

## A Global Convening to Shape AI for Human & Social Good

Inauguration by  
**Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister

February 19, 2026 | 10:00 AM | Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

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## India, Malaysia agree to fast-track strategic ties

AGENCIES

**Kuala Lumpur/New Delhi, Feb 8:** India and Malaysia Sunday agreed to accelerate their strategic partnership, deepen defence and security cooperation, and expand collaboration in emerging sectors such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital payments, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a "new speed and depth" in bilateral relations during his first foreign visit of 2026.

Addressing a joint presser with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Modi said the two countries had decided to take their partnership forward in an "unprecedented manner," building on growing cooperation in energy, infrastructure, manufacturing, and technology.

"Inspired by our achievements, today we have decided to bring unprecedented speed and depth to our partnership," Modi said, crediting Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's leadership for giving new momentum to ties in recent years.

A key outcome of the talks was a decision to strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and maritime security, reflecting shared concerns in the Indo-Pacific region. **P8**

## Himanta-Gogoi faceoff

### SIT REPORT ON PAK LINKS



wife Elizabeth Colburn and Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh had a "deeper connection", and that information from the Intelligence Bureau (IB) was secretly passed on to the neighbouring nation.

Addressing a presser here ahead of the Assembly polls, Sarma also claimed that Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) rules were violated when Colburn was paid salary by Sheikh while she was working in India. The CM also alleged that Gogoi undertook a "very confidential" visit to Pa-

kistan in 2013 and was believed to have undergone "some kind of training" there, daring the Congress leader to come clean on the trip or face charges of "rashtra-droh" (treason).

Sarma asserted they bypassed the Indian government to work with local municipal agencies, and this cannot be probed by the Assam Police. "So we recommended a national probe by the Ministry of Home Affairs," he added.

Sarma claimed that Colburn had worked with 'LEAD Pakistan', an organisation run by

Sheikh, before being transferred to India to work with the same group. "But her salary continued to be paid by Sheikh," he said.

"Pakistani agencies cannot donate to an Indian entity as it's an enemy nation. Probably special permission was obtained in UPA time to pay Colburn," he added.

He also alleged that Colburn had a Pakistani bank account to receive salaries there, but she did not reply during questioning if it was closed or still active.

"Gogoi, however, did not mention this Pakistani account in his election affidavit. Now, I feel his opponent should complain to the EC about giving wrong information in the affidavit," he added.

Gogoi in a post on X said, "I pity the journalists from Delhi and Assam who had to suffer the most flop press conference of the century. This was worse than a C grade cinema."

"Most mindless and bogus points" have been offered by the "so-called political shrewd" CM of Assam, he said.

While being escorted back to the police van after the medical checkup, Panda told mediapersons, he is innocent and

## I was framed in Pitabas murder: Bikram Panda

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 8:** Former legislator Bikram Panda, arrested in connection with murder of Berhampur-based lawyer Pitabas Panda, Sunday claimed that he had been framed for political reasons and alleged that there was a conspiracy to defame the Biju Janata Dal (BJD).

Panda was taken out of Berhampur Circle Jail to MKCG Medical College and Hospital for a health check-up Sunday.

Panda was brought to the hospital under tight security and examined at the outpatient department where doctors advised treatment for high blood pressure, piles and gall bladder-related ailments, sources said. He was initially examined by physicians from the Medicine department, followed by consultations with surgery and dental specialists.

While being escorted back to the police van after the medical checkup, Panda told mediapersons, he is innocent and



has been framed for political reasons. He alleged a conspiracy to defame BJD and claimed the case has political links. Expressing faith in the judicial system, he said, "I'm confident of getting justice. Lord Jagannath is with me."

When asked who had framed him, Panda said the people of Odisha know this well.

Panda's remarks have triggered political discussions, as he had earlier refrained from making any statements during his previous court appearances. Police have so far arrested 16 people in the case, including former Berhampur mayor Siva Shankar Das, alias Pintu, and sent them to judicial custody.

Bail pleas filed earlier by the accused have been rejected.

## 4 of a family killed in van-bike collision

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kantabanji, Feb 8:** Four members of a family, including an 8-year-old boy, were killed in a head-on collision between a motorcycle and a pickup van near Maoist-infested Pandaren under Turekela police limits in Bolangir district Sunday evening.

The incident occurred around 7:30pm on Turekela-Mahakhand main road, police said. The victims were identified as Chira Putel, 65; his wife Phulmati, 62; their son Shobhan, 31; and Shobhan's son Debasish Putel, 8, all residents of Dhanhra Khaman under Lathore police limits of the district.

According to preliminary investigations, the family was traveling toward Turekela on a motorcycle by Turekela-Mahakhand road when it collided head-on with an oncoming pickup van. All four died on the spot.

On being informed, Turekela police reached the spot and launched an investigation. Further details were awaited. Police said Shobhan got married last month.



**DEXTEROUS HANDS:** An artist demonstrates live painting during a 15-day workshop on tribal art and craft at Odisha State Tribal Museum organised by Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute in Bhubaneswar Sunday

OP PHOTO

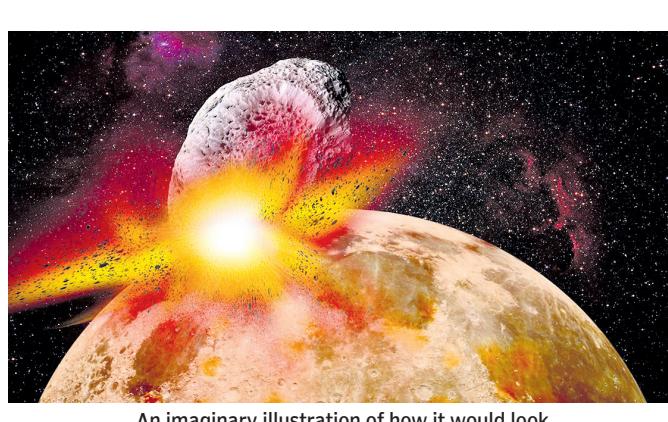
## Moon-ward asteroid could create 'optical flash'

AGENCIES

**New York, Feb 8:** Asteroid 2024 YR4, a 60-metre-wide building-size space rock, has a 4.3 per cent chance of colliding with the Moon December 22, 2032. If it does, it would release energy equivalent to 5.2-8 megatons of TNT, creating a crater approximately 1-km wide and the impact could create an "optical flash" visible from Earth, potentially as bright as Venus, and lasting several minutes, a report by 'NDTV' said, quoting 'Live Science', a noted science news portal owned by Future PLC.

In 2024, this asteroid created a buzz over reports that it would hit Earth; however, after further observations, NASA confirmed that the object poses no significant impact risk to Earth in 2032 and beyond.

According to a yet-to-be-peer-reviewed study, recently posted on the preprint server



An imaginary illustration of how it would look

arXiv.org, the impact would release energy equivalent to 5.2-8 megatons of TNT, creating a crater approximately 1-km wide. The scientists wrote that it would be the "most energetic lunar impact event ever recorded in human history", which would also generate a meteor shower, with debris potentially threatening satel-

lites and space infrastructure.

"Our results suggest an optical flash of visual magnitude from -2.5 to -3 lasting several minutes directly after the impact, followed by hours of infrared afterglow from 2000 K molten rock cooling to a few hundred K," the researchers noted.

The event would provide a ra-

ther opportunity to study lunar impact physics and the Moon's surface dynamics, and the scientists could gain valuable insights into asteroid composition and the effects of impacts on celestial bodies.

The researchers have stated that they will continue tracking Asteroid 2024 YR4, refining its orbit and impact probability estimates.

"Finally, we integrate these results into a coordinated ob-

servation timeline, identifying the best detection windows for ground-based telescopes, lunar orbiters, and surface stations," they said in the study.

"If this scenario plays out, it will be a milestone for planetary science, turning the Earth-Moon system into a grand stage for validating our understanding of asteroid impacts," Yixuan Wu, a researcher at Tsinghua University in China and an author of the paper, told 'Live Science'.

Last year, the astronomers also speculated that the 4 per cent probability could increase to over 30 per cent based on upcoming observations by the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) in February 2026. According to scientists, there is an 80 per cent chance that the odds of a lunar impact will drop below 1 per cent. Also, a 5 per cent chance that the odds will increase to over 30 per cent.

## Bhagwat: Ready to step down if Sangh asks me

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 8:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat Sunday said the Sangh had asked him to continue working despite his age, while stressing that he would step down from the post whenever the organisation directs him to do so. He was responding to questions during an interactive session with attendees here at a programme to mark the RSS centenary.

"There is no election to the post of RSS chief. Regional and divisional heads appoint the chief. Generally, it is said that after turning 75, one should work without holding any post," Bhagwat said. "I have completed 75 years and informed the RSS, but the organisation asked me to continue working. Whenever the RSS asks me to step down, I will do so, but retirement from work will never happen," he said.



What do you mean I can't read from the book? I can sir. I'm a postgraduate.

## leisure

**AUSTIN BUTLER TO PLAY LEAD IN LANCE ARMSTRONG BIOPIC**

Austin Butler is attached to headline a new biopic on cycling icon Lance Armstrong, bringing together a package stacked with Academy Award-nominated talent. The film will be directed by *Conclave* filmmaker Edward Berger and produced by Scott Stuber, with Oscar-nominated writer Zach Baylin penning the screenplay.

**KALEY CUOCO OPENS UP ABOUT DEPRESSION AFTER DIVORCE**

Kaley Cuoco recently shared her profound struggle with depression following her divorce from Karl Cook. The *Big Bang Theory* star described an intensely dark period where she felt unable to breathe and believed she was going to die.

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**

You spend happy times with your loved ones today. Ganesha suggests you learn to play some musical instrument as it is a good way to express emotions. Besides, it gives you a novel method to attract new people. Do it promptly before the mood changes.

**TAURUS**

Today, Ganesha sees your feelings and emotions running high. There is a strong possibility of an emotional encounter with some close to you. You are likely to be swayed and influenced by the other in course of this meeting. Avoid getting into any kind of dispute or controversy.

**GEMINI**

You will meet someone special who is here to stay for good, predicts Ganesha. Your kind and considerate nature will benefit others. You need to understand that it's okay to spend a little on comforts and entertainment. Be ready for a busy, yet cheerful, day ahead.

**CANCER**

You will have enthusiasm for swift action. Variety adds spice to life. So you may change job or trade. Ties with superiors will be good. Ganesha says this is the time for challenges.

**LEO**

It is a good day to renew old acquaintances and make new relationships. Your friends and relatives will probably visit you today. A joyful feeling will pervade your home. You may throw a grand party for your guests, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**

Consumption of work and success will be the high points today, says Ganesha. You will gain the much-needed appreciation for your dedication to work and your desire to succeed in whatever you do. A long-awaited promotion may materialise today, and there is also the bright prospect of some monetary arrears coming your way.

**LIBRA**

Ganesha says that today is going to be an unforgettable day for all those people who are in love or a romantic relationship. If you plan to propose to your beloved today is a good opportunity for it as success will come easily to you. You will be able to spend a day filled with joy, happiness and enjoyment.

**SCORPIO**

According to Ganesha, your family and friends top your priority list today. Life looks hunky dory on personal as well as professional front. Apart from business developments, romantic relations are on the bloom. And this is evident from your blushing cheeks. Creative indulgences may give a new dimension to your life!

**SAGITTARIUS**

Your business is likely to scale new heights, says Ganesha. You need to build up your confidence and move ahead with zest and enthusiasm. Rake in the moolah as the business yield profits.

**CAPRICORN**

Celebrations are in the offing and all the near and dear ones are invited to the party. Today, you will enjoy yourself to the fullest, feels Ganesha. You will get the desired profits in the business irrespective of how hard you have worked to achieve them. Realty seems a good investment option for you.

**AQUARIUS**

If the Almighty loads you with pain, He will also bless you with pleasure, assures Ganesha. You will begin the day with a long list of things to be done, but luckily you will be able to finish them off one by one. It will drain you out, so later on the day take a hot water bath, sit back and relax, says Ganesha.

**PISCES**

You will be able to come up trumps against the competition today. You should be wary of hidden enemies, for they might be involved in slandering you. It is best to reach out to others and make friends before they take it upon themselves to hinder your progress. Apart from this, no other significant event is indicated today, says Ganesha.



# Priyanka's best decision ever

**Mumbai:** Priyanka Chopra recently shared a deeply emotional tribute to her husband, Nick Jonas, celebrating not only his new solo album *Sunday Best* but also their journey together.

In her heartfelt Instagram post, Priyanka described choosing Nick as the "best decision" of her life, reflecting on how their relationship has shaped her personally and emotionally. Through a series of cherished photos and videos, she revisited memories from their early days, noting how those moments still feel "like yesterday."

Calling Nick "honest," "secure," and deeply sincere, Priyanka praised his courage to bare his soul through his music. She admired his willingness to be vulnerable, highlighting that it takes true strength and

confidence to share one's emotions so openly with the world. For her, this emotional depth is what makes Nick not just a talented artist, but also a remarkable life partner.

In her message, Priyanka encouraged others to seek a love rooted in respect, admiration and genuine care. She wrote about finding someone who cherishes you like a treasure and isn't afraid to express it. Her words reflected gratitude, trust and pride in their bond.

Through this tribute, the actress made it clear that choosing Nick was more than a romantic decision, it was a life-changing choice built on love, understanding, and unwavering support.

AGENCIES

**Hyderabad:**

Content creator and actress Niharika NM has often spoken about how not fitting conventional beauty standards shaped her journey while growing up.

As a child, she rarely saw people who looked like her on screen. With brown skin and a chubby frame, she felt excluded from the kind of representation that defined "who belonged" in films and media. "Women like me were hardly visible on screen. Being a chubby kid made me feel I wasn't meant to be there," she recalls. Like

many others who do not match society's narrow ideals of beauty, she faced ignorance and bullying.

Instead of letting these experiences weaken her confidence, Niharika chose to focus on building her skills, personality and individuality. She believes that not fitting in pushed her to grow beyond appearance. According to her, many children who feel different eventually develop strong inner qualities, becoming confident and talented adults.

AGENCIES

As her popularity increased, new challenges emerged, especially the pressure of constant visibility on social media. She admits that being online can sometimes affect mental health, particularly for those who compare themselves to unrealistic standards. Niharika stresses the importance of self-care, adding that stepping back when needed is an act of strength.

AGENCIES

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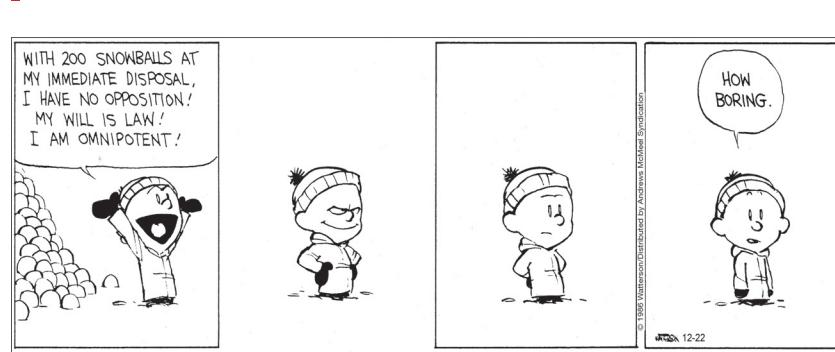
AGENCIES



**Niharika rejects unrealistic beauty norms**

Today, her journey stands as a reminder that success is not defined by looks, but by resilience, self-belief, and authenticity.

AGENCIES

**PEANUTS****CALVIN AND HOBBES****BREVITY****AUSTIN BUTLER TO PLAY LEAD IN LANCE ARMSTRONG BIOPIC**

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# Regina goes dark & gritty

**Chennai:** Actress Regina Cassandra is set to headline an upcoming untitled Tamil crime thriller series, marking a significant shift in her digital career with a more intense and serious role.

The series, which will stream on Prime Video, focuses less on dramatic twists and traditional "whodunit" elements, and more on emotional depth and psychological complexity. Rather than relying on loud moments, the makers aim to present a calm yet powerful narrative that explores pressure, fear, and inner conflict.

Regina will be seen in the central role as an investigator struggling with stress, doubt and emotional challenges while handling a sensitive case. The crime serves as a backdrop, while the true focus remains on her character's personal journey and mental state.

The show is directed by Nithin Lukose, a filmmaker and sound designer from Kerala, known for his debut film *Paka (River of Blood)*, which was praised for its atmosphere and tension. His signature slow and layered storytelling style aligns perfectly with the tone of this series.

Having worked across Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi cinema, Regina continues to expand her range with this performance-driven project. Inspired by *Mare of Easttown*, the series promises emotional depth and realism. Although details about the title, cast and release date remain undisclosed, anticipation is steadily growing.

AGENCIES



# Ahan on pressure of upholding father's legacy

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actor Ahan Shetty, who is receiving a lot of positive response to his work in the recently released film *Border 2*, has spoken about the last scene from the film, which he didn't get to shoot with his father, Suniel Shetty.

The actor spoke with this news agency after the release of the film, and shared that he was ready for the comparisons with his father given the latter's iconic performance in *Border*.

Ahan told, "That last scene that was there, unfortunately, we weren't able to shoot that together. But yeah, if I think about him being a part of *Border* and then me being a part of *Border 2*, I knew it wasn't always going to be comparisons".

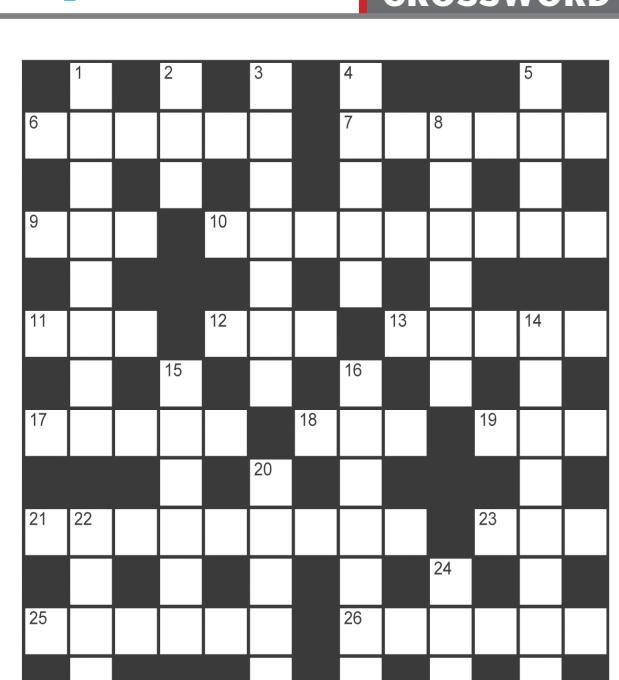
He further mentioned, "And I also had that feeling of that responsibility of carrying his legacy forward. But, I try my best not to let that noise get into my head, not to let that pressure build up in me. Because if I do that, then I know that I'll start behaving a certain way. I'll start doing things very differently, thinking about him or his fans. So, I just try to be true to myself, honest to myself and honest to my audience".

**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.



**FUN POST**

**CROSSWORD**

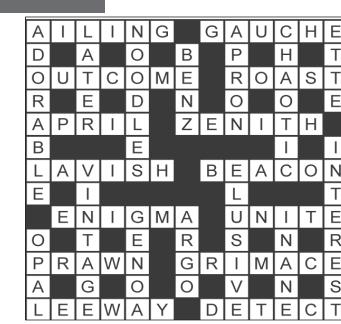
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**Across**

- 6 Steak choice
- 7 They're nuts
- 9 Chowed down
- 10 Roam
- 11 Kind of trip
- 12 Tube top
- 13 Baby bird?
- 17 City near Düsseldorf
- 18 Barbary beast
- 19 Ornamental carp
- 21 Like some gains (3-6)
- 23 Ultimate degree
- 25 Pressing
- 26 Vacation spot
- 3 African antelopes
- 4 Milky gems
- 5 Before long
- 8 Tooth problem
- 14 Hen house figures
- 15 Paltry
- 16 Shows up
- 20 Express
- 22 Zhivago's love
- 24 Nile viper

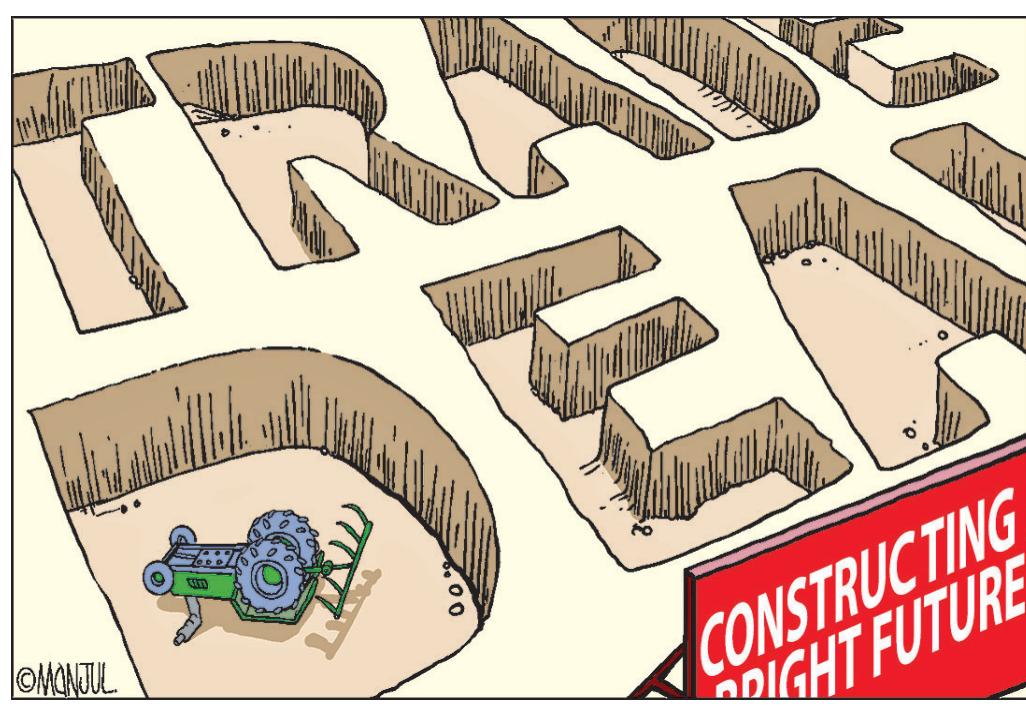
**Down**

- 1 Savings accounts (4,4)
- 2 Headlight setting
- 3 Ailing Gauché
- 4 Dobophant
- 6 Outcome roast
- 8 Redondo
- 10 April zenith
- 11 Lavish beacon
- 12 Enigma unite
- 13 Otersnir
- 14 Prawn grimace
- 15 Agoovans
- 16 Leeway detect

**SOLUTIONS****SUDOKU**

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

## POLITICKLE BY MANJUL



## Illicit liquor racket busted in Salia Sahi

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: Maitri Vihar police Sunday seized 400 litres of illicit country liquor during a raid in the Salia Sahi area of the City and arrested one person.

According to police sources, officers received reliable information about the illegal sale of country-made liquor from a house at Birsanagar under the Salia Sahi locality.

Acting on the tip-off, police raided the spot and caught the accused, identified as Salku Tiriyia (35), red-handed while allegedly selling country liquor without a valid licence or permission from the competent authority.

During the search, police recovered 20 plastic buckets of 20-litre capacity each, containing a total of 400 litres of illicit distilled liquor. Samples were collected for chemical examination, while the remaining seized liquor was destroyed on the spot as per prescribed procedure.

Salku was booked under Section 52(a) of the Odisha Excise Act and forwarded to court following his arrest. Further investigation into the matter is underway, police added.



on behalf of the party president. The communication reiterated that the action was taken in line with Patnaik's directives.

Party sources said the leadership has taken a firm stand against indiscipline and anti-party conduct, particularly at the grassroots level, as the BJD moves to strengthen its organisational structure across Odisha.

No immediate response was available from Tarai at the time of filing this report.



10001/24/2526

## ଶ୍ରୀ କୁଷ୍ଟ ସତେତନତା ଅଭିଯାନ

୩୦ ଜାନୁଆରୀ - ୧୩ ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୨୦୨୬

## ‘ଭେଦଭାବ ସମାପ୍ତ କରି ସମ୍ବାନ୍ଧ ସହ ବଞ୍ଚିବା’

- ଏହି ଅଭିଯାନରେ ଆଶା ଓ ସ୍ବାସ୍ଥ୍ୟକର୍ମୀ ନିଜ ନିଜ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ କୁଷ୍ଟରୋଗ ବିଷୟରେ ସତେତନ କରିବେ
- ବଧୁରା/ତ୍ୟାଳିଆ ଛଇ, ତେଲିଆ/ ଚିକଣ୍ଣ/ପାଉଁସିଆ ଚର୍ମ, ହାତ/ ପାଦ ବଧୁରା କିମ୍ବା ଦୂର୍ବଳ ହେବା, ମୁହଁ ଏବଂ କାନରେ ଗୁଲି ବାହାରିବା ଆଦି କୁଷ୍ଟର ଲକ୍ଷଣ ହୋଇପାରେ
- କୁଷ୍ଟରୋଗର ଚିହ୍ନଟ, ଚିକିତ୍ସା ଏବଂ ପୁନଃକ୍ଷମ ଅଷ୍ଟୋପରିର ସରକାରୀ ଡାକ୍ତରାମାନାରେ ବିନାମୂଲ୍ୟରେ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ
- ପୁନଃକ୍ଷମ ଅଷ୍ଟୋପରିର କରାଯାଇଥିବା ରୋଗୀଙ୍କୁ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ୧୯,୦୦୦ ଟଙ୍କା ପାରିଶ୍ରମିକ ଭରଣା ତଥା ଗୁରୁ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ବାବଦକୁ ୧,୫୦୦ ଟଙ୍କା ଦିଆଯାଉଛି

OIPR-10001/10003/2/25-26/0014

## କୁଷ୍ଟ ରୋଗର ଲକ୍ଷଣ

ରକ୍ଷତ୍ ସପା /  
ତ୍ୟାଳିଆ ବଧୁରା ଛଇକାନରେ ଗୁଲି ଗୁଲି  
ବାହାରିବାହାତ / ପାଦ ବଧୁରା  
ଲାଗିବା/ଦୂର୍ବଳ ଲାଗିବାଆଙ୍ଗୁଳି ବଙ୍କା ହେବା  
କିମ୍ବା ଝୁଲି ପଢିବାପାଦରେ ବଧୁରା  
ଘା' ହେବା

ଆଖ ପଚା ବନ୍ଦ ନହେବା

ମୁହଁର ଚମ ତେଲିଆ/  
ମୋଟା ଦେଖାଯିବା

କୁଷ୍ଟରୋଗର ଲକ୍ଷଣ ଥିଲେ ତୁରନ୍ତ ସ୍ବାସ୍ଥ୍ୟକର୍ମୀ କିମ୍ବା ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପରୀକ୍ଷା କରାନ୍ତୁ।

## downtown

## WB man held for ₹50 lakh online investment fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 8: The Cyber Crime and Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Bhubaneswar Sunday arrested a 46-year-old West Bengal man in connection with an online investment fraud in which a City resident was duped of ₹50.16 lakh on the promise of high returns.

The accused has been identified as Arabinda Paul (46), a resident of Hooghly district of West Bengal.

According to police, Bhagirathi Mohanta, a resident of the City stated that he came across online investment platforms offering high returns and was later added to a WhatsApp group named "SMC SIT III WII Group" October 8, 2024. The group invitation was sent from a mobile number, and the group was coordinated by a woman identifying herself as Kriti Gupta, claiming to be an assistant and group coordinator.

As per the instructions given in the group, the complainant opened a trading account with an entity posing as SMC Capital Customer Care Unit. He was



Complainant Mohanta came across online investment platforms promising high returns and was added to a WhatsApp group, "SMC SIT III WII Group," October 8, 2024

The invitation was sent from a mobile number, and the group was managed by a woman identifying herself as Kriti Gupta

Following instructions shared in the group, Mohanta opened a trading account with an entity posing as the SMC Capital Customer Care Unit and was directed to transfer funds to multiple bank accounts for investment

Trusting the claims, he transferred a total of ₹50.16 lakh from his bank accounts to various accounts provided by the fraudsters

subsequently directed by service managers to transfer money to multiple bank accounts for investment purposes.

Believing the claims to be genuine, the complainant transferred a total amount of ₹50.16 lakh from his bank accounts to various accounts provided by the fraudsters. He later realised that the investment scheme was fraudulent and that the bank accounts did not belong to any legitimate company.

Police said Arabinda and his associates impersonated investment coordinators and lured victims by assuring unusually high returns.

The money collected was routed through bank accounts operated by cyber fraudsters, which handled transactions worth lakhs of rupees daily.

During the investigation, police seized one keypad mobile phone from Arabinda's possession and forwarded him to the court.

## LWE menace will be wiped out by March 31: Amit Shah



Chhattisgarh's capital Raipur, weeks ahead of the Centre's March 31 deadline to eliminate Maoist insurgency.

The Home Minister, in a post on X, shared photographs of the meeting.

"Today in Raipur, I held a review meeting with the Chhattisgarh government and officials on anti-Naxal operations. The security-centric strategy, infrastructure development, targeting of the Naxal financial network and the surrender policy have yielded positive results, and Naxalism will be completely eradicated before March 31," he wrote.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, Union Home Secretary, Director of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and Special Secretary (Internal Security) in the Ministry of Home Affairs attended the meeting held at a hotel in Nava Raipur Atal Nagar, an official said.

Directors general of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and National In-

vestigation Agency (NIA), as well as Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Telangana, along with several senior officers, were also present, he added.

Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, comprising seven districts, shares borders with Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, and has long been considered the strongest bastion of Maoists. However, the region has witnessed intensified anti-Naxal operations over the past few years, considerably weakening the extremist movement.

Since January 2024, more than 500 Naxalites, including top cadres such as CPI (Maoist) general secretary Nambala Keshava Rao alias Basavaraj, have been killed in encounters in Chhattisgarh, while around 1,900 Naxalites were arrested and over 2,500 surrendered during the same period in the state, as per police.

## Fake guests steal ₹4 lakh valuables

POST NEWS NETWORK



Premium  
stops.



## Life Cover with attractive returns

Policy Term	Premium Paying Term
16	10
21	15
25	16

- Minimum Basic Sum Assured: ₹200,000/-
- Maximum Basic Sum Assured: Nolimit

- Minimum Entry Age: 8 years
- Maximum Entry Age: 50/54/59 years for policy term 25/21/16 years

## LIC's JEEVAN LABH

A Par, Non- Linked, Life, Individual, Savings Plan

Plan No.: 736

UIN No.: 512N304V03

LIC Policy No.: 512N304V03

Policy Term: 25/21/16 years

Entry Age: 8 years

Sum Assured: ₹200,000/-

Premium Paying Term: 10/15/16 years

Policy Type: Par, Non- Linked, Life, Individual, Savings Plan

Plan No.: 736

UIN No.: 512N304V03

LIC Policy No.: 512N304V03

Policy Term: 25/21/16 years

Entry Age: 8 years

Sum Assured: ₹200,000/-

Premium Paying Term: 10/15/16 years

Policy Type: Par, Non- Linked, Life, Individual, Savings Plan

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Plan No.: 736

UIN No.: 512N304V03

LIC Policy No.: 512N304V03

Policy Term: 25/21/16 years

# Leadership forged in struggle, not comfort: Kambhampati



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** True leadership is not born in comfort but forged in struggle, said Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati Sunday while addressing a public gathering at Pabitranagar, Kaniha block in Angul.

The governor was speaking at the inauguration of a statue and a museum dedicated to freedom fighter and former Deputy Chief Minister of state late Pabitramohan Pradhan on the occasion of his 118th birth anniversary.

Addressing the gathering, Kambhampati said that Pabitranagar was not merely a geographical location but a land of sacrifice, courage, and conscience. He said the soil of the region had produced one of Odisha's most valiant leaders, whose life and ideals continue to inspire generations to stand for justice, dignity, and the

rights of the common people.

Referring to the newly inaugurated statue and museum, the governor said the memorials were not just structures of stone and brick but living symbols of a life devoted to public service and social transformation. The museum would serve as a centre of learning for future generations, preserving the legacy of values such as courage, integrity, sacrifice, and commitment to society, he said.

Recalling the role of Pabitramohan Pradhan in the freedom movement, Kambhampati said he led the historic Talcher Prajamandal Movement against the oppressive rule of the Gadajat rulers. He also highlighted Pradhan's leadership during the mass protest known as the 'Hirrat', during which thousands of people left their homes in protest against injustice. Describing it as a landmark

moral movement driven by people's power, the governor said these struggles played a significant role in ending autocratic rule and facilitating the integration of Talcher into democratic Odisha.

The governor further said that after Independence, Pradhan continued his public service as a legislator, minister, and deputy chief minister, while remaining deeply connected with the masses. Highlighting his contribution to education, he said Pradhan's initiatives helped lay the foundation for a progressive, enlightened, and empowered Odisha.

Also joining on the occasion, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that late freedom fighter symbolises the pride, honour, and self-respect of the land and would remain a source of inspiration for generations. He highlighted Pabitramohan's life of struggle, political journey, and efforts towards the advancement of education.

The Union Minister also spoke on the National Education Policy 2020, outlining its far-reaching impact, and said coordinated efforts by the Centre and the state were underway, transforming Odisha to lead in technology-driven education. He urged the youth to take advantage of emerging opportunities and embrace entrepreneurship.

The governor and education minister also attended the Platinum Jubilee Celebration of PM Shri Pabitra Mohan Government Higher Secondary School.



IN ACT: Artistes from Moonlight perform 'Purthinu Sarag' – a drama in Sambalpuri language at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar Sunday

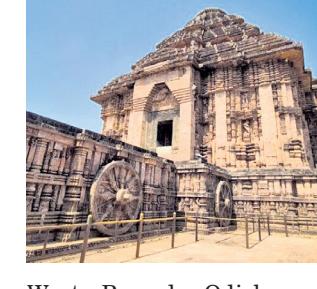
PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

## Odisha in forefront at Divine East Temple Tour

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Odisha's rich spiritual and cultural heritage takes centre stage in Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation's (IRCTC) newly launched rail-based tourism circuit, 'Divine East Temple Tour', which connects some of eastern India's most revered pilgrimage destinations. The 10-day journey aboard the Bharat Gaurav Deluxe Tourist Train will prominently showcase Odisha's iconic temples, heritage sites and natural attractions, including Puri, Bhubaneswar, Konark and Chilika.

The special tourist train will depart from Delhi Safdarjung Railway Station March 9, and return March 18, offering a spiritually immersive experience across Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand. For Odisha, the tour highlights the state's status as a major spiritual tourism hub, including a visit to Srimandir, forming one of the key highlights of the itinerary.



During its Odisha leg, tourists will also visit the 'Temple City of India', covering prominent sites such as Dhauli Shanti Stupa, Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves, followed by a trip

to the Konark Sun Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The itinerary further includes a visit to Chilika Lake, Asia's largest brackish water lagoon, blending spiritual tourism with leisure and nature-based experiences.

Introduced by IRCTC, a Navratna PSU under the Ministry of Railways, the tour is designed to offer a seamless all-inclusive travel experience. Apart from Odisha, the journey covers Varanasi with Kashi Vishwanath Temple and Ganga Aarti, Kolkata with visits to Kali Ghat and Dakshineswar Kali Mandir, a day excursion to Gangasagar for a holy dip at the Sagar Sangam, and Baidyanath Dham (Deoghar), one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva.

The Bharat Gaurav Deluxe

Tourist Train, accommodating around 150 passengers, offers AC I, AC II and AC III classes along with two onboard restaurants serving hygienic vegetarian meals. Modern amenities, enhanced safety features and dedicated IRCTC tour managers are part of the package.

The tour is priced at Rs 1,06,940 for 1AC, Rs 98,925 for 2AC, and Rs 79,285 for 3AC per person. The package includes train travel, AC hotel accommodation, vegetarian meals, transfers and sightseeing, travel insurance and guided tour services.

Bookings are now open on IRCTC's tourism portal and through authorised IRCTC tourism offices, offering a major boost to Odisha's spiritual and heritage tourism profile on the national stage.

## Workshop sets roadmap for safer wildlife-human coexistence in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** In a major push towards wildlife conservation, the state government organised a high-level workshop on human-wildlife conflict mitigation at State Convention Centre, Lok Seva Bhawan here recently.

Presiding over the session via video conference, Forest Environment and Climate Change (FE&CC) Minister Ganesh Ram Singhkhuntia proposed the implementation of a structured, roster-based system for community volunteers, specifically targeting the roles of 'Gaja Sathis' and 'Bidyut Praharis'.

The minister emphasised that resolving these conflicts requires dedication that can only be achieved through continuous, 24/7 oversight of wildlife movements. To ensure the strategy was grounded in reality, he engaged directly with field volunteers sharing first-hand challenges, addressed concerns raised by MLAs joining from various districts, and integrated the specialised perspectives of NGO representatives.

Designed to reach the most remote and marginalised communities, the campaign will use

### TAKING FIGHT AGAINST CHILD MARRIAGE TO THE LAST MILE

## Odisha flags off 'Bal Vivah Mukti Rath'

POST NEWS NETWORK



four-wheelers on major roads, while motorcycle and cycle caravans will cover areas with poor connectivity. Messages will be amplified through loudspeakers, posters, nukkad nataks, cultural programmes and survivors' stories.

Reaffirming the government's commitment, Padhy said the state had taken pro-

active measures, including appointing Panchayat Executive Officers and hostel wardens as Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, and designating school headmasters as Child Marriage Information Officers. She also assured that the issue would be taken up for detailed discussion in the Legislative Assembly.

Sharing her views, Patra

praised the collaboration between the government and civil society, calling it a "whole-of-society approach" essential to ending child marriage. Women and Child Development Additional Secretary Sumitra Pattanaik was also present on the occasion and signed the pledge.

Odisha has also rolled out the 'Mukhyamantri Kanya Bibaha Yojana', under which eligible couples receive Rs 75,000 to promote legal-age marriages. The scheme has gained traction, with Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi recently solemnising 201 marriages.

According to NFHS-5, while Odisha's child marriage rate of 20.5 per cent is below the national average, several districts continue to record prevalence above 30 per cent, underlining the need for sustained awareness and community engagement.

## SCSTRTI hosts live demonstration on tribal art & craft in Capital

POST NEWS NETWORK



the Mahali tribe. These artisans will demonstrate bamboo-based handicrafts, highlighting sustainable practices and traditional craftsmanship passed down through generations.

The initiative is expected to attract students, researchers, tourists, and art enthusiasts, while also providing livelihood support and wider exposure to tribal artisans. SCSTRTI director Sudhakar Sabar stated that such live demonstration programmes play a crucial role in safeguarding Odisha's rich tribal heritage and creating awareness about indigenous art and craft traditions among the public.

### DHAULI-KALINGA MAHOTSAV CONCLUDES

## Classical, folk, contemporary fusion dance steals show



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** The concluding evening at the 22nd Dhauli-Kalinga Mahotsav unfolded as a magnificent celebration of India's rich artistic heritage, seamlessly blending classical, folk, contemporary and martial traditions. Organised by the department of Odia Language, Literature and Culture, and Odisha Dance Academy, in association with Art Vision, the valedictory evening resonated with the festival's enduring message of peace, creativity

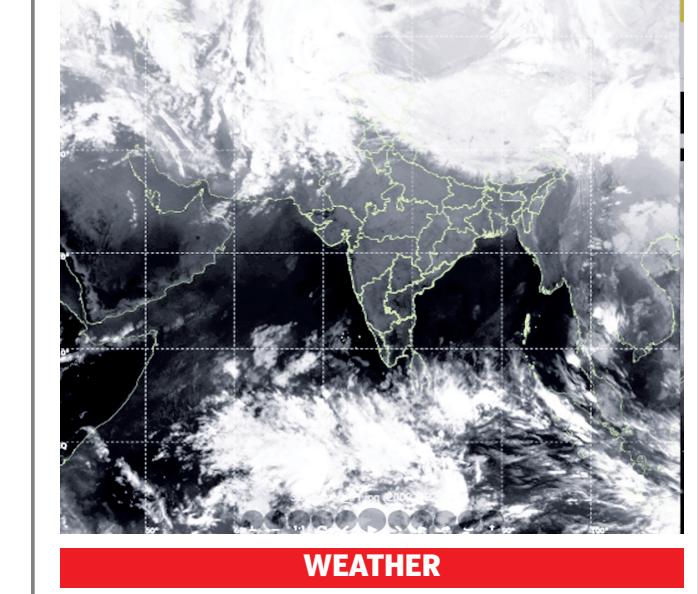
and cultural continuity.

Set against the serene backdrop of Dhauli, the evening left connoisseurs and art lovers deeply mesmerised with its evocative performances that reflected the spiritual and aesthetic legacy of Indian performing arts.

On the occasion, the prestigious Buddha Samman 2026 was conferred upon eminent cinema and theatre personality Anant Mahapatra, in recognition of his lifetime contribution to the fields of cinema and theatre. Marking the golden jubilee

of Odisha Dance Academy, the Swarna Smarak Samman was presented to former Indian diplomat and a distinguished patron of performing arts Lalit Mansingh.

The evening opened with 'Patha Rajapatha', a visually arresting fusion of classical, folk and contemporary dance, presented by the dancers of Odisha Dance Academy, Bhubaneswar. The second presentation featured a refined Kathak recital by Souvik Chakraborty and his troupe Nrityadisha, Kolkata. The performance included a Darbari set in Teen Taal and Raag Darbari, followed by a soulful ghazal highlighting the intimate baithaki bhava. The festival concluded with 'Sita', a powerful Kalaripayattu martial arts production by Belraj Soni and group of Navaneetham Cultural Trust, Kerala. A reimagined epic, Sita unfolded through a compelling synthesis of martial arts, classical dance and theatre, offering a dynamic and deeply expressive portrayal of strength, resilience and feminine power.



### WEATHER

	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	31.3°	29.2°	
Min Temp	16.4°	15.0°	Dry weather likely to prevail
Humidity	82%	91%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	



## CLASSIFIED

### LOST

Before Executive Magistrate, Digapahandi, affidavit No.- A/46- 27.01.2026, I, Gopal Das Gupta (74), S/o.- Ramnath Gupta, Vill./P.O./P.S.- Digapahandi, on dated 21.01.2026 about 7 PM when I was travelling from bike I lost my bag on the way carrying original sale deed vide document No.- 3334/1986 and did not trace it out. If anybody finds it kindly inform the above address or Police Station Digapahandi.

# 9,500 quintal unsold paddy lies exposed at Kalahandi mandis



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Kesinga, Feb 8:** More than 9,500 quintal paddy belonging to 176 farmers has been lying unsold for over two months at three procurement centres in Kalahandi district, triggering resentment among the farmers who have urged the district administration to intervene.

The concerned mandis—Shiro, Balsi and Kandel—operate under the Kandel Primary Agricultural Cooperative Society (PACS) in Kesinga block. Despite repeated assurances, paddy continues to remain exposed to the open sky amid severe cold and dew, forcing farmers to guard their produce day and night.

According to farmers, around 3,520 quintal paddy belonging to 52 farmers is piled up at the Shiro mandi, 1,600 quintal paddy of 42 farmers at Balsi, and over 4,000 quintal paddy of 82 farmers at the Kandel mandi.

Last month, protests including an eight-hour shutdown and road blockades were held

across the state over delay in lifting paddy from mandis. However, farmers allege that the situation on the ground has not improved.

The Kalahandi District Collector had reportedly directed five rice mills to lift the paddy, but millers are yet to comply. Farmers also accused millers of arbitrarily deducting 6-7 kg per quintal in the name of sorting and quality cuts.

To protect their produce from dew and cold, farmers have covered the paddy with polythene sheets. The delay has added to their distress and fuelled dissatisfaction with the state government's procurement process.

While a new shed has been constructed at the Shiro mandi, the absence of sheds at Balsi and Kandel has worsened the hardship for farmers there.

Responding to the issue, Kandel PACS secretary Jashobant Bag said the lifting process is expected to begin within five to 10 days. Farmers, however, have demanded immediate action to prevent further losses.

## 2 dead, 5 critical in car-truck collision

**Chikiti:** Two persons of a family, including a critically ill patient, were killed and five others sustained serious injuries following a head-on collision between the car they were travelling in and a truck near Nandigaon, between Palasa and Takeli along the Andhra Pradesh border, Sunday afternoon. The accident occurred at around 3pm, when family members were transporting the patient from MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur to Visakhapatnam in a hired car for advanced treatment.

The deceased were identified as W Daleia (40), the patient, and his family member W Maina (45). Five others, including the car driver, were critically injured. They were identified as W Mutiamma (38), W Niladri (25), D Rama Rao (30), B Chandra Mani (33) and driver P Venkatesh (40). According to sources, Daleia, a resident of Patisunapur village, had been admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital due to some illness. As his condition deteriorated, doctors advised shifting him to another hospital. The family then hired a car to take him to a private hospital in Visakhapatnam. However, near Nandigaon, the car collided head-on with a truck, leaving Daleia and Maina dead on the spot. Local residents rushed to the scene and shifted the injured to a nearby medical facility. Takeli police seized both vehicles and sent the bodies for post-mortem examination. An investigation into the cause of the accident is underway. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed grief over the incident and announced an ex gratia of ₹4 lakh each from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) for the kin of the deceased.

## NIT Rourkela boasts 100 granted patents

**Rourkela:** National Institute of Technology (NIT) Rourkela has crossed a major research milestone with 101 patents granted so far, reflecting a sharp rise in innovation output and intellectual property creation. The institute has filed 230 patents to date, including 218 national and 12 international applications. Of these, 97 national and four international patents have been granted. In 2025 alone, NIT Rourkela achieved 23 patent grants, with the impact of a record 91 filings that year expected to be reflected further in the coming years. The granted patents span diverse areas such as AI-based vehicular communication, autonomous drones, industrial waste treatment, health-monitoring IoT devices, sustainable food packaging and advanced materials derived from waste resources.

## Home guard, another found dead in Koraput

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Nandapur, Feb 8:** Police Sunday recovered the bodies of a home guard and a 33-year-old man from water under Khilua-Petiabada bridge on Nandapur-Handiput MDR-55 road in Koraput district.

The deceased were identified as Bhagaban Khar, 50, a home guard of Nilor Doraput village and Ugrasen Pangi, 33, of Hikimput. A motorcycle was also found from the spot.

Police said Khar was waiting for a bus at Nandapur bus stand after his finishing his duty Saturday, when around 8pm, Pangi, who was returning from Damanjodi on his bike, offered him a lift, and the duo left Nandapur.

However, neither of them reached home, prompting the family members to file miss-

## From hardship to hope: 8 tribal families set to shift downhill

*In a first, Collector treks 1,200 feet uphill to visit remote Kunnakadu village atop Niyamgiri hills*

CHANDRANSHU MISHRA, OP

**Bhawanipatna, Feb 8:** Living atop an inaccessible hill bereft of basic amenities, hope is finally in sight for eight tribal families of Kunnakadu village under Trilochanpur panchayat in Kalahandi district's Lanjigarh block. The tribal households, initially reluctant to leave their ancestral land, are set to be relocated from the Niyamgiri hilltop to a safer and more accessible settlement under a government housing initiative.

In a first, Kalahandi District Collector Pawar Sachin Prakash Saturday visited the remote village situated at an elevation of nearly 1,200 feet after taking up a

difficult trek along a rugged hilly terrain.

Kunnakadu, home to eight tribal families, has remained cut off from basic civic amenities for decades. The village has no road connectivity, electricity or tube well, forcing residents to climb nearly 900 feet daily to fetch drinking water from a hill stream. Medical emergencies are particularly challenging due to the lack of access to health facilities.

Earlier efforts by the block administration to relocate the families were unsuccessful, as villagers were reluctant to leave their ancestral land, fearing the displeasure of traditional deities. Renewed efforts in 2024 by Lanjigarh Block De-



velopment Officer (BDO) Shashank Patra and Panchayat Executive Officer (PEO) Tapas Sahu helped build trust, eventually leading the villagers to agree to move downhill.

Land was identified about 1,200 feet below the village for the construction of eight houses under the Pradhan Mantri Janman Yojana December 4, 2024. The Collector had earlier performed the bhoomi puja

(ground breaking rituals) for the project, earning wide appreciation.

During his latest visit, the Collector inspected the ongoing construction and then trekked further uphill to interact directly with the villagers. Discussions focused on ensuring safe drinking water supply, improving livelihoods, building access roads connecting the old village to the new settlement, and

## Man stabs son to death

POST NEWS NETWORK

seriously injured.

Khirod informed police the same night and lodged a complaint against his father at Kankadahad PS Sunday morning. His sister, Priyanka, later alleged that police did not treat the complaint with urgency.

When Khirod returned home from the police station, Sahu stabbed Khirod in the stomach. Family members rushed Khirod to Kamakhyanagar sub-divisional hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.

The accused fled the scene after committing the crime but was later arrested from the same village, police said. Kankadahad IIC Kalpana Behera said the dispute stemmed from land issues and family discord. She added that while the accused has been arrested, a murder case is yet to be registered as a complaint is awaited.

The victim's mother, Rashmita, and sister, Priyanka, demanded capital punishment for the accused.

Police said Sahu had frequent quarrels with his first wife's family over land. After marrying for the second time, conflicts within the family reportedly intensified. Meanwhile, Sahu allegedly returned home intoxicated and began abusing family members Saturday night. Khirod, the son from the first marriage, objected, leading to a scuffle in which Sahu allegedly threw a brick at Khirod which hit his waist and left him

## GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

### Appointment of

### Vice-Chancellor of University of Hyderabad

Applications are invited for the post of **Vice-Chancellor of University of Hyderabad**. The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

- A person possessing the highest level of competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment.
- A Distinguished academician, with a minimum of 10 years' experience as Professor University or 10 years' experience in a reputed research and/or academic administrative organisation with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.
- Preferably not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications of this advertisement.

### Salary and Service Conditions

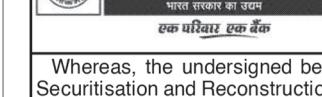
- The post carries a pay of Rs. 2,10,000/- (Fixed) per month with Special Allowance of Rs. 11,250/- and other usual allowances.
- The terms and conditions of the services will be those as set forth in the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University.

### Procedure for Appointment

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Committee constituted under the provisions of Act of the University.
- The advertisement is available on the websites <http://www.education.gov.in> and <https://uohyd.ac.in>
- Candidates are required to "APPLY ONLINE ONLY" on the Ministry of Education SAMARTH portal as per the link given below: <https://vcrec.samarth.ac.in/index.php>
- The above link will be active from 09.02.2026, 10:00 Hours to 10.03.2026, 17:00 Hours.

cbc 21201/11/0019/2526

[cbc 21201/11/0019/2526]



**BANK OF MAHARASHTRA**  
ZONAL OFFICE : BHUBANESWAR  
First Floor, Door Sanchar Bhavan, Unit-IX  
Near Rupali Square, Bhubaneswar-751022  
E-mail: cmrecovers\_bbsr@mahabank.co.in

**POSSESSION  
NOTICE**  
[Rule-8(1)]

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the **Bank of Maharashtra** under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of the powers conferred under sub-section (12) of section 13 read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice calling upon the Borrowers/Co-Applicants/Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice plus interest and expenses thereon within **60 days** from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to Borrowers/Co-Applicants/Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him under Sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The Borrowers/Co-Applicants/Guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the **Bank of Maharashtra** for an amount stated below with interest & expenses thereon. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

**BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower(s) / Co-Applicant(s) / Guarantor(s)** **Description of the Security Interest taken over possession** **Liabilities due on the specified date as per Notice** **Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession**

**BARGARH BRANCH /** **Borrower(s) / Co-Applicant(s) / Guarantor(s):** Mrs. Subanti Meher, W/o. Kartika Meher, Deulapura, Brahmani, Menda, Subarnapur, Odisha, PIN-767016. **Equitable Mortgage of all those pieces and parcels of residential Flat/ Apartment No.: 109, admeasuring 1201 sqft. (Carpet) and 1413 sqft. (Built up) of the buildingGANAPATI** **₹14,05,131.83 as on 28.11.2025 + interest & other charges thereon** **28.11.2025 / 05.02.2026**

**VILLA** Apartment projects/Society constructed or to be constructed under bearing S No./Gat No./CTS No./Flat No.: 109, B Block, Khata No.: 109, Plot No.: 7, at Bargarh, Dist.: Bargarh and within the jurisdiction of Sub Registrar SRO Bargarh and bounded by- East: Flat No. 110, West: Road, North: Corridor, South: NH-6 Road, together with building and structures/residential block constructed to/be to be constructed thereon admeasuring Ac.0.06 dec. and all the fixture annexed thereto (**Symbolic Possession**).

**JHARSUGUDA BRANCH /** **Borrower(s) / Co-Applicant(s) / Guarantor(s):** 1) M/s. Afnsa Ahmed, through its Prop.: Afnsa Ahmed, W/o- Mohammad Imtiaz, 2) Mohammad Imtiaz, Both are At: Mangal Bazar, Sarogi Colony, Koela Godam, Jharsuguda, Odisha, PIN-768201, constructed to/be to be constructed thereon and all the fixture annexed thereto (**Symbolic Possession**). **₹56,43,126.27 as on 24.06.2025 + interest & other charges thereon** **24.06.2025 / 04.02.2026**

**JAGATSINGHPUR BRANCH /** **Borrower(s) / Co-Applicant(s) / Guarantor(s):** 1) Mrs. Nibedita Bhattacharya, W/o- Sadhan Bhattacharya, Both are At: Imam Nagar, Jagatpur, Bargarh, P.S: Jagatpur, Cuttack, Odisha, PIN-754200, 3) M/s Matrukrupa Engineering, Through its Prop.: Mrs. Nibedita Bhattacharya, At: Near Durga Mandap, Jagatpur Golei Chhak, Jagatpur, Cuttack-754021. **All those pieces and parcels of Land lying at Village/Mouza: Imam Nagar, in the registration District Cuttack, PS & SRO: Salipur, Sub-Dist.: Salipur, admeasuring 1000 Square Feet and bearing CTS/Survey Nos./Khata No.: 403/863, Plot No.: 14/1508, Kissam: Gharabari, Owned by- Mrs. Nibedita Bhattacharya. Boundaries of the property: East: Land of Mr. Amlan Samal, West: Land of Manoranjan Behera, North: Balance Land of Seller, South: Road together with the buildings and structures/residential block constructed to/be to be constructed thereon admeasuring 1000 sqft. and all the fixture annexed thereto (**Symbolic Possession**).**

**SAMBALPUR BRANCH /** **Borrower(s) / Co-Applicant(s) / Guarantor(s):** 1) Mr. Manoj Kumar Chhanda, S/o- Mr. Ajodhya Chhanda, 2) Mr. Ajodhya Chhanda, S/o- Late Parameswar Chhanda, 3) Mr. Saroj Chhanda, S/o- Mr. Ajodhya Chhanda, 4) Mr. Sakuntala Chhanda, S/o- Dhamma, Dhamma Road, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN-768117, 5) Mr. Rukuni Kshetri, D/o- Mr. Ajodhya Chhanda, At: Pudapada, PO: Salesing, Dhamma, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha, PIN-768117. **All those pieces and parcels of Land & Building constructed thereon admeasuring total Area: Ac.12.50 dec., bearing Khata No.: 5, consists of Six Plots of different Kiscams, Plot No.: 277, Area: Ac.0.140 dec., Plot No.: 279, Area: Ac.0.510 dec., Plot No.: 1331, Area: Ac.10.540 dec., Agriculture Kiscam, Plot No.: 1329, Area: Ac.0.110 dec. is Pathara Chhatana Kiscam, Non Chhatka Plot No.: 278, Area: Ac.1.70 dec. is Gharabari Kiscam and Plot No.: 466, Area: Ac.0.030 dec. is Ghara Kiscam situated at Mousa: Badupali, No. 16, Tehsil: Maneswar, No. 306, Dist.: Sambalpur, Odisha together with the buildings and structures/residential block constructed to/be to be constructed thereon and all the fixture annexed thereto (**Symbolic Possession**).**

**Place:** Bhubaneswar **Date:** 07.02.2026 **Authorized Officer** **Bank of Maharashtra**

## OPIUM CULTIVATOR GIVES POLICE THE SLIP

**Tensa:** An arrested opium cultivator escaped police custody in Sundargarh district, triggering questions over security lapses. Police and Excise officials Saturday destroyed opium plants worth more than ₹30 lakh in the Punthi Pokhri area near Kalta panchayat under Koida police limits. Two persons Balaram Mundari, 32, and Budram Hare, 23, were arrested in connection with the illegal cultivation. However, during a medical examination at the Koida hospital in the evening, Mundari allegedly broke through police security and fled. Police fired four rounds while chasing him, but failed to nab the accused. More than 24 hours after the incident, Mundari has remained at large. His escape despite a security cordon has raised serious questions. Former Bonai MLA Bhimsen Choudhury alleged that police negligence led to the accused fleeing custody. When contacted, Bonai Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Ramchandra Biswal said the accused escaped from the hospital premises. He added that raids were underway at multiple locations and Mundari would be arrested soon.

## Child's handwritten letter to Maa Tara Tarini moves many

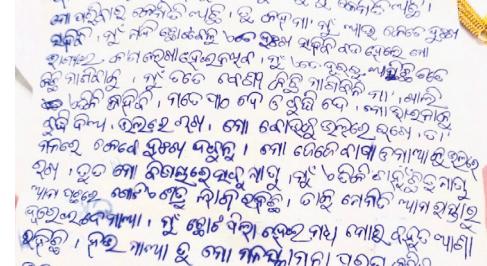
POST NEWS NETWORK

**Purushottampur, Feb 8:** A small child's handwritten letter found inside the donation box (hundi) of the Tara Tarini shrine in Ganjam district has moved many.

The letter was discovered Saturday when the temple's hundi was opened in the presence of police and revenue officials. The process was supervised by temple executive officer and Purushottampur Tehsildar Binod Kumar Behera as offerings were counted.

Amid cash and gold and silver ornaments, the emotionally charged note drew immediate attention of devotees and temple officials alike. In the heartfelt letter, the child pours out the family's hardships and prays to Goddess Tara Tarini as offerings were counted.

Temple officials said the innocence and sincerity of the appeal



Temple officials said the innocence and sincerity of the appeal left many who were present visibly moved. Devotees described the incident as a poignant reminder of the deep bond of faith between worshippers and the mother deity.

The simple, heartfelt plea has since become a subject of wide discussion among locals and devotees visiting the shrine.

left many who were present visibly moved. Devotees described the incident as a poignant reminder of the deep bond of faith between worshippers and the mother deity.

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# DEMOCRACY DIES IN DAYLIGHT



**Democracy does not die only when speech is banned. It also dies when truthful speech ceases to matter**

**D**emocracy Dies in Darkness" became the motto of the Washington Post in 2017, four years after Jeff Bezos, the Amazon founder and one of the world's richest men, purchased the newspaper. Today, however, Bezos, who has throttled the Post's opinion page and now slashed the newspaper's staff, seems determined to demonstrate that a free press, an essential component of democracy, can be killed off in broad daylight.

Democracy is dying in America because those in positions of power – starting with President Donald Trump but including media and tech owners like Oracle's Larry Ellison, who is doing to CBS News what Bezos has been doing to the Post – have learned how to make facts harmless. What began as a disinformation campaign has matured into a systematic project aimed not at controlling what people think, but at dismantling the structures that turn facts into consequences.

For years, the crisis in journalism was described largely in terms of partiality, polarization, and declining trust. Those problems are real, and they have provided cover for treating the mainstream media's supposed "liberal bias" as a justification for weakening professional standards. But there is now a deeper crisis: those who were previously pursuing this institutional weakening no longer need to bother winning an argument with the press. Instead, they have diminished the press' ability to impose accountability at all.

After Trump's first election in 2016, many commentators argued that universities, newsrooms, and cultural institutions had lost touch with the public, and that this mattered politically. But building credible alternatives to such institutions takes years and requires money, talent, distribution channels, and trust.

So, rather than trying to out-compete the established players in the marketplace of ideas, why not reduce their ability to set agendas, validate facts, and trig-

ger consequences? Why not decrease journalistic institutions' capacity to pursue deep investigations, and discredit their authority when they do? Original reporting can still circulate, but it simply won't matter.

This strategy does not require banning or censoring, because silence is not the goal. The objective is not to monopolize media on paper, but to monopolize its effects. Whereas Joseph Goebbels needed censorship and terror to enforce the Nazis' single official reality, this is not classical fascism. The strategy unfolding in the US relies on different means: stripping disfavored stories of reach, credibility, and consequence until one narrative dominates without the state having to outlaw the rest. The mechanism at work is not control of speech, but immunity to facts.

Investigative journalism is expensive. It requires time, legal backing, editorial depth, and reporters who can spend months on a single story. When major newsrooms are hollowed out through layoffs and cost-cutting, as the Washington Post's just-announced 30% staff reduction illustrates, they lose the ability to be consequential. Single scoops are easily dismissed or waited out. Repeated, rigorously documented reporting over time is harder to ignore. Downsizing a newsroom lowers the pressure that serious reporting can bring to bear.

Another part of the strategy concerns public media, where the target is not just investigative capacity but services that

cut across state borders, demographics, and ideology. Defunding National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), as Trump has done, is not merely about cultural grievance. The point is to apply structural pressure, eroding the shared facts on which democratic argument depends.

But distribution is perhaps the most underappreciated front. For more than a decade, Twitter functioned as the central circulatory system for American public discourse.

Journalists, academics, public officials, business leaders, and engaged citizens all argued in the same place. Reporting and research could travel quickly, face criticism and correction, and translate directly – and sometimes immediately – into agenda-setting pressure.

Taken together, these moves form a system. Journalism and facts still exist, but the chain that once ran from reporting to shared reality to institutional response begins to break apart.

Accurate reporting no longer compels action, because facts

can be published, verified, and still fail to trigger a response. When information loses its force, impunity follows.

Disinformation once aimed to make people believe false things. The new objective is to make the powerful immune to truths that previously would have harmed their interests or forced them to change their behaviour. We are witnessing a systemic attack on American institutions and the American public's ability to hold power to account. Democracy does not die only when speech is banned. It also dies when truthful speech ceases to matter.

*The writer is Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto.*

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**WHEN INFORMATION LOSES ITS FORCE, IMPUNITY FOLLOWS**

Carla Norrlöf

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## 2026 WB Assembly polls: Voters' slips go digital-free

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Feb 8:** People who will be voting in the crucial Assembly elections in West Bengal this year, will no longer have to download their voters' slip and take printouts or depend on the local leaders of different political parties for the same, before going to polling booths to exercise their franchise.

The Booth Level Officers (BLOs) will reach the doorsteps of the voters before the elections this time and distribute the voters' slips, as per the latest order of the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The decision had been taken by the Commission following a recommendation from the office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), West Bengal, on this count. "As per electoral process rules, it is the duty of the BLOs to distribute voters' slips among the voters. However, this became a forgotten practice in any election for Bengal since 2011. But this time, the Commission wants to reinforce the practice. This will not only make things easier for the voters but will also make the



system of the distribution of the voters' list more transparent," said an insider from the CEO's office. He also said that in case the voters' slips are not distributed, the voters concerned would be able to contact the BLOs concerned and get the voters' slips directly from them.

Meanwhile, the Commission had sent a reminder to the office of the West Bengal Chief Secretary, Nandini Chakraborty for immediate release of the remuneration amounts due to the BLOs, BLO supervisors, Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) and Assistant Electoral Registration Officers (AEROS) for their engagement in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the state.

This is the third communication made to the office of the Chief Secretary from the Commission in the matter. The first communication in the matter was sent in August last year, followed by the second one in December last year.

### SIR EXERCISE

#### Bengal informs ECI of availability of over 8K Group-B officers

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Kolkata, Feb 8:** The West Bengal government has informed the Election Commission of India (ECI) that it can provide 8,505 Group-B officers for the remainder of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list in the state, sources in the state secretariat said Sunday. A letter has already been sent to the ECI in this regard.

The development comes a day before the Supreme Court is scheduled to hear the SIR case Monday. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee may argue the case herself again, as she did on the previous occasion. The number of Group-B officers available for the SIR exercise has been communicated to the Commission ahead of the hearing.

Last Wednesday, Mamata Banerjee argued the SIR case in the Supreme Court. At that time, the Commission's lawyer said that the state government had not provided enough Group-B officers for the SIR work, necessitating the deployment of officers from other states. Following this, the court asked the state government to provide a list.

A bench comprising Justice Surya Kant, Justice Joymaya Bagchi and Justice Dipul Manubhai Pancholi directed the state government to inform the Commission by Monday how many Group-B officers it could provide for the SIR work.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Chandigarh, Feb 8:** A spate of murders, including of an AAP leader, within the first few weeks of this year, has again put the "worsening" law and order situation of Punjab in the spotlight with opposition parties going ballistic against the AAP government over "failing" to check killings "at will" and extortion threats.

Concerned over the prevailing law and order situation, Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria, in his latest remark, stated that the fear of law among criminals appears to be missing.

Though the police claimed that everything is under control, a former state's DGP was of the view that greater attention is needed on the part of the administrative agencies to contain criminal activities in the state.

Since January, six high-profile murders have taken place in the state, underlining the state of public security.

Latest among them was the murder of AAP leader Lucky Oberoi in Jalandhar and a 62-year-old woman, the wife of a retired assistant sub-inspector, in Hoshiarpur.

In the brazen daylight murder, Oberoi was shot by an unidentified assailant outside a gurdwara in Jalandhar's Model Town Friday, shortly after he stepped out of the shrine after paying obeisance.

Gangster Joga Pholriwal claimed responsibility for the murder and claimed that the AAP leader was killed due to



**Everybody, be it a businessman or trader, is feeling unsafe. There is a jungle raj, and the government is not visible anywhere**

DALIT SINGH CHEEMA | SHIROMANI AKALI DAL SENIOR LEADER

- Since January, six high-profile murders have taken place in the state, underlining the state of public security
- In the last three years, the state saw 92 shooting incidents linked to organised crime, of which 84 cases were worked out

personal enmity over a dispute regarding the presidency of a college.

On Saturday, 62-year-old Rachna Devi was shot dead by an unidentified motorcycle-borne assailant in Mehandwani Gujran village in Hoshiarpur when she was returning home after paying obeisance at a nearby religious place.

Prior to that, AAP Sarpanch Jhamal Singh of Valthoa village in Tarn Taran was shot dead January 4 at a wedding at point-blank range. The CCTV footage showed two shooters walking into the wedding venue, and one of them pulling out

shot dead by two unidentified assailants near the senior superintendent of police's office in Mohali. The killing right outside the office of the district police chief also gave enough ammunition to opposition parties to target the AAP government.

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On January 28, the murder of Gurwinder Singh, one of the accused in the 2020 murder of a cousin of gangster Goldy Brar, sent shockwaves when he was

a gun and firing at Singh's head before fleeing the spot.

Head Constable Amandeep Singh was stabbed to death in Patiala by a group of people January 25 while Ranbir Singh, a chemist, was shot dead by two assailants in Gurdaspur January 28.

In the last three years, the state saw 92 shooting incidents linked to organised crime, of which 84 cases were worked out. A total of 216 shooters were involved, and out of them, 160 were arrested, and 56 were at large, he said.

Police had previously stated that the state saw substantial reductions across major crime heads in 2025 in comparison to corresponding figures of 2024, with murders decreasing by 8.7 per cent (745 to 680), kidnappings and abductions by 10.6 per cent (1770 to 1583), snatching by 19.6 per cent (2321 to 1866), and thefts by 34.3 per cent (6714 to 4410).

The Punjab Police's Anti-Gangster Task Force busted over 400 gangster and criminal modules after arresting 992 such elements, and recovered 620 weapons in 2025.

Though gangsters operating from foreign soil and inside jails pose a serious challenge for the Punjab Police, cops have claimed that 80 per cent extortion threats are made by local criminals with no links to gangs.

Besides, continuous smuggling of arms, ammunition and narcotics from across the border is also a challenge for the security agencies.

## Kolkata Police pushes caregiver checks to curb crime

### COPS FIND 32 OF THE 104 THEFTS REPORTED BETWEEN DEC 2025 AND JAN 2026 INVOLVED MAIDS, SERVANTS OR CAREGIVERS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 8:** Kolkata Police recommended mandatory verification of household employees through its digital registration system, after it was found that domestic help and caregivers have figured in nearly one-third of the theft cases reported in the city in the past couple of months, an officer said Sunday.

The officer cited internal statistics compiled by the Kolkata Police which found 32 of the 104 thefts reported between De-

cember 2025 and January 2026 involved maids, servants or caregivers.

This was roughly 31 per cent of the total, he said, adding that the statistics by the Detective Department was internally shared among the personnel and not for the media. The trend has continued in February, with three of the 11 cases registered in the first week allegedly linked to domestic staff, he said.

"The pattern underlines growing vulnerability within residential premises, particularly



homes with elderly residents," the officer explained.

In one of the most serious recent incidents, a female senior citizen was murdered at Behala, allegedly by her former caregiver, he said. "Employees having no verification of identity pose a significant security risk and

we are appealing to residents to complete 'Domestic Help Profile' registration, either through the Kolkata Police 'Bondhu' mobile application or the official website," he said.

In case of elderly citizens who are not tech savvy, their children or younger members of family must be approached for assistance as these measures should not be delayed, the officer said. The form seeks detailed information about workers, including identity proof, permanent address and photographs, which

can help in background checks and faster investigation in case of offences, he said. The officer said that awareness drives are being strengthened across police station areas to encourage compliance, especially in apartment complexes and neighbourhoods with a high proportion of elderly citizens living alone.

"Timely verification and documentation of domestic workers could also act as a deterrent and significantly reduce the chances of theft and other crimes within households," he said.

## Teachers protest regularisation demand, face water cannon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mohali, Feb 8:** The Punjab Police Sunday used a water cannon on several teachers, who were protesting here over demands of regular appointment benefits, when they attempted to head towards the chief minister's residence in Chandigarh.

Under the banner of Special Cadre Teachers' Front, Punjab, protesters had given a call to 'gherao' the CM's residence. However, a heavy police force was deployed at the Chandigarh-Mohali border point to prevent them from moving ahead towards Chandigarh. Barricades were also raised by police at the border point.

As soon as teachers including women teachers climbed the barricades, police used a water cannon against them.

A protesting teacher, Anubhav Gupta,

claimed that one of the teachers suffered an injury to his hand. The protesting teachers said over 12,000 temporary teachers were given appointment letters for regular jobs in 2023 by the AAP government. However, the benefits of the regular appointments have not been given yet, they claimed.

They demanded that the state government should implement the pay scale for the special cadre teachers and service rules under the policy for welfare of adhoc, contractual, temporary teachers. They also demanded that implementation of the old pension scheme, medical reimbursement, group insurance scheme, ex-gratia grant gratuity, mobile allowance, child care leave, etc.

They also demanded that the service period of special cadre teachers should be increased from 58 years to 65 years.



REPRESENTATIONAL PIC

GOVT. OF ODISHA OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, KEONJHAR					
No.25001/43/2526					
Tel. 06766-258094(O), Mail : eerw1_kjr@yahoo.com					
"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works					
Identification No. Online NCB - 18/2025-26					
1. Name of the Work : 11 No. Roads Work, 2. Total Number of Work : 11 No., 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.4.98 Lakhs to 38.10 Lakhs, 4. Class of Contractor : "C" & "B" Class, 5. Period of Completion : As per annexure of e-Procurement Notice No.18 of 2025-26. 6. Other Details :					
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in O/o S.E., R.W. Division, Keonjhar
1	2	From	To	5	6
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Keonjhar	Road Online NCB No.18	Dt.09.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	upto 5.00 P.M.	Dt.13.02.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	Dt.16.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
Further details can be seen from the website <a href="http://www.tenderodisha.gov.in">www.tenderodisha.gov.in</a>					
Sd/- Superintending Engineer R.W. Division-I, Keonjhar					

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER KHURDA IRRIGATION DIVISION, KHURDA					
No.32001/34/2526					
Dist. : Khurda, Odisha-752056, Tel/Fax : 06755-796308, Mail id : eekhurdairrigationdivision@gmail.com					
"e"-Procurement Notice No.KHD-06 of 2025-26, Dtd.04.02.2026					
1. Nam of the work : 17 (Seventeen) nos. of Civil Work, 2. Tender Cost : Varies from Rs.12.33 Lakhs to Rs.49.99 Lakhs, 3. Bid Document Cost : Rs.6000/-, 4. Bid Security : Varies from Rs.12,400/- to Rs.50,000/-, 5. Class of Contractor : B, C & D, 6. Period of Completion : 2 (two) & 4 (four) calendar months, 7. Other details are as follows.					
Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of Tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Bid	
		From	To		
Superintending Engineer, Khurda Irrigation Division, Khurda	KHD 06-01 of 2025-26 to KHD 06-17 of 2025-26	10.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	19.02.2026 upto 5.00 P.M.	20.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	
8. e-mail Id : <a href="mailto:eekhurdairrigationdivision@gmail.com">eekhurdairrigationdivision@gmail.com</a>					
9. Date of lottery : 24.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.					
Further detail conditions can be seen from the Govt. website <a href="http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in">www.tendersodisha.gov.in</a>					
Sd/- Superintending Engineer Khurda Irrigation Division, Khurda					

## Punjab, Haryana slash stubble fires sharply

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Punjab and Haryana have collectively recorded about a 90 per cent reduction in fire incidences during the paddy harvesting season in the year 2025 in comparison to the same period in the year 2022, the Parliament was informed recently.

This is the third communication made to the office of the Chief Secretary from the Commission in the matter. The first communication in the matter was sent in August last year, followed by the second one in December last year.

states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and the NCT of Delhi for control of air pollution from stubble burning, he added.

A standard protocol for the estimation of crop residue burning fire events using satellite data was developed by the ISRO in consultation with State Remote Sensing Centres and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and issued by the Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas in August 2021, the minister said.

Active fire locations of stubble ('parali') burning are detected operationally during the satellite overpasses. In addition to it, burn scar (area) was also assessed using suitable satellite data, he said.

The Central government has adopted a multi-layered mechanism for monitoring paddy stubble burning in the

INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)	
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT IDENTIFICATION NO: RWS&S DIVN., PURI – 34 OF 2025-26	
Ph: (06752) 251276 Fax - (06752) 251276 E-mail - <a href="mailto:eerwspuri@gmail.com">eerwspuri@gmail.com</a>	
No.25001/44/2526: The Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Puri on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage rate bids through e-procurement in double cover system according to the norms of e-procurement system, in on-line mode from eligible contractors.	
Sl. No.	Nature of work:
1.	Construction of office building for RWSS Sub-Division, Puri in Puri District.
2.	Estimated Cost:
3.	Time for completion:
4.	Cost of bidding document:
5.	Class of Contractors eligible:
6.	Availability of bids on-line:
7.	Last date and time for seeking clarification:
8.	Date & time of opening of technical bids:
9.	Date and time of opening of financial bids:

Further details can be seen from the website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in). Subsequent corrigendum if any shall appear in the website.

**Sd/- Superintending Engineer RWS&S Division, Puri**

# national

**of the day quote**

The delays in releasing funds and the piecemeal allocation... have hindered the progress of railway projects in Tamil Nadu

M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM

A party like the Congress has shrunk -- from a large house to a small hut, and then to a nest. Its support base is on a ventilator, yet its arrogance is on the accelerator

MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI | FORMER UNION MINISTER

Jharkhand has received ₹3.14 lakh crore through tax devolution and ₹1.04 lakh grants-in-aid between 2014 and 2026. The state was given special assistance of ₹11,567 crore for various projects from 2020-21 to January 2026

RAJIV PRATAP RUDY | SENIOR BJP LEADER

**SHORT TAKES****3 held for opening fire at hosp, mall**

**Yamunanagar (Haryana):** Three youths, including two minors, were apprehended Sunday for two gun-firing incidents - one at a private hospital and the other outside a shopping mall here, officials said. The youth were captured after a police encounter in the morning near the Kasapur area of Yamunanagar. According to police, no casualties were reported in the two incidents.

**Four killed in road mishap**

**Lakhimpur Kheri (UP):** Three children were among four dead after an autorickshaw they were in fell into a roadside ditch here due to low visibility caused by dense fog, police said Sunday. The accident occurred Saturday night near the Basantpur village when a family was returning to their village after attending a programme in the neighbouring Dhaurahara town. According to police, due to low visibility caused by dense fog, the vehicle's driver, Israil (30) from Rasoolpur village, could not see a culvert ahead and the autorickshaw hit its railing and then overturned onto the ditch.

**2 labourers killed as scaffolding collapses**

**Noida:** Two labourers were killed and another was injured after a scaffolding collapsed at the site of an under-construction building in Sector 144 here Sunday, police said. The incident occurred within the limits of the Sector 142 police station when labourers were working at the site. The collapse of the scaffolding caused three workers to fall and sustain serious injuries. "They were rushed to a hospital, where two were declared dead by doctors, while one is undergoing treatment," ACP (Central Noida) Rajeev Kumar Gupta told PTI.

**18-year-old woman raped in UP village**

**Banda (UP):** An 18-year-old woman was allegedly raped by a man when she had gone to light a lamp at a temple here, police said Sunday. Enraged by the incident, the villagers set the accused's motorcycle on fire, they said. Additional Superintendent of Police of Chitrakoot Satyavati Singh said that according to the complaint, the incident occurred Saturday evening when the woman had gone to light a lamp at a temple. The accused, Rajesh Kumar (24), who was already present there, tied the girl's hand with a scarf (dupatta) and raped her.



**“** The state government supports paddy farmers by providing a bonus over and above the Minimum Support Price fixed by the Centre, and questioned why the union government was uncomfortable with this

PINAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

**STUDENTS FALL ILL AFTER BREAKFAST AT SCHOOL**

As many as 74 students of Devarapalli Government Tribal Welfare School here in Polavaram district fell ill after consuming idly and chutney served for breakfast, police said Sunday

**MINOR SEEN VOTING WITH FATHER SPARKS ROW IN SOLAPUR**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Pune, Feb 8:** Authorities have initiated action against Zilla Parishad poll contestant Arjun Sinh Mohite Patil, who allegedly took his minor son to cast his vote inside a polling booth, the presiding officer and police personnel, an official said Sunday.

A viral video shows the 14-year-old boy, accompanied by his father, allegedly casting a vote in the Zilla Parishad elections in Maharashtra's Solapur district. Arjun Sinh Mohite Patil's son is seen standing next to him inside a polling booth at Yashwant Nagar in Akluj, and pressing the EVM button during the polls held on Saturday.

Deputy Collector Santosh Deshmukh said the incident amounted to a violation of voting confidentiality. "It was the responsibility of polling officials to prevent the candidate from taking the minor inside the voting compartment. Police personnel deployed outside the polling booth should not have allowed the minor to enter the booth," he said.

Looking at the video, it does not appear that the presiding officer sought assistance from the police personnel to prevent the violation of voting confidentiality, he said.



PTI PHOTO

People take part in a religious procession, in Moradabad

**SURAJKUND SWING COLLAPSE****Police arrest ride operator, staff**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Faridabad, Feb 8:** A day after a swing collapsed at the Surajkund fairgrounds in Faridabad, killing an on-duty inspector during rescue efforts and injuring 12 others, two people were arrested Sunday even as the Opposition blamed the tragedy on the government's negligence.

The tragedy struck the 39th Surajkund International Crafts Mela Saturday evening, when about 19 people were riding the swing before it suddenly tilted and then crashed onto the ground.

Inspector Jagdish Prasad (58), who died trying to save people, joined the Haryana Armed Police in 1989 and was to retire in March after completing 36 years in the force

been discharged from the hospital after treatment.

Meanwhile, the 58-year-old cop, who died trying to save people trapped under the collapsed swing, was cremated with state honours at his native Dengar village in Uttar Pradesh.

His last rites were performed with full rituals on the banks of the Yamuna River, where his son Gaurav lit the funeral pyre, said an official, adding that hundreds of people gathered for the funeral.

Prasad, who joined the Haryana Armed Police in 1989 and was to retire in March after completing 36 years in the force, showed great bravery in trying to save those trapped in the swing but received severe injuries in the process, leading to his death, a senior officer said.

So far, the team has arrested two accused as "Mohammad Shakir, the proprietor of Himachal Fun Care that operated the giant swing, and Nitesh from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh, who worked under Shakir. "The role of others is being examined," Yashpal, a spokesperson for Faridabad police, said.

The 12 injured in the accident include female ASI Neelam, female constable Sharmila, SPO Rajesh, Harsh Prakash, Prashant, Amisha, Parvinder, Sunil, Shivani, Balbir, Anuj and Pooja, Faridabad police spokesperson Yashpal said, adding that five of them have

**PM vows stronger India-Malaysia ties**

*The two sides inked a total of 11 agreements and documents to expand cooperation in a range of key areas, including a framework pact for deeper engagement in the semiconductor sector*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Malaysian Ringgit -- for trade settlement.

"We will pave the way for economic transformation through strategic trust," Modi said, describing the India-Malaysia relationship as "special".

"We are maritime neighbours. For centuries, our peoples have had deep and cordial ties," he said in his media statement.

Modi also announced India's decision to establish an Indian Consulate General in Malaysia.

In his remarks, Ibrahim noted

Modi interacted with four leading industry leaders of Malaysia and appreciated the strong interest of the companies in the "Indian growth story"

international eco and trade scene," he said, describing the decision to use local currencies for bilateral trade as "remarkable".

In the talks, Malaysia extended its support for India's permanent membership in a reformed UN Security Council.

Elaborating on engagement in the security domain, Modi said cooperation in counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and maritime security will be strengthened, adding that both sides will further expand defence ties.

The prime minister touched upon India's position on Indo-Pacific and its steadfast views on the 10-nation grouping ASEAN's centrality in the region.

"With the support of friendly countries like Malaysia, India will further expand its relations with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). We agree that the review of the ASEAN-India Trade Agreement, ITIGA, should be completed expeditiously," he added.

ed India's economic growth and said his country would benefit immensely if it could secure more ways and opportunities to collaborate with New Delhi.

"It (India's economic growth) is one spectacular rise in the

**Centre ups fees for govt lawyers across courts**

Now group 'A' counsels appearing for regular appeals and defended petitions for final hearing will get ₹21,600 per case per day, while group 'B' and 'C' counsels will be paid ₹14,400

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** The Union Law Ministry has increased the fees of advocate, who represent the central government in courts across the country, after a gap of nearly 11 years.

In a notification issued February 5, the department of legal affairs in the law ministry said that now group 'A' counsels appearing for regular appeals and defended petitions for final hearing will get ₹21,600 per case per day, while group 'B' and 'C' counsels will be paid ₹14,400.

Earlier, the fee stood at ₹13,500 for group A counsels and ₹9,000 for group B and C counsels. The fee payable to government counsels was last revised in October 2015.

Fees for other category of cases and setting up conferences with various central ministries has also been revised. Fee payable to counsels appearing in courts outside their headquarters -- which could be Delhi or state capitals -- has also been hiked.

A top official said the hike was long overdue keeping in



A man was arrested in Madhya Pradesh for a wheat theft that occurred in 1980

The accused had been absconding for over 45 years and was running a grocery shop

The arrest was made with the assistance of a cyber cell during a search for another accused

The accused believed the case had been forgotten after so many years



Balkhanda village under Balakwada police station limits,

fled after the theft and began leading a normal life running

a grocery shop along with his son in Bagh town in neighbouring Dhar district, the SDPO said. The case remained pending in courts, with a warrant also issued against Salim, she said.

Salim was traced to his grocery shop in Bagh during a cyber cell-assisted search for another accused. He was arrested on Saturday. During questioning, he told police he believed the case had been forgotten after all these years and that he was safe from legal action," Khaltaka outpost in-charge Mithun Chauhan said.

Salim, son of one Mujahid, was presented in a court here, which remanded him in judicial custody, Chauhan added.

A top official said the hike was long overdue keeping in



mind inflation and rising costs of hiring professionals.

"The fee revision notification for central government counsel, an exercise initiated during my tenure as Law Secretary, has come into effect. Congratulations to all counsels. This was long overdue, for over a decade. I'm glad the effort has reached its rightful conclusion," former Union law secretary Anju Rathi Rana posted on X.

Rana, who is now member secretary, Law Commission, said the hike was must to retain talented advocates to represent the Union government in courts.

Besides law officers comprising the attorney general, the solicitor general and various additional solicitors general, the central government also hires advocates to represent it in judicial fora as legal counsels.

# national

of the day quote

Just last week, he (Sukhu) was claiming to make Himachal Pradesh the most prosperous state of the country, and now he is saying that the state's financial condition is weak



JAI RAM THAKUR | LEADER OF OPPN

We are ready to go to Delhi and meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with BJP MPs and MLAs to take up this issue. I think once the provision of RDG is gone, it will be difficult to reclaim the rights of the people



SUKHINDER SINGH SUKHU | HIMACHAL PRADESH CM

The budget provides relief to various sections of society, takes care of the interests of every section and added that it will lead the country towards development



SATISH CHANDRA DUBEY | UNION MINISTER

X POST OF THE DAY

> Wake up  
> Drink detergent-mixed milk for breakfast  
> Ride on potholes-filled road to reach office  
> Pay toll & fuel tax on the way  
> Eat fake paneer sandwich for lunch  
> Ride a bike back home  
> Fall in a sewage pit  
> Die from corruption  
What a joke this country has become!

@talk2anuradha

## SHORT TAKES

### Delhi gets 500 new electric buses

New Delhi: The Delhi government Sunday launched 500 new electric buses, taking the total EV fleet of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) to more than 4,000, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said. The chief minister said with the latest induction, Delhi has now become the state with the largest e-bus fleet in the country, calling it a landmark moment for the national capital's public transport system.

### TMC councilor arrested

Kolkata: An elderly man died in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district after being allegedly assaulted by a TMC councilor for protesting illegal construction, his family alleged in a police complaint Sunday. Rabindra Nath Bhattacharya, the councillor of North Barrackpore Municipality's ward number 23, was arrested after interrogation by police following registration of a case of unnatural death.

### 7 godowns gutted

Thane: At least seven godowns stocked with materials like paper products and plastic items were destroyed after a fire broke out in an industrial hub in Maharashtra's Thane district on Sunday, an official said. No one was injured in the incident at the godown complex in Bhiwandi's Mankoli area, said Chief Fire Officer Nitin Lad from the Bhiwandi-Nizampur Municipal Corporation. After being alerted about the fire, which started around 2.30 pm, three fire engines were rushed to the spot, he said. The fire destroyed seven godowns that stored paper goods and plastic items. The firefighting operation is still underway, he said.

# Trainer aircraft crashes due to inadequate fuel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Vijayapura (Karnataka)/New Delhi, Feb 8: A 50-year-old Cessna 172 trainer aircraft made a crash landing due to inadequate fuel and broke into three pieces near Belagavi airport Sunday afternoon, and the two pilots, who were on board the plane, are safe, according to sources.

The two-seater aircraft VT-EUC, which was flying from Kalaburagi to Belagavi, crash-landed in an open field in Mangaluru village in Babaleshwar Taluk of Vijayapura district. The site is around 50 to 70 kilometres from the Belagavi airport.

Both the occupants ejected before it crashed, sources said, adding the aircraft broke into three pieces. In a statement Sunday evening, the civil aviation ministry said the force landing happened "due to suspected fuel starvation experienced by the aircraft" and that the plane was manufactured in 1975. The aircraft's certificate of registration with Redbird was issued May 23, 2023, and the certificate of airworthiness was issued September 20, 2023.

According to the ministry, the Airworthiness Review Certificate (ARC) was issued August 1, 2025 and is valid till August 3, 2026. ARC is issued after inspection of the particular aircraft to ensure that it is fit to fly. The people who were injured in the accident are Captain Kunal Malhotra, an Assistant Flight Instructor (AFI) at Redbird, and trainee pilot Goutham Sankar P R, the sources said. The Pilot In Command (PIC) had 734 hours



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The site is around 50 to 70 kilometres from the Belagavi airport

Both the occupants ejected before it crashed, sources said, adding the aircraft broke into three pieces

of flying experience.

Redbird Flight Training Academy has 48 planes in its fleet and its Flying Training Organisation (FTO) approval is valid till July 22, 2030. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) approved the academy as an FTO July 23, 2020, as per the statement.

The ministry said, "Further investigation will be carried out by DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)/ AAIB (Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau)." In a statement, a RedBird Flight Training Acad-



Real questions. Honest answers. No filters. During a conversation with young NRI students from the UAE, we spoke about identity, purpose, and the pressures faced by today's youth

RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

### PAK INTRUDER APPREHENDED

A Pakistani intruder was apprehended while attempting to sneak into the Indian side from across the International Border in Samba district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, officials said



### Plea against CM Mamata's personal appearance in SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: An application has been filed in the Supreme Court alleging that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's personal appearance in the apex court in the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) matter was "constitutionally improper" and "legally untenable".

On February 4, Banerjee became the first serving chief minister to argue in the top court. She had urged the court to intervene in the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls to "save democracy", alleging that West Bengal was being targeted and its people were being bulldozed.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinivas said that deleting the video, which showed Assam Chief Minister Sarma "shooting Muslim men" with the caption "point-blank shot", was not enough.

"This is who the BJP really is: Mass murderers. This venom, hatred and violence is on you, Mr Modi. Are the courts and other institutions sleeping?" she said on X.

Congress spokesperson Shama Mohammed said in a post on X, "@narendramodi, you talk about 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas', but your favourite man, Himanta Biswa Sarma, made a video Shooting Muslims and got it posted from the official handle of BJP Assam."

"This is an attack on the Indian Constitution. I am shocked that the Supreme Court of India is acting as a mute spectator. The court's silence and failure to take suo motu cognisance puts its role into question," she added.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi also slammed the BJP.

"The BJP Assam Pradesh X handle posted one of the most hate-driven, targeted videos titled 'Point Blank Shot'; after outrage, it went on to delete the post, but it was there long enough for many people to download and spread it further," Chaturvedi said on X.

"The subject matter of the aforesaid writ petition filed by the petitioner is not a personal or private dispute, but concerns matter of state governance and the constitutional exercise of powers by the Election Commission of India in conducting the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in accordance with the Constitution of India and the applicable election laws," the application said.

"In such circumstances, the petitioner, being the incumbent chief minister, cannot claim to appear in a personal capacity, and any representation before this court must necessarily be through duly appointed advocates representing the state of West Bengal," the application said.

### 3 found dead inside car near Delhi flyover

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: Three people, including a woman, were found dead inside an abandoned car near the Peeragarhi flyover in outer Delhi Sunday, police said.

Prima facie, the case appears to be of a suicide pact. However, no such note has been recovered so far, they said.

A PCR call was received at 3.50 pm informing the police that three people were sitting inside a car with locked doors and were not responding, they said. On reaching the spot, police personnel three occupants sitting motionless inside found the car parked near a service lane next to the flyover, they said, adding that emergency services were alerted and a forensic team rushed to the spot.

The area was immediately cordoned off, they said.

"The bodies were found inside the car with doors closed, and no signs of struggle were noticed at the spot. No visible external injuries were found on the bodies and all valuables, including mobile phones and personal belongings, were found intact inside the vehicle," the police officer added.

According to the police, all three victims have been identified as Randhir (76), Shiv Naresh Singh (47), both residents of Baprola, and Laxmi Devi (40).

The vehicle belonged to Randhir. It was not immediately known if the deceased persons belonged to the same family, they said.

Preliminary inquiry suggested that the car had been parked at the spot for some time before being noticed by passersby, who alerted the police after seeing unresponsive occupants, they said. The investigators are examining all possible angles to ascertain the exact circumstances leading to the deaths. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem to determine the exact cause of death, the police said.

# Cong slams Assam BJP's 'point-blank shot' video

The now-deleted video showed Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma purportedly taking aim with a rifle and firing a shot at two people, one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard, with "point-blank shot" as the caption

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



must act, and there shouldn't be any leniency shown in this case," Venugopal said.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinivas said that deleting the video, which showed Assam Chief Minister Sarma "shooting Muslim men" with the caption "point-blank shot", was not enough.

"This is who the BJP really is: Mass murderers. This venom, hatred and violence is on you, Mr Modi. Are the courts and other institutions sleeping?" she said on X.

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People take a 'shikara' ride on Dal lake under the snow-covered Zabarwan mountains after the city received snowfall, in Srinagar

PTI PHOTO

# UP rises to 3rd spot nationally in freezing cyber fraud funds

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, Feb 8: A 70-year-old retired bank employee in Lucknow was held under a six-hour "digital arrest" by cyber fraudsters posing as CBI officers in January but was saved from losing his savings because of timely reporting and swift police action.

Indeep Singh, a resident of Sindhunagar in Krishna Nagar area, was alone at home when he received a call around 2 pm from unknown persons claiming to be officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation, according to officials. The callers kept him psychologically confined and under pressure, a tactic increasingly used by cyber criminals. However, when Singh stopped responding to repeated calls from his family, they alerted the Krishna Nagar police. Prompt intervention ensured that no financial transaction took place, and a potential fraud was averted.

In another case, alert staff of the Bank of Maharashtra pre-



cured by placing liens on suspected bank accounts, translating into a lien (frozen/seized) percentage of about 35 per cent. The state has now climbed to the third position among states and Union territories in terms of freezing defrauded money, a sharp rise from its 24th rank last year.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu topped the list with a lien percentage of 62.44 per cent, followed by Haryana at 35.72 per cent. Telangana recorded 26.69 per cent, Maharashtra 22 per cent and Tamil Nadu 14 per cent.

In an interaction with

According to the latest data from the Union Home Ministry's National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, UP received 29,715 cyber fraud complaints in January 2026 involving losses of ₹138 crore

to fraudulent transactions, preventing withdrawal or transfer until legal procedures are completed and thereby improving recovery prospects.

Krishna said sustained awareness campaigns and capacity-building measures have strengthened the state's cyber response.

Police have conducted around 500 awareness campaigns in recent days, reaching 1,000 to 1,500 people at various levels in each programme with the participation of cyber experts. "I have personally participated in 14 such meetings," the DGP added.

He explained that a lien refers to temporarily freezing money in bank accounts linked

## international



Mass Islamic migration is killing the America we know and love  
BRANDON GILL | CONGRESSMAN

**EPSTEIN FILES CONTROVERSY: FRANCE'S EX MINISTER QUILS**

France's former Culture Minister Jack Lang has resigned as head of a Paris cultural centre over alleged past financial links to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein that prompted a tax investigation



of the day quote



We are not there where we want to be yet. There is going to be a long track, so where we are going to land at the end, it's too early to say

VIVIAN MOTZFELDT | GREENLAND'S FOREIGN MINISTER



I believe the secret of the Islamic Republic of Iran's power lies in its ability to stand against bullying, domination and pressures from others

ABBAS ARAGHCHI | IRAN'S TOP DIPLOMAT



We are very excited to have extended an invitation for India to join Pax Silica, and I'll be travelling to India in just a couple weeks for a major signing with the Indian Government

JACOB HEBERG | UNDER SECY OF STATE FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**SHORT TAKES****Pressure grows on British PM Starmer**

**London:** A senior minister faced questions about British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's future Sunday and the deputy prime minister appeared to break ranks with his boss over his decision to appoint Peter Mandelson as ambassador to the United States. Starmer is facing what is widely seen as the biggest crisis of his 18 months in power over his decision to make Mandelson Britain's ambassador to Washington in 2024, with a handful of his own lawmakers openly questioning his judgment and future.

**Nigeria's president to make state visit to UK**

**London:** Britain's Buckingham Palace said Sunday that Nigeria's president is set to make a state visit to the UK in March. Officials said President Bola Tinubu and first lady Oluremi Tinubu will travel to the UK March 18 and 19 in the first state visit to Britain in almost four decades.

**Russian airstrike on Ukrainian city kills 1**

**Kyiv:** A Russian airstrike on a residential area in eastern Ukraine killed one person and wounded two, officials said Sunday, after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the US has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a peace deal. The attack on the city of Kramatorsk in Ukraine's Donetsk region caused a fire in a nine-story apartment block, according to Ukraine's State Emergency Service. Russia also struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's Poltava region overnight into Sunday, Serhii Kortesky, chief executive of Ukraine's state-owned gas company Naftogaz, said.

**Strikes paralyse parts of Balochistan**

**Karachi:** Parts of Balochistan came to a standstill Sunday after a call for a complete shutter down and traffic strike by an opposition alliance to mark the anniversary of February 8, 2024. Pakistan general elections, which they allege were rigged. The strike call was given by Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Aain Pakistan (TTAP), the united front of all opposition political parties, including incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), in the country. After the February 8, 2024 general elections, Khan had called the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) as 'mandate thieves' alleging that they rigged the election to steal his party's seats by manipulating results to come to power.

# Japan's Takaichi forges stunning election win

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Tokyo, Feb 8:** The governing party of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi secured a more than two-thirds majority in a key parliamentary election Sunday, Japanese media reported, citing preliminary results.

Takaichi, in a televised interview with public television network NHK, said that after the sweeping victory she is now ready to pursue her policies.

NHK, citing results of vote counts, said Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, alone secured 316 seats by early Monday, comfortably surpassing a 261-seat absolute majority in the 465-member lower house, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament. That marks a record since the party's foundation in 1955 and surpasses the previous record of 300 seats won in 1986 by late Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

A smiling Takaichi placed a big red ribbon above each winner's name on a signboard at the LDP's headquarters, as accompanying party executives applauded.

Despite the lack of a majority in the other chamber, the upper house, the huge jump from the preelection share in the superior lower house would allow Takaichi to make progress on a right-wing agenda that aims to boost Japan's economy and military capabilities as tensions grow with China and she tries to nurture ties with the United States.

Takaichi said that she would firmly push forward her policy goals while trying to gain support from the opposition. "I will be flexible," she said.

Takaichi is hugely popular, but the governing LDP, which has ruled Japan for most of the last seven decades, has struggled with funding and religious scandals in recent years. She called Sunday's early election



Takaichi's ruling coalition secures supermajority in lower house

Japan's first female leader gambled on rare winter snap election

She has seen strong ratings since becoming PM in October

Takaichi has strained ties with Beijing, rattled markets

only after three months in office, hoping to turn that around while her popularity is high.

The ultraconservative Takaichi, who took office as Japan's first female leader in October, pledged to "work, work, work," and her style, which is seen as both playful and tough, has resonated with younger fans who say they weren't previously interested in politics.

The Opposition, despite the formation of a new centrist alliance and a rising far-right, was too splintered to be a real challenger. The new opposition alliance of LDP's former coalition partner, Buddhist-backed dovish Komeito, and the liberal-leaning Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, is projected to sink to half of their combined preelection share of 167 seats.

Takaichi was betting with this election that her LDP

party, together with its new partner, the Japan Innovation Party, would secure a majority.

Akihito Iwatake, a 53-year-old office worker, said he welcomed the big win by the LDP because he felt the party went too liberal in the past few years. "With Takaichi shifting things more toward the conservative side, I think that brought this positive result," he said.

The prime minister wants to push forward a significant shift to the right in Japan's security, immigration and other policies. The LDP's right-wing partner, JIP leader Hirofumi Yoshimura, has said his party will serve as an "accelerator" for this push.

Japan has recently seen far-right populists gain ground, such as the anti-globalist and surging nationalist party Sanseito. Exit polls projected a big gain for Sanseito.

Takaichi has pledged to revise security and defense policies by December to bolster Japan's offensive military capabilities, lifting a ban on weapons exports and moving further away from the country's postwar pacifist principles. Takaichi also wants to increase defense spending in response to US President Donald Trump's pressure for Japan to loosen its purse strings.

## Iran sentences Nobel laureate Mohammadi to 7 more yrs in prison

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Dubai, Feb 8:** Iran sentenced Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi to over seven more years in prison after she began a hunger strike, supporters said Sunday, as Tehran cracks down on all dissent following nationwide protests and the deaths of thousands at the hands of security forces.

The new convictions against Mohammadi come as Iran tries to negotiate with the United States over its nuclear program to avert a threatened military strike by President Donald Trump.

Iran's top diplomat insisted Sunday that Tehran's strength came from its ability to "say no to the great powers," striking a maximalist position just after negotiations in Oman with the US. Mohammadi's supporters cited her lawyer, who spoke to Mohammadi. The lawyer, Mostafa Nili, confirmed the sentence on X, saying it had been handed down Saturday by a Revolutionary Court in the city of Mashhad. "She has been sentenced to six years in prison for gathering and collusion" and one and a half years for propaganda and two-year travel ban," he wrote.

She received another two years of internal exile to the city of Khorasan, some 740 kilometers (460 miles) southeast of Tehran, the capital, the lawyer added.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge the sentence. Supporters say Mohammadi has been on a hunger strike since February 2. She had been arrested in December at a ceremony honouring Khosrow Alikordi, a 46-year-old Iranian lawyer and human rights advocate who had been based in Mashhad. Footage from the demonstration showed her shouting, demanding justice for Alikordi and others.

Supporters had warned for months before her December arrest that Mohammadi, 53, was at risk of being put back into prison after she received a furlough in December 2024 over medical concerns.

# Ukraine FM urges faster peace talks

REUTERS

**Kyiv, Feb 8:** Kyiv's foreign minister has said the Ukrainian and Russian leaders need to meet in person to hash out the hardest remaining issues in peace talks, and that only US President Donald Trump has the power to bring about an agreement.

Ukraine wants to accelerate the efforts to end the four-year-old war and capitalise on momentum in the US-brokered talks before other factors come into play, such as campaigning for the US Congressional mid-term elections in November, Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said in an interview.



■ Ukraine's foreign minister says there is "momentum" in talks

■ Only US leader has power to stop Russia's war, says Sybiha

■ He says Ukraine wants peace efforts to speed up

■ US mid-term elections could cause a distraction, minister says

on Saturday that the US had proposed a new round of talks in Miami in a week, which Kyiv had agreed to.

"My assessment is we have momentum, that's true," Sybiha, in post since 2024, said in an interview conducted on Friday. "We need consolidation or mobilisation of these peace efforts, and we're ready to speed up."

Ukraine also wants control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant - the largest in Europe - which is in Russia-occupied territory.

During a second round of trilateral peace talks in Abu Dhabi this week there was no sign of a breakthrough, though an exchange of 314 prisoners of war was concluded Thursday - the first such swap since October. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told reporters

## Thailand PM's party takes early lead in three-way poll race

REUTERS

**Bangkok, Feb 8:** Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul's Bhumjaithai Party took an early lead in Sunday's general election, though the three-way battle is unlikely to give any single party a clear majority, potentially prolonging the spectre of political instability.

Anutin set the stage for the snap election in mid-December, amid a raging border conflict between Thailand and Cambodia, in what analysts said was a move timed by the conservative leader to cash in on surging nationalism.

At that point, he had been in power for less than 100 days, taking over after the ouster of premier Paetongtarn Shinawatra of the populist Pheu Thai Party over the Cambodian crisis.

Thai voters turned out in numbers on Sunday. Polls closed at 5 p.m. local time (1000 GMT) and preliminary results were trickling in throughout the evening.

With about 30% of polling stations reporting, the first partial results released by the election commission showed the Bhumjaithai Party with a commanding lead over People's Party in second place, followed by the Pheu Thai Party.

Pheu Thai, backed by the billionaire former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who himself went to jail just days after his daughter's removal, is down but not out, according to surveys.

"We have done everything that we can," Anutin told reporters, after casting his vote in the Bhumjaithai Party's stronghold of Buriram city, northeast of Bangkok. "We hope the people will have confidence in us."



A reveler performs during the "Ceu na Terra" or "Heaven on Earth" pre-Carnival street party, in Rio de Janeiro AP PHOTO

# Power cuts, uncertainty hit Ukraine businesses

ASSOCIATED PRESS

"It's now more than impossible to imagine a Ukrainian business operating without a generator," said Olha Hrynnchuk, the co-founder and head baker of Spelta.

The cost of purchasing and operating generators to overcome power outages is just one of many challenges facing Ukrainian businesses after nearly four years of war. Acute labour shortages due to mobilisation and war-related migration, security risks, declining purchasing power and complicated logistics add to the pressure, officials say. Production is entirely dependent on electricity, and the generator burns about 700 hryvnias (USD 16) worth of fuel per hour.

**Operate at a loss**

Olha Nasonova, 52, who is head of the Restaurants of Ukraine analytical centre, says the industry is experiencing its most difficult period of the past



20 years. While businesses were prepared for electricity cuts, no one expected such a cold winter, and it's been especially tough for small cafes and family-run establishments, because they have the least financial resources.

**Generators are expensive to run**

Many businesses have become a lifeline for communities struggling with plunging temperatures. Ukraine's government has allowed some firms to operate during curfew

hours in the energy emergency as "Points of Invincibility," allowing access to free electricity to charge phones and power banks, drink tea and have some respite from the cold. Tetiana Abramova, 61, is a founder of the Rito Group, a clothing company that has been producing designer knitwear for men and women since 1991, the year Ukraine became independent.

**Main goal is to survive**

A macroeconomic forecast by the Kyiv School of Economics for the first quarter of 2026 says strikes on the energy system are currently the most acute short-term risk to the country's GDP. The analysis says that if the business managed to adapt, output losses could be limited to around 1 per cent or 2 per cent of GDP. But if the energy system failures are prolonged, it could lead to larger losses of as much as 2 per cent or 3 per cent of GDP.

"We have done everything that we can," Anutin told reporters, after casting his vote in the Bhumjaithai Party's stronghold of Buriram city, northeast of Bangkok. "We hope the people will have confidence in us."

of the  
day quote

**Gold consolidation and recovery suggest that bias still remains positive. However, in case of silver, we remain cautious of volatility and further corrections**

**PRANAV MER | VICE PRESIDENT, EBG - COMMODITY & CURRENCY RESEARCH, JM FINANCIAL SERVICES**

**MILESTONES BY MUNDRA PORT**

Adani Group's Mundra Port in Gujarat has recorded a sharp increase in automobile exports and liquid cargo volumes in January 2026, posting multiple operational records that highlighted the growing role of large, integrated ports in supporting India's trade and export flows. The port handled its highest-ever monthly automobile export volume, shipping 25,762 vehicles through its dedicated roll-on/roll-off (RoRo) terminal at Adani Mundra Container Terminal (CT2), officials said



We are even today importing 300 billion dollars of goods that can be imported from the US. We are importing from all over the world. That is going to grow up to two trillion in the next five years

PIYUSH GOYAL | COMMERCE MINISTER

Yes, we have been facing pressure on the commodity side for nearly a year now. Still we see pressure on the precious metal side, copper and so on. Overall, if you see the impact of commodity price increase, it has been for us about 2 per cent plus of our revenues

SAHAJ CHANDRA | MANAGING DIRECTOR &amp; CEO, TATA MOTORS PASSENGER VEHICLES

This year we will cross ₹2 lakh crore. We already touched almost ₹1 lakh crore in the first half... I think we will cross ₹2 lakh crore

M NAGARAJU | FINANCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY

**SHORT TAKES****Mcap of 8 of top 10 valued firms surges**

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of eight of the top 10 valued firms jumped by a whopping ₹4.55 lakh crore last week, with Reliance Industries emerging as the biggest winner, in line with a remarkable rally in equities. Last week, the BSE benchmark surged by 2,857.46 points or 3.53 per cent. From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), and Hindustan Unilever were the gainers, while Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys saw their valuations erode. Reliance Industries added ₹1,41,887.97 crore, taking its market valuation to ₹19,63,358.79 crore. LIC's valuation zoomed ₹64,926.1 crore to ₹5,70,198.54 crore. The market valuation of Bharti Airtel surged ₹52,516.39 crore to ₹11,62,288.64 crore and that of ICICI Bank jumped ₹52,476.97 crore to ₹10,06,258.82 crore. The combined market valuation of the eight firms was ₹4,55,336.36 crore. Reliance Industries remained the most valued firm followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, LIC and Hindustan Unilever.

**Cement majors post double-digit growth**

New Delhi: Leading cement makers reported strong double-digit year-on-year growth in sales volumes during the December 2025 quarter, even as their realisations came under pressure. The companies remain optimistic of further improvement in demand and prices in the coming months, aided by benign inflation, supportive tax rationalisation measures and healthy infrastructure-led growth. Industry leaders, including UltraTech, Ambuja Cements, Shree Cement, Dalmia Bharat, JK Lakshmi Cement and JSW Cement, saw higher capacity utilisation and expansion in volumes. However, overall profitability was impacted by rising input costs, provisions under new labour codes and elevated prices of pet coke and coal. Leading cement maker UltraTech reported a 15 per cent rise in its consolidated sales volumes to 33.85 metric tonnes (MT) in the December quarter. Adani Group firm Ambuja Cements, which recorded the highest-ever quarterly sales volume at almost 18.9 million tonnes, up 17 per cent, and improved market share to 16.6 per cent. It reported an improvement of ₹5 per bag in sales realisations with its focus on premium and blended cement. Shree Cement Ltd, the country's third-largest cement group by capacity, though has not specified the total sales volume, but said it was up by 2 per cent on a year-on-year basis.

**Industry awaits clarity on soybean oil, animal feed tariff cuts**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: The edible oil and soybean processing industry has cautiously welcomed the India-US interim bilateral trade agreement announced Saturday, but is awaiting crucial details on tariff cuts, quota mechanisms and quality specifications.

Under the pact, while the US will reduce tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from the present 50 per cent, India will eliminate or cut down import duties on all US industrial goods and a wide range of American food and agricultural products, including soybean oil, distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruits, wine and spirits.

**IMPORT DEPENDENCE DRIVES CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM**

The Solvent Extractors Assoc-

iation of India (SEA) has welcomed the move, particularly given India's heavy dependence on soybean oil imports. During the 2024-25 edible oil year (November-October), the country imported a record 5.47 million tonnes of soybean oil, mainly from Argentina and Brazil, much of it genetically modified.

Currently, India imports only about 1,50,000-2,00,000 tonnes of soybean oil from the US. The product attracts a 16.5 per cent duty, which includes a 10 per cent basic customs duty, 5 per cent agri-cess and 1.5 per cent education cess.

**UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**

What remains unclear is whether American soybean oil will be allowed on a quota basis with nil basic customs duty, and whether the 6.5 per cent agri and education cess will be exempted.

"We will have to see if cess will



be reduced or removed," SEA Executive Director BV Mehta said, adding that US soybean oil imports could reduce shipments from Argentina and potentially impact palm oil prices.

Interestingly, Mehta suggested that a reduction in import duty on US refined soybean oil could also resolve the issue of

The US-origin soybean oil is generally more expensive for India by \$30-40 per tonne plus additional logistic cost, so the advantage of duty reduction will be less for Indian importers

BV MEHTA | SEA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

supply for both the cattle and poultry sectors in the country.

India currently produces about 7.5 to 8 million tonnes of DDGS, a byproduct of maize and rice, which replaces soya and rapeseed meal. "The supply of American DDGS would impact the domestic production and prices, impacting the domestic processors," Mehta warned.

The Soybean Processors Association of India (SOPA) Executive Director DN Pathak raised another concern that India has not currently permitted GM-DDGS.

"There is no clarity as of now whether GM or non-GM DDGS will be permitted from the US. Whether there will be a quota or not, there is no clarity," he said.

With domestic DDGS production running high, Pathak said three critical clarifications are required from the government -- whether imports will be quota-based, what the duty structure will be, and whether GM or non-GM products will be allowed.

**INDUSTRY IN WAIT-AND-WATCH MODE**

Both industry bodies emphasised that while the framework signals positive intent in bilateral trade relations, the real impact will only be clear once the fine print emerges.

"Let's see how the fine print comes out," Pathak said, reflecting the industry's measured response to the trade announcement.

**Labour codes accelerate hiring in tier III, IV cities**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 8: As businesses expand beyond metros, labour codes are accelerating recruitment in smaller cities, pushing job postings in tier III and IV markets by up to 56 per cent, according to a report.

India's Labour Codes are triggering a dramatic redistribution of job opportunities across the country, with smaller cities emerging as the unexpected winners of regulatory reform, according to a report by blue and grey-collar recruitment platform WorkIndia.

It revealed that despite early fears about hiring freezes, the data found the total job postings grew by 8.4 per cent after the codes took effect. Tier III and IV markets experienced a surge in hiring as Kolhapur witnessed 56.3 per cent growth in job postings, while Udaipur saw 55.3 per cent increase.

Goa recorded a 23.6 per cent jump, Vijayawada 20.2 per cent, Kochi 17.7 per cent, Coimbatore 14.1 per cent, and Raipur 13.9 per cent, added the report.

Collectively, the report revealed that these tier III and IV cities are growing at 12-15 per cent and above, signalling that Labour Codes are accelerating formal hiring in emerging and semi-urban regions.

The WorkIndia report is based on an analysis of data on its platform during pre-Labour Codes reforms, October 1 to November 20, 2025, compared with data during post reforms period - November 21, 2025, to January 31, 2026.

The report further stated that tier I markets aren't being left behind as they witnessed steady growth of 6.6 per cent overall.

The data reinforces that demand remains strong across major employment hubs, even as smaller cities experience disproportionate acceleration, according to the report.

**Foreign investors return as buyers**

After months of exodus, FPIs invest ₹8,100cr in a week on US trade deal



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 8: After three consecutive months of heavy selling, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) turned net buyers in the first week of February, infusing more than ₹8,100 crore in Indian equities, aided by improving risk sentiment, along with a trade deal with the US.

The inflows follow sustained withdrawals in recent months, with FPIs pulling out ₹35,962 crore in January, ₹22,611 crore in December, and ₹3,765 crore in November, data with the depositories showed.

Overall, in 2025, FPIs pulled out a net ₹1.66 lakh crore (\$18.9 billion) from Indian equities, marking one of the worst periods for foreign flows. The selling was driven by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched equity valuations.

According to the data, FPIs invested ₹8,129 crore in this month (till February 6).

Himanshu Srivastava, principal manager-research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said the recent buying reflects improving risk appetite and renewed confidence in India's growth outlook.

"The sentiment was supported by easing global uncertainties, stability in domestic interest rate expectations, and optimism around India-US trade and policy developments," he added.

The turnaround contrasts sharply with January's outflows, when FPIs exited Indian

markets amid a global risk-off environment and elevated US bond yields.

Echoing similar views, Vargajaved Khan, senior fundamental analyst at Angel One, said the breakthrough in India-US trade talks helped reduce geopolitical uncertainty and fuel a market rally, alongside stabilising US yields and supportive measures announced in the Union Budget for FY26, including fiscal stimulus and sector-specific incentives.

VK Vijayakumar, chief investment strategist at Geojit Investments, said the appreciation of the rupee also played a key role in improving sentiment. The rupee strengthened from a record low of 90.30 against the dollar, although it later weakened to around 90.70 by the close of February 6.

He said the rupee is expected to stabilise and gradually appreciate to below 90 per dollar by the end of March.

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markets amid a global risk-off environment and elevated US bond yields.

Market participants remain cautiously optimistic. Further inflows could materialise if corporate earnings momentum continues and global trade tensions remain contained, although lingering rupee weakness, elevated valuations and potential shifts in US policy could limit upside, Khan said.

The report further stated that tier I markets aren't being left behind as they witnessed steady growth of 6.6 per cent overall.

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**Central Bank of India Bhubaneswar Regional Office holds MSME Credit Outreach Programme**

Bhubaneswar: MSMEs are the backbone of India's economy, contributing significantly to employment, innovation & income generation. To ensure their sustained growth & competitiveness, the Government of India, along with financial institutions, has introduced a wide range of dedicated schemes. In line with this vision, the Central Bank of India has launched its nationwide

MSME Credit Outreach Programme aimed at uplifting enterprises by providing timely credit, financial support, and sector-specific solutions that enable MSMEs to expand and thrive. Simultaneously, its Bhubaneswar Region also organised a mega MSME Credit Outreach Programme at Jan Shikshan Sansthan, CDA Sector-8, Cuttack. The programme was held in presence of PK Gupta, Director-MSME-DFO, DS Rathore GM Central Office, Manoj Mohapatra, DGM DIC and Pankaj Kumar, Regional Head, Regional Office, Bhubaneswar along with other senior officials, MSMEs entrepreneurs and other prospective customers. On this occasion sanction letters were distributed to different loan beneficiaries aggregating to an amount of ₹103 crore. Further, Central Bank of India reaffirms their commitment for empowering MSMEs and supporting them as key drivers of India's economic transformation.

**Cyber breaches emerge as top risk for India Inc**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cyber breaches as major financial and reputational threats.

"More than half, 57 per cent, report potential data theft and insider fraud as significant risks, and 47 per cent acknowledge difficulty in addressing increasingly sophisticated cyber threats," the report stated.

The findings are based on a web-based survey of 137 senior decision-makers, including CXOs. The technology sector had the highest representation in the study at 21 per cent, followed by professional services.

The report, which draws on inputs from senior decision-makers across various sectors, highlights that technology risk is now tightly linked to operational continuity.

According to the survey, 61 per cent of respondents feel that rapid technological change and digital disruption are affecting their competitive position. An equal proportion (61 per cent) identified cyber-attacks and da-



ta breaches as major financial and reputational threats.

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## BOXAM ELITE INTERNATIONAL 2026

# Pugilists conquer Spain



Women boxers lead charge as India finishes as most successful nation with nine gold, three silver and seven bronze medals

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**Alicante, Feb 8:** India wrapped up a highly successful BOXAM Elite International 2026 with a dominant showing on the final day, clinching nine gold medals as Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain and former Youth World Champion Arundhati Choudhary led a resounding finish in La Nucia, Alicante.

In a standout achievement, India was represented in seven Elite Women's finals Saturday—including an all-Indian title clash in the 54kg division—and emerged with gold in each.

Held in La Nucia, Alicante, the BOXAM Elite 2026 featured over 200 boxers from 20 nations, providing a high-quality international test early in the season. India finished as the competition's most successful nation with nine golds, three silvers and seven bronze medals.

BFI President Ajay Singh added, "BOXAM Elite offered exactly the kind of exposure we were seeking at this stage of the season, including strong

international opposition, depth across weight categories, and high-pressure bouts. The performances in Spain, particularly the conversion rate in finals, reflect the progress of our programme. With a demanding year ahead, this tournament has been a valuable step in preparing our boxers for the challenges to come. Congratulations to the entire contingent on an outstanding campaign."

India's women set the benchmark on the final day. Manju Rani (48kg) and Nitu (51kg) opened proceedings with emphatic unanimous wins over Spain's Marta Lopez and Noelia Gutierrez respectively, before

Poonam (54kg) edged compatriot Preeti in a hard-fought all-Indian final. Priya (60kg) and Arundhati (70kg) followed with commanding 5:0 victories over Ukrainian opponents, while Lovlina (75kg) displayed her trademark control and composure to defeat England's Mary-Kate Smith 4:1. Naina (80kg) completed the sweep with a measured win over Ukraine's Raisa Piskun.

Reflecting on the women's performances, Indian women's head coach Santiago Nieva said, "This was an exceptional showing from the women, not just in terms of medals, but in how they boxed with discipline, clarity, and confidence. Reaching seven finals and winning all seven speaks volumes about the work being done across the system. Credit also goes to the entire Indian team, the men and women pushed each other throughout the tournament, and that collective environment is key to sustained success."

In the men's finals, Sachin (60kg) produced one of the day's most gripping contests, edging Canada's Keoma-Ali Al Ahmadieh 3:2, while Akash (75kg) added another gold after a tense 3:2 win over Kazakhstan's Aman Konsbekov. Deepak (70kg) and Ankush (80kg) settled for silver medals after facing strong opposition from Kazakhstan and Ukraine, respectively.

India's performance in Spain adds further momentum as the national programme builds towards a packed international calendar, with major championships and multi-sport events on the horizon.

## ASIAN C'SHIPS

# Shooters cross 50 medal mark

INDIA DOMINATE MEDAL TALLY WITH 34 GOLD, 12 SILVER, EIGHT BRONZE



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Olympians Elavenil Valarivan and Arjun Babuta teamed up to clinch a gold medal in the 10m Air Rifle mixed team event as India crossed the 50 mark in total medals in the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championship, New Delhi 2026, which is being held here at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Himanshu Dhillon and Shambhavi Kshirsagar secured the gold in the junior mixed team event, while Hruday Shri Kondur and Anshul Batra won a gold medal in the youth mixed team event.

The Rio 2016 Olympian Gurpreet Singh won gold in the 25m Standard Pistol event, leading to a clean sweep of the podium. Harsh Gupta secured silver while Amanpreet Singh won the bronze medal. In the junior category, the Indian shooters

repeated the clean sweep with Suraj Sharma, Mukesh Nella-valli, and Tanishq Muralidhar Naidu winning gold, silver, and bronze medals, respectively. Both seniors and juniors also won the team gold in their respective categories.

At the end of Day 5 of the competitions, India are far ahead of the competition in the medal tally with a total of 54 medals, including 34 gold, 12 silver, and eight bronze. Uzbekistan are in second place with three gold and one silver, followed by Indonesia with one gold, two silver, and four bronze.

Elavenil continued her gold medal-winning form in the individual event, hitting a total of 253.4 in 24 shots, while Arjun, who started with a 9.5, finished strongly with a total score of 251.6. The pair's combined total of 505.0 was enough to secure the gold.

Himanshu Dhillon and Shambhavi Kshirsagar added a mixed team gold to the yellow metal they won in individual competition, which was won on Saturday in the junior finals. The pair cruised through the final to shoot a combined score of 502.4.

In the youth category final, the Indian pair of Hruday Shri Kondur and Anshul Batra won the gold with a combined score of 498.4 from the Indonesian pair of Dominique Rachmawati Karini and Anang Febrian.

The precision stage of the Women's 25m Pistol also concluded Sunday, with Esha Singh sitting on top with 295, followed by Manu Bhaker with 291. The third Indian in the fray, Rhythm Sangwan, is currently in 13th place with a score of 285. The rapid-fire stage and the finals will be held tomorrow.

## Padhy asserts supremacy in 7th Golden King Open Snooker C'ship



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Feb 8:** The 7th Golden King Open Snooker Championship 2026 concluded successfully at Golden Q Snooker Kafe, CDA, Cuttack, in the presence of players, officials, sponsors and snooker enthusiasts here Saturday.

In the semi-finals, Nishant Biswal defeated Aakash Mohapatra 4-1, while Asutosh Padhy overcame Anuj Panda by an identical 4-1 margin to set up the title clash. In the grand final, Asutosh Padhy also won the highest break award for a break of 68, earning an extra 5,000.

The dignitaries present at the event included Gyana Ranjan Behera, Founder of GK Group of Companies; Smriti Ranjan Behera, Co-Founder of GK Group of Companies; Rajendra Puhan, Partner at Poddar Re-treading; and Bhabani Shankar Mohanty.

secured the runner-up position and received 13,000 and a trophy. The semi-finalists were Aakash Mohapatra and Anuj Panda, each of whom was awarded 6,000 along with a trophy.

The quarter-finalists included Subrat Das, Sudipta Dash, Dr. Rakesh Roshan Pradhan, and Chirag Arora, all of whom received 3,000 and a trophy. Additionally, Asutosh Padhy also won the highest break award for a break of 68, earning an extra 5,000.

The dignitaries present at the event included Gyana Ranjan Behera, Founder of GK Group of Companies; Smriti Ranjan Behera, Co-Founder of GK Group of Companies; Rajendra Puhan, Partner at Poddar Re-treading; and Bhabani Shankar Mohanty.

## DAVIS CUP

## Dhakshineswar seals historic win

This is the first time India have made it to the second round of the Qualifiers since the new Davis Cup format was launched in 2019, getting a step closer to the elite eight-team Finals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, Feb 8:** Dhakshineswar Suresh capped a breakthrough Davis Cup performance by clinching the decisive fifth rubber to hand India a memorable 3-2 win over the Netherlands and seal the country's place in the Qualifiers Round 2, underlining his rapid rise as the hosts' new match-winner, here Sunday.

Playing only his second Davis Cup tie, the 25-year-old -- fondly known as DK -- delivered an extraordinary three-win haul, claiming both his singles rubbers and combining with Yuki Bhambri to win the doubles, a rare feat in Indian Davis Cup history and one that evokes memories of Leander Paes' heroic effort against Japan in 2004.

Back then, Paes had swept all three matches he played -- two singles and the doubles -- single-handedly steering India to victory.

More than two decades later, Dhakshineswar, ranked as low as 465, produced a similarly defining performance, shouldering the pressure in the deciding rubber against Guy de Ouden, winning 6-4 7-6 (4) to emerge as India's new Davis Cup hero.

As he hit the tie-ending fore-



hand winner, Dhakshineswar fell on his back. His teammates rushed to hug him and then carried him on their shoulders, celebrating a rare consecutive success against European sides.

India had beaten Switzerland last year in their own den.

The Netherlands missed their top two singles players --

world number 29 Tallon Griekspoor and world number 67 Botic van de Zandschulp -- and it allowed India, ranked as low as 33 in Davis Cup rankings, a fighting chance, and they grabbed it with both hands, beating the world number six team.

This is the first time India have made it to the second round of the Qualifiers since the new Davis Cup format was launched in 2019, getting a step closer to the elite eight-team Finals. They are likely to meet Korea next.

Beginning the day tied 1-1, Yuki Bhambri and Dhakshineswar prevailed in a marathon doubles rubber, outlasting David Pei and Sander Arends 7-6(0) 3-6, 7-6 (1) to put India ahead 2-1.

Sumit Nagal had a one-set advantage but lost 7-5 1-6 4-6 to world number 88 Jesper de Jong in an energy-sapping reverse singles that lasted nearly three hours. This was Nagal's second defeat in the tie, having lost opening singles. Captain Rohit Rajpal had called Dhakshineswar his "trump card" and he did not disappoint, producing a superlative show.

Despite having spent close to three hours on court earlier in the day alongside Bhambri in the doubles, Dhakshineswar showed no signs of fatigue as he came out firing on all cylinders.

The Indian's big serve remained his biggest weapon. He fired 15 aces in the match. The Indian seized the initiative in the opening set, earning his first break in the seventh game when De Ouden committed consecutive backhand errors.

## SANTOSH TROPHY

## Services clinch eighth title



Services striker Abhishek Pawar slammed the only goal of a tense battle in the 109th minute of extra time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka (Assam), Feb 8:** Services defeated Kerala 1-0 in an absorbing final of the 79th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy 2025-26 at a jam-packed Dhaka (Assam) Football Stadium here Sunday.

This was the eighth time Services won the tournament in their chequered history. Striker Abhishek Pawar slammed the only goal of a tense battle in the 109th minute, after regu-

lation and the first half of extra time yielded no goals.

It was only the second time in the championship's history that these two teams clashed in the final. They had last met in the 2012-13 edition's final in Kochi when Services won 4-3 via the penalty shoot-out after the teams had drawn a blank at the end of regulation and extra time. Services thus repeated that winning act once more.

Services had last won the title in 2023-24 in Yopia, Arunachal Pradesh, defeating Goa 1-0 in the final. It was also only the second time that these two teams had figured in a final, whenever Assam played hosts on six occasions in the past.

Services had lost to Bengal 1-0 in the 1969-70 final. Kerala had also lost to Bengal 3-4 via the

## ICC deputy chair in Lahore for talks with PCB over match boycott

**Karachi, Imran Khwaja, deputy chair of the International Cricket Council, arrived in Lahore on Sunday evening for crucial talks with PCB officials as efforts to resolve the standoff over Pakistan's proposed boycott of the high stakes T20 World Cup match against India gather pace. Khwaja, who represents Singapore in the ICC, is an influential figure in the world governing body and has voting rights on the board as an associate member director.**

A source close to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) confirmed Khwaja has been nominated by the ICC board as a mediator on the controversial subject. The two officials -- Khwaja and Aminul -- were greeted at the airport by senior PCB officials and then driven to the Gaddafi Stadium where they are scheduled to meet with the board's chief Mohsin Naqvi.

## Asian Indoor Athletics C'ships: Tejaswin bags India's lone gold

**Tianjin (China), Feb 8:** Tejaswin Shankar won the men's heptathlon event to clinch India's lone gold as the country ended the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships campaign with five medals here Sunday.

India finished overall sixth in the medals tally. China topped the chart with 34 medals -- 10 gold, 11 silver and 13 bronze.

On his way to winning the gold medal in heptathlon, Shankar collected 5993 points to better his own national indoor mark of 5650 points set in 2021 in the USA. Pooja (silver in high jump), Tajinderpal Singh Toor (silver in shot put) and Ancy Sojan (bronze in long jump) were other medal winners Sunday.



Shankar, who was leading on Day 1, continued his good form in the next three events -- 60m hurdles, pole vault and 1000m -- Sunday. In the men's shot put, Tajinderpal Singh Toor claimed a silver with a season best throw of 20.05m. In the women's high jump, Pooja clinched a silver with a height of 1.87m. Ancy Sojan added a bronze on the long jump arena. Her best jump Sunday was 6.21m. Her other two legal jumps were 6.02m and 6.20m.