





# leisure

## 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 or 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 jovial feeling will pervade your home. You may throw a grand party for your guests, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
Consummation 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 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.



## 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



# 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.

**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 societal

ety'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.

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.



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



# 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.

# 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.

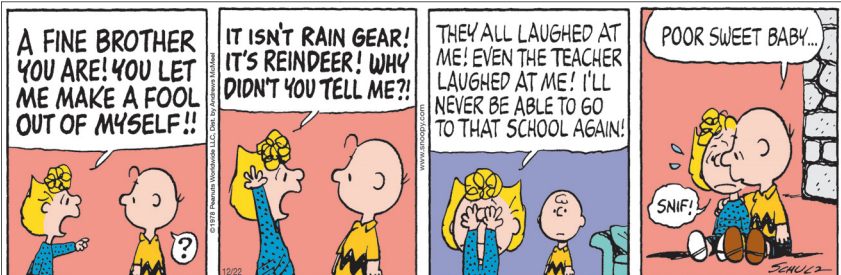
The actor spoke with this news agency after the release of the film, and shared that he was ready for the comparisons with his father given the latter's iconic performance in *Border*.

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 there were always going to be comparisons".

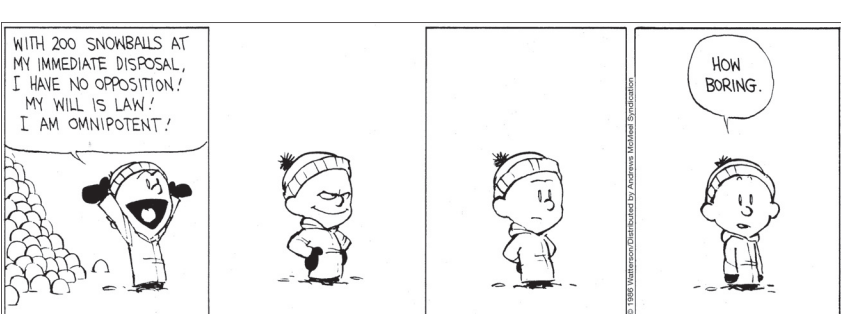
He further mentioned, "And I also had that feeling of that responsibility of carrying his legacy forward. But, I try my best not to let that noise get into my head, not to let that pressure build up in me. Because if I do that, then I know that I'll start behaving a certain way. I'll start doing things 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".

IAN S

## PEANUTS



## CALVIN AND HOBBS

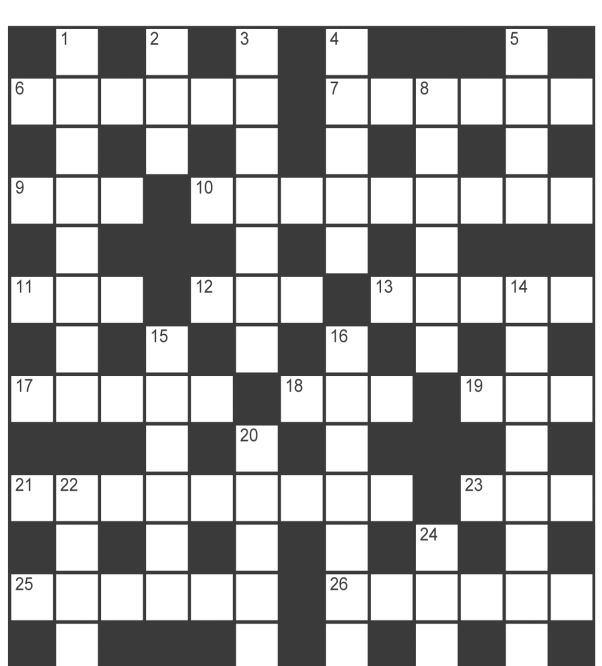


## BREVITY



## FUN post

## CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 6 Steak choice
  - 7 They're nuts
  - 9 Chowd 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

## 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.

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

## SOLUTIONS

### CROSSWORD

A	I	L	I	N	G		G	A	U	C	H	E
D	A	O	B	P	H	T						
O	U	T	C	O	M	E	R	O	A	S	T	
R	E	D	N	O	O	E						
A	P	R	I	L	Z	E	N	I	T	H		
B	E						I					
L	A	V	I	S	H		B	E	A	C	O	N
E	I	N	I	G	M	A		L				
O	T	E	R	S	N	R						
P	R	A	W	N			G	R	I	M	A	C
A	G	O	O	V	N	S						
L	E	E	W	A	Y		D	E	T	E	C	T

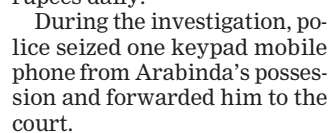
### SUDOKU

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

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



# WB man held for ₹50 lakh online investment fraud





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21	15
25	16

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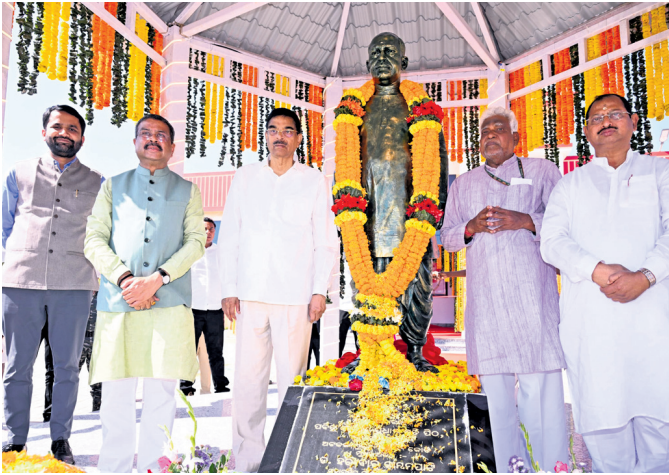
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*Har Pal Aapke Saath*

LICPI/2024-25/52/Eng



# 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 Pabitrnanagar, 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 Pabitrnanagar 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

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 Sadfardjung 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 restaurant cars 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 firsthand challenges, addressed concerns raised by MLAs joining from various districts, and integrated the specialised perspectives of NGO representatives.

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

## Odisha flags off 'Bal Vivah Mukti Rath'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Strengthening its campaign against child marriage, Odisha Legislative Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy Sunday flagged off the 'Bal Vivah Mukti Rath' from the Capital city along with Odisha State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (OSPCPR) Chairperson Babita Patra.

The Rath, carrying strong awareness messages and a public pledge wall, will travel across villages and towns in Odisha till March 8, spreading awareness against child marriage as part of the Central government's 100-day intensive nationwide campaign. The initiative is led by Just Rights for Children (JRC) in partnership with Ruchika Social Service Organisation.

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



four-wheelers on major roads, while motorcycle and cycle caravans will cover areas with poor connectivity. Messages will be amplified through loudspeakers, posters, nukkad natak, 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

### 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 Orissa 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 jubi-

lee of Orissa Dance Academy, the Swarna Smaraki 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 Orissa 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 reimaged 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.

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.

## Ekamra Walks marks 51 years of 'Jajabara'

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** Ekamra Walks hosted a landmark cultural evening in the City as part of its Odia Film Panorama initiative, presenting a special screening of the Odia classic 'Jajabara' to mark 51 years since its original release in 1975.



The event carries historic importance as audiences witnessed the colour version of the iconic black-and-white film, screened at the open-air theatre in Kalabhoomi. Ekamra Walks serves as the flagship cultural initiative under Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA).

Jajabara occupies a distinctive place in Odia cinema and continues to be regarded as more than just a film—it is a cultural touchstone that has influenced generations of viewers. The screening not only celebrates its enduring legacy but also honours the remarkable restoration effort that has brought the film back to life for contemporary audiences.

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

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 8:** With an aim to promote, preserve, and showcase traditional tribal art forms by providing a platform to experienced tribal artisans from different regions of the state, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI) recently inaugurated a 15-day live demonstration programme on tribal art and craft at Odisha State Tribal Museum here. The workshop will continue till February 21.

As part of the initiative, artisans with expertise in Idital painting, Saura painting, and Bamboo craft have been sponsored by various Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) to participate in the live demonstration sessions.

The ITDA Gunupur (Rayagada district) has sponsored five artisans skilled in Idital and Saura painting who will demonstrate traditional techniques, motifs, and cultural narratives associated with these indigenous art forms during the programme. Similarly, the ITDA Kaptipada, Udala (Mayurbhanj district) has nominated five experienced tribal artisans specialising in Bamboo Craft of



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 Sabaro 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.

WEATHER

Max Temp

Min Temp

Humidity

Rainfall

BBSR

31.3°

16.4°

82%

Nil

CTC

29.2°

15.0°

91%

Nil

FORECAST

Dry weather likely to prevail



[illegible]



FOCUS PRESS FREEDOM

DEMOCRACY DIES IN DAYLIGHT



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

“Democracy 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.

Then Elon Musk bought the platform, gutted its staff, and renamed it X. Soon enough, it stopped functioning as a shared civic distribution system for verified information. It now prioritizes engagement over verification, weakens credibility cues, and makes reach less predictable.

Today, fewer journalists and academics bother to post on X, and even when they do, verified information no longer translates reliably into agenda-setting or yields any consequence at all. The results are far-reaching, because when the infrastructure for elite information exchange no longer reliably rewards accuracy or sustained explanation, the entire accountability system

starts to crumble. And the same dynamic extends beyond platforms into ownership. When a major newsroom sits inside a conglomerate that is navigating mergers, regulatory scrutiny, and political exposure, independence can narrow without the need for an explicit instruction from the top. That is why it matters that Skydance – headed by David Ellison, Larry Ellison’s son – took over Paramount, which controls CBS. Direct censorship is not required when everyone can see which stories will cost the parent company money or jeopardize its deals.

Under such conditions, self-censorship becomes rational. It is implicit in the stories that never run, the investigations that are dropped because they might invite lawsuits or regulatory retaliation, and kid-glove coverage of politicians or corporate figures who could make the parent company’s life difficult. Once editors understand that certain fights have become corporate liabilities, risk avoidance becomes the new normal.

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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WISDOM CORNER

Choice of attention - to pay attention to this and ignore that - is to the inner life what choice of action is to the outer. In both cases, a man is responsible for his choice and must accept the consequences, whatever they may be.

WH AUDEN

Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart. Who looks outside, dreams; who looks inside, awakes.

CARL JUNG

Your entire life only happens in this moment. The present moment is life itself. Yet, people live as if the opposite were true and treat the present moment as a stepping stone to the next moment - a means to an end.

ECKHART TOLLE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1757: The Treaty of Alinagar placed what is today Kolkata under British control and served as a prelude to the seizure of Bengal. Robert Clive had seized the city in January from the ruler of Bengal, Siraj al-Dawlah.
- 1796: Qianlong, the fourth emperor of the Qing dynasty, abdicated and was succeeded by Jiaqing.
- 1959: The world's first intercontinental ballistic missile becomes operational in the USSR. The Soviet R-7 Semyorka missile had a range of 8800 km.
- 1969: The Boeing 747 flies for the first time. The “Jumbo Jet” was the world's largest passenger aircraft at the time.
- 1984: Soviet Premier Yuri Andropov died 15 months after succeeding Leonid Brezhnev and was replaced by Konstantin Chernenko.
- 1996: The Irish paramilitary organization IRA ends an 18-month ceasefire by exploding a large bomb in London. The explosion in London's Canary Wharf left 2 people dead and 39 injured.
- 1996: German physicist Peter Armbruster and his team of scientists synthesized chemical element 112, a heavy transuranium element that was later named copernicium.



THE LONELY CHILD

Sandy began a job as an elementary school counsellor and she was eager to help. One day during recess she noticed a girl standing by herself on one side of a playing field while the rest of the kids enjoyed a game of soccer at the other. Sandy approached and asked if she was all right. The girl said she was. A little while later, however, Sandy noticed the girl was in the same

spot, still by herself. Approaching Sandy offered, "Would you like me to be your friend?" The girl hesitated, then said, "Okay," looking at the woman suspiciously. Feeling she was making progress, Sandy then asked, "Why are you standing here all alone?" "Because," the little girl said with great exasperation, "I'm the goalie!"

SPECTRUM PUBLIC HEALTH

Integrated care model to improve efficiency



Sarit Kumar Rout

AROUND 63% OF ALL DEATHS IN INDIA ARE CAUSED DUE TO NCDs, RESULTING IN SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC BURDEN FROM HEALTHCARE COST AND PRODUCTIVE LOSSES LINKED TO PREMATURE MORTALITY

Announcing the budget, the Finance Minister underscored skilling-allied health professionals and care providers to respond to increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and growing elderly population, both of which requires care and empathy. Around 63% of all deaths in India are caused due to NCDs, resulting in substantial economic burden from healthcare cost and productive losses linked to premature mortality. This needs a responsive health system to design intervention at the primary and secondary care to address underlying constraints. The role of allied health professionals - physiotherapists, nutritionists, laboratory technicians, and rehabilitation specialists – is key to bridge the exiting service delivery gap in primary and secondary care. The declaration to train one lakh allied health professionals through a mix of public and private institutions signals a commitment to build a healthy population. Moreover, the growing elderly population from 100 million in 2011 to 230 million in 2036 has profound socio-economic

implications. The proposal to create 1.5 lakh caregivers is impressive in many ways as India is uniquely placed to leverage the demographic dividend with a higher share of younger population who can be trained to look after the elderly. Along with this, the Biopharma SHAKTI initiative with an allocation of ₹10,000cr for a period of five years will transform India from a low cost pharmacy to a hub of biopharmaceutical manufacturing.

Despite the stated intentions, the allocations are not notable. Total allocations to health including health research witnessed a 7% rise in FY27BE compared with FY26BE. Allocations to health and family welfare has risen from ₹95,957cr in FY26BE to ₹1,01,709cr in FY27BE - an increase of around 6%. Similarly, allocation to health research has increased to ₹4821cr in FY27BE compared to ₹3900cr in FY26BE. The increase in allocations in health research will help build an ecosystem to conduct high profile and context specific research for evidence based policymaking. However, a balanced approach spanning disease specific (biological re-

search) and health system research involving both government and private organizations is essential to maximize impact on population health.

Despite increase in nominal terms, the share of health in the total allocations for FY27BE remains insignificant, and continues to hover around 2%, the same observed 7 years ago. The National Health Mission has received an allocation ₹39,390cr and has not changed much in the last seven years except the pandemic years. The National Urban Health Mission, which was added as a sub component of NHM in 2013 in order to meet the growing health care needs of the rising urban population, has not witnessed any commensurate expansion of funding. As cities grow with increasing migration of population, urban health requires more funding to develop and design adaptive health systems to meet growing challenges.

Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, announced to develop capacities of health systems and institutions across the continuum of care at all levels, has faced several imple-

mentation constraints leading to substantial underutilization of resources. In FY27BE, total allocation has been ₹4760cr, similar to what was allocated in FY26BE. Similarly, the National Digital Health Mission witnessed a marginal rise from ₹340cr in FY26BE to ₹350cr in FY27BE. Allocation to PMJAY is purposed at ₹9,500cr in FY27BE, a component that has drawn enough attention due to steady population coverage and hospital admissions over the years. While PMJAY has been addressing hospitalization component, an integrated care model combining primary care with secondary and tertiary care through PMJAY would reduce avoidable hospitalizations and hence efficiency of spending. As an expression of policy intent, the budget needs to articulate such integration in order to improve efficiency of public investment.

The writer is Professor of Health Economics and Financing at Indian Institute of Public Health Bhubaneswar, an institution under the aegis of PHFI New Delhi.

Letters

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

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

Keep stress away

Sir, The column, “It doesn't cost anything to give a hug” (Feb. 4) made a fascinating read. Hugging a tree is no less equal to hugging your loved ones. It is a feeling of exhilaration. When demands of the modern day and stressful life often pull us away from nature, tree hugging serves as a poignant reminder of the healing power of our natural surroundings. The benefits of hugging trees, supported by both ancient wisdom and contemporary research, are far-reaching. From stress reduction to emotional release and a profound sense of connection, tree hugging offers a path to improved physical, mental, and emotional well-being. As we stand beneath the branches of ancient trees, we not only heal ourselves but also cultivate a deeper appreciation for the invaluable role that trees play in sustaining life on earth. By embracing trees, we embrace a healthier, more harmonious future for ourselves and the planet. Like the famous quote of an apple linking to a doctor, we can perhaps say, “A tree-hug a day keeps the stress away.”

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

Prolonged rate pause

Sir, With the policy repo rate held at 5.25% and the stance maintained as “neutral,” the RBI’s Monetary Policy Committee has signalled a prolonged pause—if not a definitive close—to the easing cycle. Governor Sanjay Malhotra indicated that rates are likely to remain unchanged over the next nine to twelve months, reflecting confidence in the durability of the growth outlook. Economic momentum remains firm and could strengthen further as trade deal with the United States approaches conclusion, alongside the recently finalised India-EU free trade agreement. Fiscal policy is also supportive, with the Union Budget limiting consolidation and sustaining capital expenditure at Rs 12.2 lakh crore. This extended pause aligns India with several Asian peers, including South Korea and Indonesia, which have also stepped back from further easing amid inflation risks, rising commodity prices, and currency pressures. Having delivered cumulative rate cuts of 125 basis points, with transmission to lending rates broadly effective the RBI sees little immediate need for additional stimulus.

Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH





# 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 in West



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 Chakrabarty, 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.

# 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.

To further strengthen the detection of stubble burning cases, patrolling by enforcement agencies during late evening hours has been enhanced, Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Kirti Vardhan Singh told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply to a question.

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

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.

## 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 Vipul Manubhai Pancholi directed the state government to inform the Commission by Monday how many Group-B officers it could provide for the SIR work.

# Series of murders put Punjab on edge

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**  
DALJIY 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.

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

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.

Prior to that, AAP Sarpanch Jharmal 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

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.



**GOVT. OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS DIVISION-I, KEONJHAR**  
Tel. 06766-258094(O), Mail : eerw1\_kjr@yahoo.com  
**"e" Procurement Notice for Road Works**  
**Identification No. Online NCB - 18/2025-26**

No.25001/43/2526

1. Name of the Work : 11 No. Roads Work, 2. Total Number of Work : 11 No., 3. Estimated Cost : Rs.4.98 Lakhs to Rs.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
		From	To		
1	2	3	4	5	6
Superintending Engineer, Rural Works Division-I, Keonjhar	Road Online NCB No.18	Dt.09.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	Dt.14.02.2026 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 [www.tenderorissa.gov.in](http://www.tenderorissa.gov.in) Sd/- Superintending Engineer R.W. Division-I, Keonjhar  
OIPR-25001/25110/1/25-26/0033

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER**  
**KHURDA IRRIGATION DIVISION, KHURDA**  
Dist. : Khurda, Odisha-752056, Tel/Fax : 06755-796308, Mail id : eekhurda Irrigationdivision@gmail.com  
**'e'-Procurement Notice No.KHD-06 OF 2025-26, Dtd.04.02.2026**

No.32001/34/2526

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 &amp; D, 6. Period of Completion : 2 (two) &amp; 4 (four) calendar months, 7. Other details are as follows.

8. e-mail id : [eekhurda Irrigationdivision@gmail.com](mailto:eekhurda Irrigationdivision@gmail.com)  
9. Date of lottery - 24.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.  
Further detail conditions can be seen from the Govt. website [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in) Sd/- Superintending Engineer Khurda Irrigation Division, Khurda  
OIPR-32001/32078/1/25-26/0020

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, M.I. DIVISION, ANANDAPUR**  
A/P.O : Salapada, Dist.-Keonjhar, Pin Code-758020  
**e-Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No.-18/MDO/2025-26**  
E-mail ID : [mianandapur@yahoo.co.in](mailto:mianandapur@yahoo.co.in), [eamindandapur@gmail.com](mailto:eamindandapur@gmail.com)  
**No.328 Date 05.02.2026**

No.32001/36/2526

1. Name of the work : Construction of Watch Tower at Jamjharia, Kalunga Section, Kuarmunda Forest Range of Rourkela Forest Division, District-Sundargarh

2. No. of works : 01 No.

3. No. of covers : SINGLE Cover

4. Estimated Cost : Rs.20,32,462.00

5. Period of Completion : 01 Calendar Month

6. Date &amp; Time of availability of bid documents in the portal : From 10.00 A.M. of date 07.02.2026 to 05:00 P.M. of dated 17.02.2026

7. Last date / time for receipt of bids in the portal : Up to 05:00 P.M. of dated 17.02.2026

8. Date of opening of bid documents : At 11:00 A.M. of date 18.02.2026

9. Class of Contractor : "D" &amp; "C" Class Contractor

10. Name and address of officer : Divisional Forest Officer, Rourkela Forest Division

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal [www.tenderorissa.gov.in](http://www.tenderorissa.gov.in). The Addendum / Corrigendum if any will be hosted in the website only. Sd/- Divisional Forest Officer, Rourkela Forest Division  
OIPR-8001/8072/1/25-26/0001

**OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER CUM WILDLIFE WARDEN**  
**ROURKELA FOREST DIVISION, ROURKELA, SUNDARGARH, ODISHA**  
Phone No. 0661-2664637, Fax No. 0661-2664638, email : [dforourkela.od@gov.in](mailto:dforourkela.od@gov.in)  
Order No. 39 / Dtd. 05.02.2026  
**INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**  
**E-Procurement Bid Identification No. RKL-F.E & C/C/2025-26 Dtd.05.02.2026**

No.8001/27/2526

1. Name of work : Construction of 13 Nos. of New Check Dams in different Block of Rayagada District under MATY 3.0. Construction of Canal Lining of Puhundi MIP in Kasipur Block of Rayagada District under MIPSP Scheme &amp; Improvement to Kankubadi MIP under DPW for the year 2025-26.

2. Total Number of works : 15 (Fifteen) Nos.

3. Estimated cost : Approximately varies from Rs.25.33 Lakh to Rs.46.55 Lakh

4. Period of completion : As mentioned against each work in Annexure to Bid Notice

5. Class of Contractor : As mentioned against each work in Annexure to Bid Notice

6. Date and time of availability of bid documents in the portal : From 10.00 A.M. of 10.02.2026 to 5.00 P.M. of 19.02.2026

7. Last date/time for receipt of bids in the portal : 5.00 P.M. on 19.02.2026

8. Date of opening of bid : At 11.00 A.M. on 20.02.2026 in website ([www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in))

9. Submission of Bids : Online mode

10. Name of the Officer inviting Bid : Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Rayagada

Further details can be seen from the Government of Odisha Website : [www.tendersodisha.gov.in](http://www.tendersodisha.gov.in) Sd/- Superintending Engineer M.I. Division, Rayagada  
OIPR-32001/32056/1/25-26/0001

**ଅଧ୍ୟାକ୍ଷକ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ**  
**ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଜଳସେଚନ ବିଭାଗ, ଆନନ୍ଦପୁର**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, M.I. DIVISION, ANANDAPUR**  
A/P.O : Salapada, Dist.-Keonjhar, Pin Code-758020  
**e-Procurement Notice**  
**Bid Identification No.-18/MDO/2025-26**  
E-mail ID : [mianandapur@yahoo.co.in](mailto:mianandapur@yahoo.co.in), [eamindandapur@gmail.com](mailto:eamindandapur@gmail.com)  
**No.328 Date 05.02.2026**

No.32001/36/2526

1. Name of the work : Construction of 01(One) no. Check Dam (In-sream storage structures) under MATY scheme and 01 no. of Repair in ERM scheme

2. No. of Works : 02 (Two) Nos only

3. Estimated Cost : Varies from 23.83 lakhs to 36.60 lakh (Approximately)

4. Cost of Tender Paper : 6000/- (Non-refundable)

5. Period of Completion : 4 (Four) Calendar months

6. Availability of bid documents for sale and receipt through on-line : From dt.12.02.2026, 10.00 A.M. to dt.20.02.2026, up to 5.00 P.M.

7. Last date/Time of receipt of bids in the portal : 20.02.2026 (5.00PM)

8. Date of Technical bid opening through online : On dt.21.02.2026 at 10.00 A.M. in the Office of the S.E., M.I. Division, Anandapur

9. Mode of payment of Bid Cost : Online

10. Digital Signature Certificate of Bidder : The Bidder must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate (DSC)

The detail tender call notice can also be seen in the DOWR website <http://dowr.orissa.gov.in>11. Name & Address of the OIT : Superintending Engineer, Minor Irrigation Division, Anandapur, A/P.O/District - Keonjhar  
Email ID : [mianandapur@yahoo.co.in](mailto:mianandapur@yahoo.co.in)Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement market place <http://tendersorissa.gov.in> Sd/- Superintending Engineer, M.I. Division, Anandapur  
OIPR-32001/32108/1/25-26/0001








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



SUKHVINDER 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

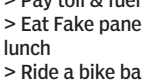
X

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 councillor 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



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

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

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

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** The Congress Sunday hit out at the BJP over a purported video posted on the X handle of the ruling party's Assam unit, claiming it shows the "targeted point-blank murder of minorities" and said the judiciary must act in the matter.

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.

Congress general secretary in charge of organisation, K C Venugopal, slammed the BJP over the issue.

"An official BJP handle posted a video showing the targeted, 'point-blank' murder of minorities. This is nothing but a call to genocide - a dream this fascist regime has harboured for decades," Venugopal said on X. This is not an innocuous video to be ignored as troll content, but as "poison being spread from the very top", and there must be consequences for this, he said.

"There is no hope that Narendra Modi will condemn or act against this, but the judiciary

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.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria is slated to hear on Monday a batch of pleas, including the one filed by Banerjee, relating to the ongoing SIR exercise in the state.

The application, filed by the former vice president of the Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha, Satish Kumar Aggarwal, has sought to intervene in the petition filed by Banerjee.

The West Bengal chief minister has filed a petition in the apex court against the SIR of electoral rolls in the state.

"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 Narresh 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.

SNIPPETS

Two 'reserve' EVMs found in car in Solapur

**Mumbai:** Two Electronic Voting Machines were found in a car near an eatery in Maharashtra's Solapur district, with the State Election Commission Sunday promising strict action in the matter while clarifying that the sanctity of the poll process was maintained as these were "reserve" devices. Elections to 12 Zilla Parishads, including in Solapur, and 125 Panchayat Samitis were held in Maharashtra Saturday. Around midnight Saturday, two EVMs were found in a car, hired for an official on election duty, near Hotel Swarajya in Mohol town, prompting a few political parties to level allegations of tampering.

Hindus in B'desh have chosen to unite and resist: Bhagwat

**Mumbai:** RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat Sunday said the Hindu population in Bangladesh has chosen to unite and resist rather than flee, and assured them of the Sangh's support. Addressing an interactive session organised to mark the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's (RSS) centenary, Bhagwat spoke on a wide range of issues, including his retirement, language, caste, population imbalance, the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), infiltration, religion, and national unity. Emphasising the primacy of local languages, Bhagwat said English would never be the medium of communication in RSS functioning, as it is not an Indian language. Dispelling perceptions about caste identities vis-a-vis the RSS, Bhagwat said the Sangh chief has to be a Hindu, irrespective of caste.

UIDAI completes mandatory biometric updates for over 1 crore schoolchildren

**New Delhi:** Aadhaar custodian UIDAI has completed mandatory biometric updates (MBU) for one crore school children covering 83,000 schools across the country, an official statement said. A child under the age of five can enrol for Aadhaar by providing the photograph, name, date of birth, gender, address and birth certificate but the fingerprints and iris biometrics of a child are not captured for Aadhaar enrolment below the age of five as these indicators are not mature by then.

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.

Inderjeet 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-

vented a ₹35 lakh "digital arrest" fraud targeting a retired Lucknow Municipal Corporation official, Chhedilal Patel, February 6, when he was at the bank, when cyber comment struck him.

Thugs posing as "ATS officers" kept him on a nearly 90-minute call and even initiated a fake WhatsApp video "hearing", citing a Pahalgam terror probe to intimidate him. Noticing his distress, bank employees intervened, confronted the callers and ensured no transaction was made, thereby averting a major financial loss.

Police officials say the case underlines the importance of acting within the "golden hour" - a strategy that has significantly improved Uttar Pradesh's performance in tackling cyber fraud.

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.

Of this, ₹48.45 crore was se-



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

PTI PHOTO



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

PTI, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Rajeev Krishna attributed the turnaround to faster reporting by victims and improved coordination between police cyber cells, banks and payment gateways.

"The golden hour of reporting online crime is crucial. The earlier it is reported, the greater the chances of holding the money and getting it recovered. Don't wait long; report cyber crimes in the first hour itself," the DGP added.

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

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 said.



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 ARAGHCI | 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 HELBERG | 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 by a Nigerian president 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 Zelenskyy 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 Koretskyi, 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

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 Khosf, 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.

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.



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



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.

The "Best Way to Cup" project, which has two venues and roasts and grinds its own coffee, is on the brink of permanent closure. Co-founder Yana Bilym, 33, who opened the cafe in May, said a Russian attack shattered

all its windows and glass doors in August. Bilym said the cost of renovation was 150,000 hryvnias (about USD 3,400), half of which she financed with a bank loan that she only recently finished repaying.

**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

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 SAYS FINAL DEAL WITH RUSSIA NEEDS TRUMP

"Only Trump can stop the war," Sybiha told Reuters in his office in Kyiv, close to the Dnipro river.

From a 20-point peace plan that has formed the basis of recent trilateral negotiations, only "a few" items remain outstanding, Sybiha said. "The most sensitive and most difficult, to be dealt with at the leaders' level."

On key issues, such as land, the two sides appear far apart. Russia has maintained its demand that Ukraine cede the remaining 20% of the eastern region of Donetsk that it has failed to occupy during years of grinding, attritional warfare - something that Kyiv has steadfastly refused.

Ukraine also wants control over the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant - the largest in Europe - which is in Russian-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

Ukraine FM urges faster peace talks



- 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."

Nearly four years after its full-scale invasion in February 2022, Russia occupies almost a fifth of Ukraine's territory - including the Crimean Peninsula and parts of eastern Ukraine occupied before the war - and has devastated the electricity and heating network with targeted bombing. On the battlefield, analysts say Russia has gained only about 1.3% of Ukrainian territory since early 2023.

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."



of the day

quote

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




PRAYUSH 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



SHAILESH CHANDRA | MANAGING DIRECTOR & 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.



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



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 Asso-

ciation 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

INDO-US TRADE PACT



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

oil flows from Nepal, as such imports may no longer be commercially viable. "We are waiting for more details", he said.

DDGS: BOON OR BURDEN

On dried distillers' grains (DDGs), the SEA official said duty-free imports of this animal feed would boost "additional"

**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 tonne 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.

PUSH FOR US TRADE DEAL

Indian refiners avoid Russian oil

*The intake of Russian oil by India, the world's third-biggest oil consumer and importer, declined to its lowest level in two years in Dec*

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Indian refiners are avoiding Russian oil purchases for delivery in April and are expected to stay away from such trades for longer, refining and trade sources said, a move that could help New Delhi seal a trade pact with Washington.

The US and India moved closer to a trade pact Friday, announcing a framework for a deal they hope to conclude by March that would lower tariffs and deepen economic cooperation. Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum and Reliance Industries are not accepting offers from traders for Russian oil loading in March and April, said a trader who approached the refiners.

These refiners, however, had already scheduled some deliveries of Russian oil in March, refining sources said. Most other refiners have stopped buying Russian crude.

TRUMP SAYS INDIA 'COMMITTED' TO HALTING PURCHASES

The three refiners and the oil ministry did not respond to requests for comment. The trade minister Saturday referred questions about Russian oil to the foreign ministry.

A foreign ministry spokesperson said: "Diversifying our energy sourcing in keeping with objective market conditions and



evolving international dynamics is at the core of our strategy" to ensure energy security for the world's most-populous nation.

Although a US-India statement on the trade framework did not mention Russian oil, President Donald Trump rescinded his 25% tariffs on Indian goods, imposed over Russian oil purchases, because, he said, New Delhi had "committed to stop directly or indirectly" importing Russian oil.

New Delhi has not announced plans to halt Russian oil imports. India became the top buyer of discounted Russian seaborne crude after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, spurring a backlash from Western nations that had targeted Russia's energy sector with sanctions aimed at curtailing Moscow's revenue and making it harder to fund the war.

INDIA'S RUSSIAN-OIL IMPORTS A FRACTION OF 2025 LEVELS

One regular Indian buyer is Russia-backed private refin-

er Nayara, which relies solely on Russian oil for its 400,000-barrel-per-day refinery. Sources said Nayara may be allowed to keep buying Russian oil because other crude sellers pulled back after the European Union sanctioned the refiner in July.

Profits at Shell's Integrated Gas and Marketing divisions missed analyst projections.

Nayara also does not plan to import Russian crude in April due to a month-long refinery maintenance shutdown, a source familiar with its operations said.

Indian refiners may change their plan and place orders for Russian oil only if advised by the government, sources said.

Sources said last month that India was preparing to cut Russian oil imports below 1 million bpd by March, with volumes eventually falling to 500,000-600,000 bpd, compared with an average 1.7 million bpd last year. India's Russian oil imports topped 2 million bpd in mid-2025.

Cyber breaches emerge as top risk for India Inc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 8:** Cybersecurity breaches and attacks have emerged as the top risks for Indian companies' organisational performance, with 51 per cent of senior leaders citing it as their primary concern, according to a new survey released Sunday.

The 'FICCI-EY Risk Survey 2026' identified changing customer demands (49 per cent) and geopolitical events (48 per cent) as the next two most critical risks facing businesses.

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.

"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.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a dual risk area for India Inc. While 60 per cent of respondents believe inadequate adoption of emerging technologies, including AI, can adversely impact operational effectiveness, 54 per cent feel AI-related risks, including ethical and governance issues, are not being effectively managed.

Commenting on the findings, Rajeev Sharma, Chair, FICCI



Committee on Corporate Security & DRR, said, "In a business environment shaped by volatility, the ability to anticipate, absorb and adapt to risk is emerging as a defining capability for sustained growth. The report indicates that organisations are moving away from treating risk as episodic and are instead embedding it into strategic decision-making".

The survey also flagged significant concerns regarding

**Organisations are navigating a phase where multiple risks are converging rather than occurring in isolation. Inflation, cyber threats, AI governance, climate exposure and regulatory change are interacting in ways that directly influence India Inc's performance and resilience**

SUBHAKAR RAJENDRAN | RISK CONSULTING LEADER, EY INDIA

workforce dynamics. About 64 per cent of respondents believe talent shortages and critical skill gaps might affect organisational performance, while 59 per cent cited weak succession planning as a risk to stability.

On the regulatory front, 67 per cent of respondents agreed that regulatory changes need to be addressed, with 40 per cent indicating that their compliance frameworks struggle to keep pace with regulatory shifts.

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.



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 Ahmadih 3:2, while Akash (75kg) added another gold after a tense 3:2 win over Kazakhstan's Aman Konsbekov. Deepak (70kg) and Anshuk (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 Hrudya 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 Nela-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 Hrudya 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.

T20 WORLD CUP

## England survive Nepal scare

**Mumbai:** A stunning late assault from Lokesh Bam did not prove to be enough as England beat Nepal by four runs in their T20 World Cup match here Sunday. Chasing 185 for a win, Nepal ended at 180 for 6 with Lokesh remaining not out on 39 off 20 balls with the help of four boundaries and two sixes. Dipendra Singh Airee scored a 29-ball 44 while captain Rohit Paudel chipped in with 39 off 34 balls. Earlier, England scored 184 for seven batting first. England saw Jacob Bethell (55 off 35 balls) and Harry Brook (53 off 32 balls) make significant contributions with the bat after opener Phil Salt (1) was dismissed early.

## Seifert leads NZ chase

**Chennai:** Tim Seifert blasted a 42-ball 65 as New Zealand opened their T20 World Cup campaign with a five-wicket win over Afghanistan here Sunday. Opting to bat, Gulbadin Naib (63) smashed a fine fifty as Afghanistan posted a 182 for six. Sediqullah Atal (29) and Rahmanullah Gurbaz (27) also chipped in with useful contributions. In reply, NZ romped home in 17.5 overs with Seifert (65) and Glenn Phillips (42) doing bulk of the runs.

## 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 emerged champion, defeating Nishant Biswal 4-3 in a closely contested match, with Nishant finishing as the runner-up.

Asutosh Padhy emerged as the champion, winning a cash prize of 25,000 along with a trophy, while Nishant Biswal

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; Smruti Ranjan Behera, Co-Founder of GK Group of Companies; Rajendra Puhan, Partner at Poddar Retreating; 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 Bot-ic 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 Pel 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.