India and Malaysia walk hand-in-hand as partners for progress and prosperity, celebrating each other's successes as their own

why, just a few months ago, we took a historic decision to extend OCI card eligibility to Malaysian citizens of Indian origin up to the sixth generation," he said.

Modi said the Malaysian prime minister, who was present at the event, and he have been friends even before Ibrahim be-

came prime minister.

"India's success is Malaysia's success, and it is Asia's success," Modi said, adding that the guiding word of the relationship was IMPACT "India-Malaysia Partnership for Advancing Collective Transformation.

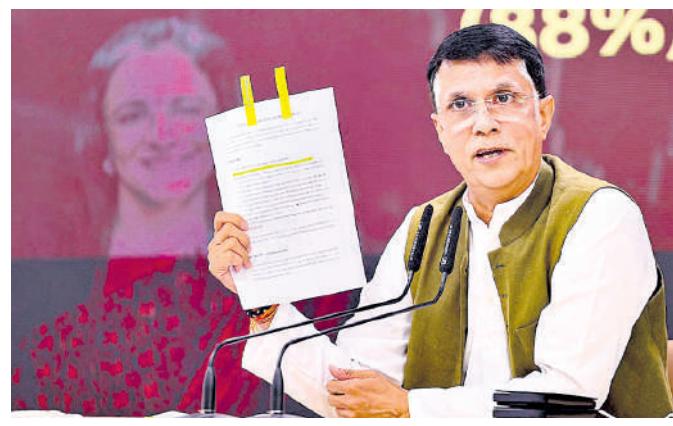
The prime minister said India and Malaysia walk hand-in-hand as partners for progress and prosperity, celebrating each other's successes as their own.

"I was deeply touched by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's warm wishes on the historic success of Chandrayaan-3. I fully agree with my dear friend, India's success is Malaysia's success, and Asia's success. This spirit of shared impact defines our relationship," he said.

The two leaders also walked through a PLO history and heritage exhibition paying tribute to the rich legacy, resilience and contributions of the Indian diaspora in Malaysia and their journey across generations, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a social media post.

"The Indian Government's decision of extending OCI card eligibility to Malaysian citizens of Indian origin up to the 6th generation has caused immense happiness among the diaspora. In the times to come, an Indian consulate will also be opened in Malaysia, thus bringing our nations even closer," Modi said in a post on X. Earlier, Modi and his Malaysian counterpart received a rousing welcome at the event.

## Congress calls Indo-US trade pact a 'surrender'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** The Congress claimed Saturday that the Indo-US trade pact is "not a deal but a surrender" of the country's self-esteem and interests, and that it is a betrayal of India and its people.

Addressing a press conference here, Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera also claimed that India will soon become a dumping ground for American products and it will hurt the interests of the farmers and small and medium industries here.

"This deal is a betrayal to all that India stands for and all that India stood for over the last 75 years. This is not a deal which is in our interest. This is a total surrender by none other than Narendra," Khera said, taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Congress leader added that he has proved that "Narendra is surrender".

"India has been made into a dumping ground by this deal. I do not want to call it a deal, as a deal is amongst equals and you sit across the table and negotiate. A deal cannot be with a gun held on your head... It is blackmail, it is a surrender," he said.

Khera also alleged that US is dubbing India as a "thief" as it will keep a close watch on New Delhi buying oil from Russia and showed an order from the United States government.

The opposition party's attack came soon after Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal announced that India has not given any duty concessions on any dairy product and claimed that several Indian goods, including agricultural products, will attract zero reciprocal tariff in the US.

India and the US announced on Saturday that they have reached a framework for an interim trade agreement, under which both sides will reduce import duties on a number of goods to boost the two-way trade.

Khera said this is not a pact with the US, but a "compromise

with our self-esteem and the interests of our farmers and MSMEs and the middle-class".

Noting that India has become a dumping ground for the US and it has happened under Modi's rule, he said, "With this deal, the back of farmers would be broken further and the coming days will prove how farming in the country would be destroyed due to this deal."

Taking a swipe at the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government, Khera said it now works according to the US time, alleging that all decisions, whether on announcing a ceasefire of military conflicts or a trade deal, are taken in the US.

He said the trade deal was signed between India and the US without Goyal even traveling abroad.

Khera alleged that this was not the first time that Modi was seen "surrendering" India's interests before other countries.

"You have seen Narendra Modi giving clean chits to China. Now, we have gone and announced that we will buy products worth USD 500 billion over the next five years from the US. There is no corresponding commitment from the US."

"Your import bill with the US, from USD 40-42 billion a year, will have to go up to USD 100 billion a year. You know about the health of the rupee and the health of the economy. Where are you getting the money from and what are the products you will buy? Mr Piyush Goyal read out from the list of products that we will not buy. But he, very conveniently and cleverly, hid the list of what all will come and what all will be dumped," the Congress leader said.

He said earlier, India used to hold talks with the US and other countries looking them in the eye.

According to a joint statement, India has expressed its intention to purchase US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products and coking coal worth USD 500 billion over the next five years.

## SIT formed to trace 10 tribal kids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Union Minister Pralhad Joshi plays 'gulli danda' during the inauguration of the Hubbali International Kite Festival 2026 and Dharwad Sansad Krida Mahotsav, in Hubbali, Karnataka

PTI PHOTO

## Allahabad HC quashes 'humiliating' placard punishment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Prayagraj, Feb 7:** A division bench of the Allahabad High Court has set aside a controversial direction issued by a single-judge bench mandating a Noida university student to stand on the campus gate for 30 days carrying a placard declaring, "I will never misbehave with any girl".

The division bench of Chief

Justice Arun Bhansali and Justice Kshitij Shailendra set aside the direction while disposing of a petition filed by the student, calling it "unjustified" and "humiliating" that could cast a "permanent scar" on his character.

The student was rusticated by the Noida International University in March 2023, following allegations that

he misbehaved with women students from another institution.

The student challenged the rustication in the high court, and October 29, 2025, a single-judge bench of Justice Saurabh Shyam Shamshery set aside the rustication order but imposed a series of conditions for his reinstatement.

A reward of Rs 1 lakh has also been announced by the Koderma Police for anyone providing information about the whereabouts of the children, SP Anudeep Singh told PTI.

The children, who belong to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) and residents of Gadiyai Birhor Tola (hamlet) in Khariyodih panchayat, have been missing since February 1, after they did not return home from Parsabab, police said. DSP Rati Bhan Singh is leading the SIT.

Pictures of the children with their names, age and other details are being circulated in multiple locations, including various police stations, and CCTV footage from Parsabab and nearby areas are being analyzed, as part of the investigation, the officer said.

Ratibhan Singh told PTI that all the 10 children are aged between 5 and 14 years. On February 1, they had gone to Parsabab to attend a shradh ceremony, about 4 km away from their hamlet, he said.

## SNIPPETS

### ENPO calls FNTA agreement first step towards separate statehood

**Dimapur:** As eastern Nagaland celebrates the signing of the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA) agreement, the ENPO Saturday described the development as the first step towards achieving its long-standing goal of separate statehood. The Centre Thursday signed a tripartite agreement with the Nagaland government and the Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation (ENPO) for the formation of 'Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority', a long-standing demand for a new administrative body within the state aimed at addressing the demands of eastern Nagaland. The ENPO, the apex body representing eight tribes across six eastern districts of the state, has been demanding a separate state since 2010, alleging decades of neglect. It later agreed to the Centre's proposal for a certain degree of autonomy under the FNTA framework.

### Vijay considers two constituencies in Chennai for his electoral debut'

**Chennai:** Actor-politician Vijay is considering two constituencies in Chennai from which he may pick one for his maiden electoral contest in the upcoming Assembly election in Tamil Nadu, a source in the TVK said. Vijay is considering contesting either from Velachery or from Virugambakkam in Chennai. He is obtaining feedback from party functionaries and would make the final decision, the source said. In the 2021 rural civic polls held in 9 districts, the candidates of Vijay Makkal Iyakkam, his fan club, won 115 seats. Vijay is exploring Velachery and Virugambakkam constituencies in Chennai, Vikravandi in Villupuram, Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam, and Vedasandur constituency in Karur, sources further said. The choice fell on seats starting with the letter 'V' after he was advised to select one of these constituencies in view of winning prospects. However, a final decision will be taken by the party leader, they added.

### 1 killed, 13 injured as swing collapses at Surajkund Mela in Faridabad

**Faridabad:** An on-duty police inspector was killed and 11 people were wounded at the Surajkund fairgrounds Saturday when a giant swing snapped mid-air and collapsed, just an hour after a gate fell down, injuring two persons including a child, officials said. According to the police, around 6 pm, approximately 15 people were riding the swing when it tilted and came crashing onto the ground. An senior official said the deceased officer was identified as Inspector Jagdish Prasad of Palwal Police, who was on fair duty and was posted in the police lines, Palwal. Prasad was set to retire in March. He tried to save people and showed great bravery, but in the process he received severe injuries to his face and head, the official said.

**Man killed as KSRTC bus hits scooter**

**Tiruvananthapuram:**

A man died after a KSRTC bus hit his scooter and then rammed into a shop here Saturday, police said. The deceased was identified as Jayachandran (50) of Konchira, Vembayam. According to police, the accident occurred around 4 pm when a KSRTC bus plying on the MC Road hit Jayachandran's scooter, lost control and crashed into a shop at Koppam near Vembayam.

**Sengar moves SC**

**New Delhi:** Expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar has moved the Supreme Court seeking bail in the custodial death case of the Unnao rape survivor's father. The apex court will hear his plea seeking the relief Monday. On January 19, the Delhi High Court had refused to suspend Sengar's 10-year jail term in the case on the grounds of delay in trial, saying it was partly caused by the multiple applications he had filed in the matter. On March 13, 2020, Sengar was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment by a trial court.

**Key accused held in AAP leader's murder case: Punjab Police**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

**Chandigarh, Feb 7:** In a major breakthrough in AAP leader Lucky Oberoi's murder case, the Punjab Police arrested a key accused following a brief exchange of fire in Amritsar Saturday, a senior officer said.

Shaminder Singh, a resident of Jalandhar's Mithapur, was waiting for the assailant on a two-wheeler at a short distance away when Oberoi was shot at outside a Jalandhar gurdwara Friday, police said.

A .30-bore pistol has been seized from the possession of the accused, who was arrested from Amritsar's Khasa area, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Border Range) Sandeep Goel said.

The accused, who has crim-



inal antecedents, was riding a Honda Activa that was used in the crime, police said.

Oberoi was shot at by an unidentified assailant outside the gurdwara in Jalandhar Saturday. Talking to reporters in Amritsar, the DIG said the accused knew Oberoi for the last 10-12 years.

He said strict action will be taken against those on whose

directions the shooting was carried out. Vital clues about the shooter have been obtained from his accomplice, the officer said. "He (the shooter) will soon be arrested," he asserted.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Amritsar Rural, Suhail Qasim Mir said the arrested accused was riding the two-wheeler when the police signalled him to stop. The accused attempted to take a U-turn but lost control of the vehicle and fell down. In an attempt to escape, the accused opened fire at the police team, the SSP said, adding that the security personnel acted in self-defence and in the retaliatory firing, the man sustained a gunshot injury.

He was arrested and taken to a hospital for treatment.

During preliminary interrogation, the accused has made important disclosures and on the basis of these revelations, further raids and follow-up action are being conducted, the SSP said.

Police are also suspecting the involvement of Oberoi's servant, who has gone missing, in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader's killing, sources said.

A Hyundai Creta car seen in CCTV footage is under the police scanner, they added.

A case has been lodged against two named accused, including a foreign-based gangster, and two unidentified individuals in connection with the daylight killing, with police suspecting personal enmity as the motive behind the incident, officials said.

# international



If, however, we witness a regional escalation, it would be appropriate for groups supported by Iran to exercise the greatest restraint in the whole region so as not to worsen a situation

JEAN-NOEL BARROT  
FOREIGN MINISTER, FRANCE

## 2 POLISH AIRPORTS REOPEN

Poland's Lublin and Rzeszow airports reopened Saturday after authorities said they had ended military aviation operations including flights by NATO aircraft in the country's airspace, triggered by Russian strikes on Ukraine. There was no violation of Polish airspace, the Polish army's operational command said



of the day quote



Today, I can reveal that the U.S. Government is aware that China has conducted nuclear explosive tests, including preparing for tests with designated yields in the hundreds of tons

THOMAS DINANNO | UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR ARMS CONTROL AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY



For those with wealth exceeding 1 billion forints (\$3.13 million), we will introduce an annual 1% wealth tax on the portion of their wealth above that threshold

PETER MAGYAR | OPPosition TISZA PARTY LEADER, HUNGARY



We support this appeal. We are interested in a ceasefire and if Russia once again rejects, it will once again confirm who is the obstacle for peace and who wants to continue this war

ANDRII SYBIRA | FOREIGN MINISTER, UKRAINE

## SHORT TAKES

### EU, India open talks

**London:** The European Union and India have launched talks on New Delhi's possible association with the EU's 93.5-million-euro flagship programme designed to foster cross-border research and innovation. In a statement, the European Commission, the 27-member bloc's main executive body, said that the "exploratory discussions" were opened Friday for India's association with 'Horizon Europe', a key EU funding programme for research and innovation.

### US accuses China of secret N-testing

**Geneva:** The United States accused Beijing on Friday of conducting a secret nuclear test in 2020 as it called for a new, broader arms control treaty that would bring in China as well as Russia. The accusations at a global disarmament conference highlighted serious tension between Washington and Beijing at a pivotal moment in nuclear arms control, a day after the treaty limiting US and Russian missile and warhead deployments expired.

## US pushes Russia, Ukraine to end war by summer: Zelenskyy

AGENCIES

**Kyiv, Feb 7:** The United States wants Moscow and Kyiv to find a solution on how to end the war in Ukraine before summer, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

In remarks to reporters released by his office Saturday after Ukraine and Russia held two days of US-brokered talks in Abu Dhabi this week, Zelenskyy said Washington had proposed talks in Miami in a week, and that Kyiv had agreed to that.

Zelenskyy also criticised Russia over an overnight attack on Ukrainian energy facilities, saying in comments posted on X that Moscow must be deprived of the ability to use the cold winter weather as leverage against Kyiv. "The Americans are proposing that the parties end the war before the start of this summer, and will likely pressure the parties to adhere to this schedule," Zelenskyy said. "The (November mid-term US Congressional) elections are definitely more important to them. Let's not be naive. And they say they want to get everything done by June."

Ukraine had suggested a sequencing plan, Zelenskyy said, but he provided no specific details.

This week's talks in Abu Dhabi concluded without a major breakthrough but Russia and Ukraine agreed to exchange 157 prisoners of war each, resuming such swaps after a five-month pause. Zelenskyy said the POW swap would continue.

### ZELENSKY SAYS SECURITY GUARANTEES ARE KEY

Zelenskyy met his negotiat-



US proposes new round of peace talks in Miami, Kyiv agrees

Washington suggests energy ceasefire, Russia yet to agree

Ukraine and Russia far apart on territorial issues

ing team in Kyiv and posted a video of their meeting Saturday, saying he wanted more progress. "Ukraine needs results, and one of the most important foundations for achieving lasting peace is effective security guarantees," he said.

Washington has asked Kyiv and Moscow to agree to a new ceasefire covering strikes on energy infrastructure as a de-escalation step during the talks, Zelenskyy said. US President Donald Trump said last week that Russian President Vladimir Putin had agreed to a one-week ceasefire. Russia halted strikes on Ukraine's power sector for a few days but unleashed a heavy new attack February 3.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine was ready to stop attacks on Russian oil facilities and other energy

infrastructure. Moscow has yet to agree. In the latest Russian attack, Moscow launched over 400 drones and about 40 missiles, targeting Ukraine's power grid, generation facilities and distribution substations, Zelenskyy said. More than 1,000 residential apartment buildings are without heating in bitterly cold temperatures in the capital.

### MILITARY TEAMS DISCUSS DETAILS

Zelenskyy said military teams had discussed in detail technical aspects of how to monitor a potential ceasefire.

Security guarantees for Ukraine and agreements on economic cooperation, referred to by officials as "the prosperity plan" that outlined Ukraine's postwar recovery, were also discussed. Zelenskyy said he had reports from Ukrainian intelligence services on discussions in which Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev had proposed US-Russian co-operation deals worth as much as \$12 trillion. Any such agreements between Moscow and Washington must not violate Ukraine's constitution, he said.

## Indian-origin bizman found guilty in drink spike case in UK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, Feb 7:** An Indian-origin businessman on trial in London was Friday found guilty of intentionally spiking the drink of a woman with a dangerous drug at a nightclub two years ago.

Vikas Nath, associated with fine-dining Indian restaurants in London, had denied the charges of trying to administer a substance with intent and possession of a banned drug.

However, a jury at Southwark Crown Court in London convicted him of administering a substance with intent to commit a sexual offence and possession of a controlled Class B drug. The 63-year-old has been remanded in custody to be sentenced at a later date. "Nath's actions were despicable and sinister, adding a dangerous drug to a woman's drink while she wasn't present in an attempt to enable sexual activity," said Detective Constable (DC) Louis Prior, of the Metropolitan Police's Public Protection Command.

"Thanks to the quick-thinking actions of the venue's staff and the thorough work of the attending officers and investigation team, Nath was prevented from causing harm to the victim and is now held accountable for his actions. I commend the strength of this victim throughout the investigation. It's hard to imagine how she is feeling after discovering Nath's predatory intentions, however she has demonstrated immense strength and courage," he said. The five-day trial this week heard that Nath was arrested and charged by the Met Police within 24 hours of attempting to spike the woman's drink at Annabel's, an exclusive London club where she was a member, back in January 2024.

## 2 POLISH AIRPORTS REOPEN

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi spoke to Qatari Al Jazeera TV a day after Tehran and Washington pledged to continue indirect nuclear talks following what both sides described as positive discussions Friday in Oman

REUTERS

**Cairo, Feb 7:** Iran will strike US bases in the Middle East if it is attacked by US forces that have massed in the region, its foreign minister said Saturday, insisting that this should not be seen as an attack on the countries hosting them.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi spoke to Qatari Al Jazeera TV a day after Tehran and Washington pledged to continue indirect nuclear talks following what both sides described as positive discussions Friday in Oman.

While Araqchi said no date had yet been set for the next round of negotiations, US President Donald Trump said they could take place early next week. "We and Washington believe it should be held soon," Araqchi said.

Trump has threatened to strike Iran after a US naval buildup in the region, demanding that it renounce uranium enrichment, a possible pathway to nuclear bombs, as well as stopping ballistic missile development and support for armed groups around the region. Tehran has long denied any intent to weaponise nuclear or missile production.

While both sides have indi-



cated readiness to revive diplomacy over Tehran's long-running nuclear dispute with the West, Araqchi balked at widening the talks out.

"Any dialogue requires refraining from threats and pressure. (Tehran) only discusses its nuclear issue ... We do not discuss any other issue with the US," he said.

Last June, the US bombed Iranian nuclear facilities, joining in the final stages of a 12-day Israeli bombing campaign. Tehran has since said it has halted uranium enrichment activity.

Its response at the time included a missile attack on a US base in Qatari, which maintains good relations with both Tehran and Washington.

In the event of a new US attack, Araqchi said the consequences could be similar.

"It would not be possible to attack American soil, but we will target US bases stationed in them. There is a big difference between the two."

Iran says it wants recognition of its right to enrich uranium, and that putting its missile programme on the negotiating table would leave it vulnerable to Israeli attacks.

## 4 Indian students among several hurt in stabbing attack in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Moscow, Feb 7:** At least six people, including four Indians students, were injured Saturday in a stabbing attack at a university in Russia's Bashkortostan Republic, media reports and the Indian mission here said.

According to preliminary reports, a teenager armed with a knife entered a dormitory of the State Medical University in Ufa in the Bashkortostan Republic. He attacked the students living there and stabbed several of them, the Interior Ministry said.

The Embassy said it is in touch with the authorities, and officials from the Consulate in Kazan are en route to Ufa to provide assistance to the injured students.

## Islamic State in Pak claims responsibility, toll rises to 36

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

pers were busy offering the weekly prayer.

**Islamabad/Peshawar, Feb 7:** Regional affiliate of Daesh Saturday claimed responsibility for the horrendous Shiite mosque attack in Islamabad even as four suspects, including a mastermind, were arrested in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in connection with the blast that took 36 lives.

A 32-years old suicide bomber, identified as Yasir from Peshawar, barged into Khadijatul Kubra mosque-cum-shrine in Tariq subrubs of capital Islamabad Friday and detonated his explosives when the worshippers were busy offering the weekly prayer.

Initially, 31 worshippers were killed and 169 injured but authorities said that the death toll rose to 36 after some criti-

cally injured died in hospitals.

In a statement on its Amna News Agency, the Islamic State in Pakistan, an offshoot of Daesh, claimed responsibility for the attack, saying that the bomber fired at the security guards when they tried to stop him at the gate and exploded near the worshippers inside the mosque.

The terrorist group said that the Pakistani Shiites were a legitimate target as they were a "human reservoir" that provided recruits to Shiite militias fighting the Islamic State in Syria. Meanwhile, Pakistan authorities said that they arrested four suspects, including three alleged facilitators and the mastermind of the attack. The arrests followed intelligence based raids by the law enforcing agencies in Peshawar and Nowshera area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The authorities had earlier said two brothers of the suicide bomber and his brother-in-law Usman were arrested while his mother had also been detained during the operation late Friday night. According to investigation officials, an identity card recovered from them helped establish the attacker's identity as Yasir.

Official records show that his permanent address was Abbas Colony, Shiro Jangi, Charsadda Road, Peshawar, while his temporary residence was in Ganj Mohalla Qaziyan, Peshawar.

Investigators have also re-

vealed that prior to the Islamabad suicide bombing, the attacker had remained in Afghanistan for approximately five months where he allegedly received formal training in weapons handling and suicide attacks.

## WEEK'S BEST PICS



Members of the Lakaani family from the Maasai pastoralist community gather near their emaciated cow at their manyatta homestead following worsening drought due to the failed rainy season at a village settlement near Magadi township along the Kenya-Tanzania border, in Kajiado, Kenya, February 5



Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor rides a horse in Windsor Great Park, near to Royal Lodge, a property on the estate surrounding Windsor Castle



Laurence Fournier Beaudry and Guillaume Cizeron of France during training ahead of the Winter Olympics, at the Milano Ice Skating Arena in Milan, February 5



A partially frozen boardwalk near the American Falls as seen from Niagara Falls, Canada, January 31



Activists wearing red rose dresses with faces covered in treacle sit outside Equinor's offices staging an 'oil spill' protest, as the UK Government's decision on whether to approve or reject the Rosebank oilfield is now imminent, in London, Britain



Demonstrators burn a poster of U.S. President Donald Trump during a rally in support of the Iranian people, amid recent tensions between the United States and Iran, outside the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul, Turkey

DIRENIS SELAN

YOU WILL HESITATE

# business

of the  
day quote**INDIA, US  
INTERIM  
TRADE PACT**

The FTAs which are being signed, huge opportunities are going to come... I would say that's what people should be looking at, opportunities

ARVIND VIRMANI |  
NITI AAYOG MEMBER

Indian exporters were hit hard by the 50% tariffs, as America is their largest export destination

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Washington, Feb 7: India and the United States Saturday announced they have reached a framework for an interim trade agreement under which both sides will reduce import duties on a number of goods to boost two-way trade.

US President Donald Trump has removed the 25 per cent tariffs, or additional import duty, it imposed on India in August last year for purchasing Russian oil, citing that the country has undertaken "significant steps" and New Delhi has committed to stop directly or indirectly importing oil from Moscow.

The interim pact will open a \$30 trillion market for Indian



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

■ With America, India had a trade surplus -- or the difference between imports and exports -- of \$41bn in 2024-25. It was \$35.32bn in 2023-24 and \$27.7bn in 2022-23

exporters, especially MSMEs, farmers and fishermen as the

US duties on Indian goods will come down to 18 per cent from 50 per cent earlier.

According to a joint statement, the two countries will "promptly" implement this framework and work towards finalising the interim agreement with a view to concluding a mutually beneficial Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA).

As per the statement, India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of American food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains,

## KOTAK RULES OUT IDBI BID

Kotak Mahindra Bank said in an exchange filing Saturday that it has not submitted a financial bid for IDBI Bank. The government has received bids for the bank, Divestment Secretary Arunish Chawla said Friday. The Indian government and state-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) together plan to sell 60.7% of the lender as part of a broader government privatisation programme. The government owns 45.48% of IDBI Bank, while LIC holds 49.24%



## KEY POINTS

**WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED**

- United States and India agree on a framework for an interim reciprocal trade agreement
- Framework linked to broader US-India Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) talks launched Feb 13, 2025
- Deal aims at reciprocal, balanced trade and supply chain resilience

**INDIA'S TARIFF ACTIONS**

- To eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods
- To cut duties on a wide range of US farm and food products, including DDGs (dried distillers' grain) and red sorghum for feed, tree nuts and fruits, soybean oil, wine and spirits

**US TARIFF ACTIONS**

- To apply an 18% reciprocal tariff rate on Indian-origin goods under existing executive orders

**DIGITAL TRADE**

- Both countries commit to address discriminatory or burdensome digital trade practices

**RULES AND SAFEGUARDS**

- Both sides to set rules of origin to ensure benefits accrue mainly to U.S. and Indian producers

**US TARIFF ACTIONS**

- To provide preferential market access in agreed sectors

**US PURCHASE COMMITMENTS**

- India intends to purchase \$500 billion worth of US goods over five years, including energy products, aircraft and parts, precious metals, technology products, coking coal

**STEEL, ALUMINUM, AUTO PARTS**

- US to remove certain Section 232 tariffs on Indian aircraft and aircraft parts tied to steel, aluminum and copper measures

**INDIA PURCHASE COMMITMENTS**

- India to receive a preferential tariff-rate quota for auto parts under US national security tariff rules

**PHARMACEUTICAL TARIFF**

- Pharmaceutical tariff outcomes subject to ongoing US

duce the import duty on Indian goods to 18 per cent.

In August last year, the US imposed 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs and an additional 25 per cent levy on India for its purchase of Russian oil.

Modi February 13, 2025, which will include additional market access commitments and support more resilient supply chains.

According to the key terms of the agreement, the US will re-

duce the import duty on Indian goods to 18 per cent.

In August last year, the US imposed 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs and an additional 25 per cent levy on India for its purchase of Russian oil.

According to the key terms of the agreement, the US will re-

## Harley-Davidson gets massive relief



India will grant zero-duty access to US motorcycle makers for bikes with engine capacities of 800-1,600 cc and above under the interim trade agreement, a move that would benefit iconic American brand Harley-Davidson, an official said Saturday. Last year, the government reduced import duty on motorcycles with engine capacities of up to 1,600 cc, which are imported as completely built-up (CBU) units, from 50 per cent to 40 per cent. For motorcycles with engine capacities exceeding 1,600 cc, the duty was curtailed to 30 per cent from 50 per cent. The official said that the duty elimination will come into effect on the day of the implementation of the agreement. India is a small market for high-end premium bikes, and the US share in the segment is minuscule. The move assumes significance as the US President has on multiple occasions earlier flagged concerns over India's import duties on Harley-Davidson motorcycles, saying the company was unable to sell its bikes in the country due to high tariffs.

## Domestic spirits makers seek fair play



Domestic spirits makers' body CIABC Saturday said it expects tariffs on spirituous beverages to be aligned with India's recently signed free trade agreements (FTAs) with the UK and the EU. According to the framework finalised by India and the US for an interim trade agreement, American goods ranging from wines and spirits to dry fruits will enter India either duty-free or at reduced import tariffs. Urging the Indian government to ensure a "fair and level-playing field against imports", the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) said it hopes the deal will be "equitable and mutually beneficial" for both nations. CIABC, which represents home-grown Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) players, said it is not against reduction in import duty, but wants it in a "phased manner".

## CRYPTO CRASH



# Bitcoin reverses Trump-era gains

REUTERS

New York, Feb 7: Bitcoin could drop further after wiping out all of its price gains since the election of US President Donald Trump as liquidity is expected to remain thin for the near future.

Bitcoin's slump alongside other digital asset prices coincides with investor concerns about inflated tech valuations and the uncertain path of US Federal Reserve rate cuts.

"This contraction has been underway for several months and remains ongoing, suggesting it is likely to persist for some time," said Thomas Probst, a research analyst at crypto data provider Kaiko.

"Reduced liquidity translates into sharper and more erratic price movements," he added.

Precious metals and cryptocurrencies sold off heavily January 30, after US President Donald Trump named Kevin Warsh as the next Fed chair, due to expectations he could shrink the Fed's balance sheet, reducing demand for bitcoin. Digital asset prices have seen-sawed since, declining to close down 20% on Thursday before rebounding Friday.

The moves have raised questions about the outlook for bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies in the year ahead. The end of the year proved to be tumultuous: October also saw the largest crypto liquidation event in history after Trump announced new tariffs on Chinese imports, washing out liquidity that has yet to fully return.

The Trump administration's friendly stance toward crypto helped give bitcoin a major boost last year, sending it to an all-time high above \$125,000 in October. Still, Trump's introduction of pro-crypto policies in 2025 has not stemmed the latest price declines.

Bitcoin fell below \$61,000 Thursday, its lowest level since a month before Trump's election. But some analysts have theorized that the worst may already be over.

"There are several things signifying that we are very close to a bottom, if not having achieved it," said James Butterfill, head of research at crypto

**BITCOIN'S PRICE DROP LINKED TO THIN LIQUIDITY AND MARKET VOLATILITY****BITCOIN'S MARKET DEPTH SHRINKS, CAUSING LARGER PRICE SWINGS****THIN LIQUIDITY**

Bitcoin's average 1% market depth - a measure of the crypto token's ability to absorb trades without significant price fluctuations - was more than \$8 million in 2025, but fell to around \$6 million after October 10, and now stands at around \$5 million, Probst said.

That means that the amount of bitcoin available to trade at close to the current price has been shrinking, so even relatively small orders now cause bigger moves than they did prior to October's crash.

"It is the trend in liquidity that is truly concerning," said Probst. Market participants are bracing for more volatility in the near term, said Andrew Moss, head of digital assets research at Jefferies.

"We see few bullish indicators that suggest we may be approaching the bottom," he said.

Cryptocurrencies represent a small part of global markets, but the points of crossover between the crypto world and mainstream finance - including stablecoin reserves, crypto-related stocks and bank exposure to crypto - have all grown in recent years.

Bitcoin has become more closely correlated to equities in periods of market stress, making it more sensitive to macroeconomic and geopolitical developments, said Probst.

Global equity indexes rose Friday as investors crept back into US technology stocks after a massive selloff in the prior three sessions.

Bitcoin rose more than 10% above the key \$70,000 level.

## I-T dept releases draft rules, forms for new Income Tax Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 7: The tax department Saturday released draft rules and forms under the new Income Tax Act, 2025, which proposes to simplify the provisions and reduce compliance burden for ease of understanding and make it taxpayer-friendly.

A new and simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, which will replace the over six-decade-old Income Tax Act of 1961, will come into effect from April 1.

The Income Tax department has sought comments from stakeholders on the draft Income-tax Rules, 2026, and forms by February 22. Thereafter, the rules and forms under the new Act will be notified.

Korean firms have actively invested in a number of sectors in India, most notably automobiles and electronics. Last year, Hyundai Motors and LG Electronics listed their Indian units on local markets.

Any deals resulting from the talks would mark the first time that Korean insurance firms have entered the Indian insurance sector.

The sources, who are familiar with the discussions, said representatives of the three Korean companies had met in recent months with Indian insurers, market advisers and the regulator, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), to assess ways to enter the market.

The talks are exploratory and no formal proposals have been made so far, they said. They requested anonymity because the discussions are private.

Hyundai Marine & Fire, South Korea's second-largest non-life insurer, told Reuters it



After the pan-India launch of the all-new Chetak C25 earlier this week, the premium electric scooter was inaugurated at Chetak showroom Atharana, Puri Friday. The unveiling ceremony was attended by Rashit Malhotra, ASM (Sales), Bajaj Auto Ltd; Mansur Baksh, Managing Director and Saheera Banu, Director of MSB Automotive Pvt Ltd. Bajaj has also introduced a limited-time early-bird discount of ₹4,299 for the first 10,000 customers across India.

## Leading SK insurers explore India entry

THE INTEREST COMES AS INDIA HAS OPENED UP ITS INSURANCE SECTOR TO FULL FOREIGN OWNERSHIP AND FOLLOWS A SURGE OF LARGE CROSS-BORDER DEALS IN THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

REUTERS

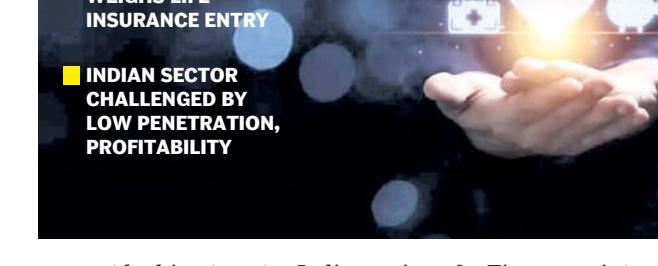
Mumbai, Feb 7: South Korean firms Samsung Fire & Marine Insurance, Mirae Asset Financial Group and Hyundai Marine & Fire Insurance Co are in exploratory talks about entering India's \$130 billion insurance market, three Indian sources said.

Korean firms have actively invested in a number of sectors in India, most notably automobiles and electronics. Last year, Hyundai Motors and LG Electronics listed their Indian units on local markets.

The sources, who are familiar with the discussions, said representatives of the three Korean companies had met in recent months with Indian insurers, market advisers and the regulator, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), to assess ways to enter the market.

The talks are exploratory and no formal proposals have been made so far, they said. They requested anonymity because the discussions are private.

Hyundai Marine & Fire, South Korea's second-largest non-life insurer, told Reuters it

**SAMSUNG, HYUNDAI MARINE & FIRE FOCUS ON NON-LIFE INSURANCE****MIRAE ASSET WEIGHS LIFE INSURANCE ENTRY****INDIAN SECTOR CHALLENGED BY LOW PENETRATION, PROFITABILITY**

was not looking to enter India immediately and was taking a "measured approach" and assessing options. It recently closed its liaison office in India.

"From a mid- to long-term perspective, we remain open to exploring a form of market entry when appropriate," a company spokesperson said.

Samsung Fire & Marine Insurance, the non-life insurance arm of Samsung, has "not made any official plans or decisions regarding entry into the Indian insurance market," a company spokesperson said.

Mirae Asset, which already owns a mutual fund business in India, specialises in life insurance, variable annuity and retirement products in South Korea.

Samsung and Hyundai Ma-

rine & Fire are interested in potentially entering the non-life insurance sector, the first source said, while Mirae Asset Financial Group is focusing on life insurance. Samsung sells non-life covers such as vehicle, property damage and liability insurance across Asia.

Seoul-headquartered Hyundai Marine & Fire Insurance focuses on insurance for businesses as well as health and auto cover.

Mirae Asset, which already owns a mutual fund business in India, specialises in life insurance, variable annuity and retirement products in South Korea.

Reuters reported last week that global reinsurers, including Samsung Re and Korean Re, are also seeking to expand their India presence through Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), a special economic zone.

India, as measured by total insurance premium underwritten in a year, stood at about 3.7% of GDP in 2024, well below global averages, leaving room for growth.

India's insurance sector has high commissions compared to international standards and weak profitability compared to global peers.

Profit margins too remain well below those of multinational insurers in Asia, a report by McKinsey and Co said.

The discussions come as insurers prepare for long-pending reforms under a new law that gives the regulator legislative powers to set commission limits and order disgorgement of wrongful gains.

"For all three companies, both organic and inorganic routes are possible for entry," the first source said.

India has about 60 insurers with global insurers such as Prudential Plc, Sun Life Financial and AIG currently operating through joint ventures with local firms.

Reuters reported last week that global reinsurers, including Samsung Re and Korean Re, are also seeking to expand their India presence through Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), a special economic zone.

# SKY's assault rescues India

**SKIPPER, SIRAJ SHINE IN INDIA'S 29-RUN WIN OVER USA IN T20 WORLD CUP OPENER**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 7:** Skipper Suryakumar Yadav batting just like he does and Mohammed Siraj's incisive first spell headlined defending champions India's scratchy 29-run win against the United States of America despite a stunning top-order collapse in the opening encounter of the T20 World Cup here Saturday.

A veteran of many-a-battle here at the Wankhede Stadium, Suryakumar's 49-ball unbeaten 84 was a blend of fine rescue act and a defiant counter-attack against a USA attack that proved to be more than mere pushovers.

The Indian captain garnered all his experience of playing at his home ground, reaped rich dividends for being patient but more importantly, disciplined, as plucky USA had India on the mat at 77 for 6 at one stage in the first half.

But Suryakumar's late onslaught which had 10 fours and four sixes after being dropped on 15, took India as far as 161/9 after being precariously placed at 128/7 after 18 overs.

USA, in reply, finished at 132/8 in a meek response with the bat, especially in comparison to their first-innings show in which bowlers kept the high-flying Indians on a tight leash and held on to their catches.

Siraj, who joined the team late Friday evening, came in as a replacement for an indisposed Jasprit Bumrah and bowled a fuller Test match length to take two wickets in his first spell and ended with 3/29 in 4 overs. Once USA were 13 for 3 within fourth over, they didn't have a chance to surpass the middling total.



## BATTING COLLAPSE

The captain stood tall with a 49-ball innings, single-handedly driving India out of woods after a stunning collapse saw them reeling at 77 for six in the 13th over.

South Africa born Shadley van Schalkwyk returned with figures of 4-0-25-4 as India's famed batting line-up, bar-

## BRIEF SCORES

India: 161/9 in 20 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 84 not out; Shadley van Schalkwyk 4/25, Ali Khan 1/13, Harmeet Singh 2/26) beat USA: 132/8 in 20 overs (Milind Kumar 34, Suraj Krishnamurti 37; Mohammad Siraj 2/ Arshdeep Singh 2/18, Axar Patel 2/24) by 29 runs

ring Suryakumar, endured a horrendous outing with the bat and were in real trouble of being restricted for an under-par total.

While Ishan Kishan (20) smacked a six off the fifth ball to get rolling, the first blow to India came when Abhishek Sharma fell for a first-ball duck in the second over.

Tilak Varma (25) broke the shackles when he danced down to hit a straight off Saurabh Neeravkar (0/65) in the third over and went after van Schalkwyk for three fours in the next and it looked like India were finally up and running.

Shivam Dube (0) is no stranger to the Wankhede wicket but the burly all-rounder was to-

tally outfoxed by an innocuous slow bouncer failing to check his stroke.

Rinku Singh (6 off 14 balls) couldn't control his first attacking stroke which went straight to long-on off Mohammad Mohsin (4-0-16-1). Hardik Pandya (5) fell to former Mumbai left-arm spinner Harmeet Singh (4-0-26-2) while trying to clear

the sweeper cover, and Axar Patel (14) in his bid to get some late quick runs.

Being the only Indian batter to have understood the nature of the wicket completely, Suryakumar opened up finally in the last two overs. He collected 34 runs off those, which included 21 in the last from Neeravkar.

## CLOSE CLASHES

### NERVY PAK SURVIVE DUTCH SCARE

**Colombo:** The Netherlands nearly pulled off a major upset before Faheem Ashraf's breezy cameo secured a nervy three-wicket win for Pakistan in their Group A match at the Twenty20 World Cup Saturday. Put in to bat, the Dutch were bowled out for 147 with one delivery left in their innings at Colombo's Sinhalese Sports Club ground. They then produced a lion-hearted effort with the ball, but dropping Faheem proved costly as he went on to smash 29 not out of 11 balls to secure Pakistan's victory with three balls to spare. Pakistan have little margin for error in their bid to qualify for the Super 8 stage after deciding to boycott their group match against arch-rivals India. Having bowled out the Netherlands with a ball to spare, they made heavy weather of their small target with the bat, and the outcome could have been different had Max O'Dowd held the catch offered by Faheem.



### SHEPHERD'S HAT-TRICK SAVES WI

**Kolkata:** Romario Shepherd grabbed five wickets after Shimron Hetmyer hit a fiery fifty as two-time champions West Indies began their T20 World Cup campaign with a comfortable 35-run victory over late entrants Scotland here Saturday. Invited to bat, Hetmyer blazed away to 36-ball-64, notching up the fastest fifty by a West Indian in the tournament. Late Sherfane Rutherford's 13-ball 26 cameo helped West Indies post a formidable 182 for 5. Shepherd (5/20) then starred with the ball claiming four wickets, including a hat-trick, in the 17th over to help bowl out Scotland for 147.



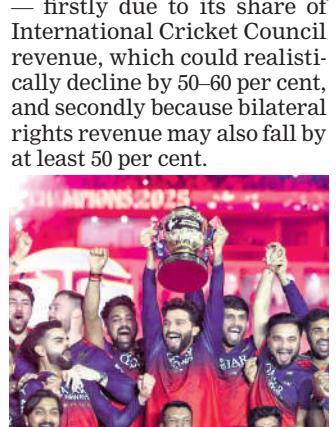
**Man Utd's Glazer brothers among bidders for RCB**

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** Reigning Women's Premier League and Indian Premier League (IPL) champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) have reportedly received bids from nine parties, including a \$1.8 billion offer from the Glazer family, which owns top England Premier League club Manchester United.

Latit Modi, the former chief of the Indian Premier League, confirmed to IANS Saturday that the bid from the Glazer family has already reached \$1.75 billion.

"I assume this is based on the current scenario of 74 games and not 94 games, which I believe will become the norm, as the IPL was originally conceived as a full home-and-away format. Secondly, this will solidify the Board of Control for Cricket in India's own revenue, especially at a time when the board's central revenues are under tremendous pressure — firstly due to its share of International Cricket Council revenue, which could realistically decline by 50-60 per cent, and secondly because bilateral rights revenue may also fall by at least 50 per cent."



## U-17 girls bag SAFF U-19 Women's crown

**YOUNG TIGRESSES BLANK BANGLADESH U-19 4-0**



**Pokhara (Nepal), Feb 7:** Fielding an U-17 side, India thrashed Bangladesh 4-0 in the final to clinch the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) U-19 Women's Championship title here Saturday.

Captain Julian Nongmaithem (42nd minute) opened the scoring before Elizabed Lakra (63rd), Pearl Fernandes (68th)

and substitute Anwita Raghuraman (83rd) completed a commanding triumph, as the Young Tigresses emphatically avenged their earlier round-robin defeat (0-2) against Bangladesh.

India had sent their U-17 women's national team to Pokhara to participate in the SAFF U19 Women's Championship, in order to prepare for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup later this year.

India's approach was clear:

build patiently, switch play through the wings, and attack with pace whenever gaps appeared.

India dominated possession and controlled the contest from the first whistle. Their movement off the ball, quick passing combinations, and intelligent use of width ensured Bangladesh were constantly stretched and unable to settle into any meaningful pattern.

## ASIAN SHOOTING

### Elavenil bags gold; Shambhavi shatters Asian junior record

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** Olympian Elavenil Valarivan held her nerve to fend off a strong challenge from Japan's Misaki Nobata and clinch the women's 10m air rifle gold, while Meghana Sajjanar also climbed the podium with a bronze medal at the Asian Championship here Saturday.

The trio of Elavenil Valarivan, Arya Borse and Meghana Sajjanar stof atop the podium in the team event, capping a memorable day for India's women's rifle shooters at the Karni Singh Range.

In the junior women's 10m air rifle event, Shambhavi Kshirsagar shattered the Asian Junior Finals Record en route to gold as India swept the podium, with Manjana Singh and Aneesha Sharma claiming the other two medals in a superb display of marksmanship.

The trio of Shambhavi, Aneesha and Sandrata Roy also combined to clinch the team gold, finishing ahead of Kazakhstan.

Elavenil was placed fifth after the first two five-shot series in the final but the young rifle

## India-Pak WC game back on the table

**ICC-PCB deliberations start; ICC seeks explanation after PCB wants to invoke 'Force Majeure'**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

natural disasters, government actions or public emergencies.

For the clause to apply, the affected party must demonstrate that the event was unforeseeable, unavoidable and that it took all reasonable steps to mitigate the impact. Mere inconvenience or political preference does not ordinarily satisfy the test.

### ICC seeks proof of mitigation

The Pakistan government had announced that its team would boycott only the India fixture to support Bangladesh, who were shown the door for refusing to play in India due to their "security concerns."

They will play the remaining matches.

The ICC has sent across a series of queries, asking the PCB to demonstrate what efforts it made to mitigate the situation, explore alternatives or seek exemptions before opting for non-participation.

It is learnt that the global body also set out the conditions under which force majeure can legitimately be triggered, the evidences required for withdrawal from a scheduled match, and the wider sporting, commercial and governance consequences of such a step.

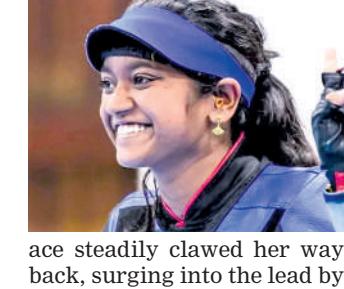
The ICC has also underlined the damages it could potentially claim if the invocation is found invalid.

In its reply, the ICC has pointed out that selective participation strikes at the core premise of a global tournament and could expose the PCB to breach-of-contract claims as well as disciplinary action under ICC regulations.

## ₹7.5 CRORE CASH AWARD FOR U19 MEN'S WC CHAMPS

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 7:** The BCCI have announced a total cash award of Rs 7.5 crore for the U20 Men's Cricket World Cup winning team, technical staff and the selection committee, the board's secretary Devajit Saikia told IANS Saturday.



ace steadily clawed her way back, surging into the lead by the 18th shot. She held her composure to the end to stay atop the pack, winning with a score of 252.0. Japan's Misaki (251.5) and Meghana (229.5) took the silver and bronze respectively.

The Indian trio of Elavenil Valarivan, Arya Borse and Meghana Sajjanar also clinched the team gold with a combined score of 1892.6, followed by Japan (1879.7) and Kazakhstan (1875.6).

India began the day in dominant fashion by sweeping the podium in the men's 50m pistol event, with former 10m air pistol world No. 1 Saurabh Chaudhary clinching gold, followed by Kamaljeet Chaudhary and reigning world champion Ravinder Singh taking silver and bronze respectively.

A staggering century from 14-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi fired India to ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup glory. Captain Ayush Mhatre (53) and wicketkeeper Abhigyan Kundu (40) also made valuable contributions as India racked up 411/9.

## Political tensions surface at slick Milano Cortina opening ceremony

**FOR THE FIRST TIME, TWO OLYMPIC CAULDRONS, ONE OF THE SYMBOLS OF THE GAMES, WERE LIT SIMULTANEOUSLY AND WILL BURN THROUGHOUT - ONE AT MILAN'S ARCO DELLA PACE (PEACE ARCH) AND THE OTHER IN CORTINA'S PIAZZA DIBONA**

REUTERS

**Milan, Feb 7:** Italy launched the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics Friday with a slick and colourful ceremony that celebrated the country's history, arts and fashion but where global political tensions surfaced in the crowd reaction.

The nine parties have submitted non-binding bids ranging from \$1 billion to \$1.8 billion, indicating serious interest, the report by the State of Play claimed. The Glazers' bid positioned them among the highest bidders for the franchise.

Last month, pharma tycoon Adar Poonawalla said he would make a 'strong and competitive' bid for securing the ownership of RCB.

in the iconic soccer stadium for the performance entitled "Armonia" (Harmony) that lasted three and a half hours.

Vance, who has been strongly critical of Europe, drew jeers in the stadium when an image of him waving the US flag appeared on a big screen.

The announcement of the Israeli team prompted some boos in Milan over the loud soundtrack, but there were cheers in Cortina. Israel has a team of 10 in Italy. The group of five athletes from Ukraine in Milan drew huge cheers.

Alberto Tomba and Deborah Compagnoni, two of Italy's most successful Alpine skiers who both won three Olympic gold medals, lit the cauldron at the

19th century Milan monument Sofia Goggia, one of Italy's top medal hopes for these Games, did the honours in Cortina. She became the first Italian woman to win an Olympic downhill gold at the 2018 edition.

US pop diva Mariah Carey had got the party started in a unique opening ceremony

There was some initial confusion over access in Cortina.

Local officials and officials

Let these Games be a celebration of what unites us - of everything that makes us human. This is the magic of the Olympic Games: inspiring us all to be the best that we can be - together

KIRSTY COVENTRY | PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE



locals and officials gathered to watch the main ceremony in Milan on screens as athletes in the small Alpine town walked in the snow, in sync with delegations at the San Siro.

A series of protests took place Friday, with more planned over the weekend, in the Italian financial capital to oppose the presence of analysts from a department that falls under US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Italy's government has said the controversy is unfounded, with ICE personnel not on the streets during the Olympics and only operatives from its Homeland Security Investigations in Italy working out of US diplomatic missions.

"But the IPL will make up for all those downsides. The next IPL media rights cycle, which will be decided within the next year, is very likely to see the value at least double. I have zero doubts about that," Modi said.

The nine parties have submitted non-binding bids ranging from \$1 billion to \$1.8 billion, indicating serious interest, the report by the State of Play claimed. The Glazers' bid positioned them among the highest bidders for the franchise.

Last month, pharma tycoon Adar Poonawalla said he would make a 'strong and competitive' bid for securing the ownership of RCB.