



Moving moments

Actor and global icon Priyanka Chopra Jonas turns emotional while addressing students at Harvard Business School

LEISURE | P2



'Difficult' peace talks end

The latest US-brokered talks between envoys from Moscow and Kyiv end with no sign of breakthrough

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Silver bounces back

Snapping a three-day losing streak, silver prices rebound by ₹1,000 to ₹2.46 lakh per kg in the national capital Wednesday

BUSINESS | P11



Racism hits UCL

Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr accuses Benfica's Prestianni of racially insulting him during their Champions League playoff game

SPORTS | P12

12 PAGES | ₹5.00

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BHUBANESWAR | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Biennial RS polls to 37 seats set for March 16

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The BJP is set to win at least half of the 37 Rajya Sabha seats, including four in Odisha, going to biennial polls March 16 and is likely to increase its strength in the Upper House, as it is in power or part of the ruling alliance in six of the 10 states where seats are falling vacant.

The seats will fall vacant April 2 and 9 following the retirement of several members, including Rajya Sabha deputy chairman Harivansh (JD), NCP-SP MP Sharad Pawar (NCP-SP), former Lok Sabha deputy Speaker M Thambidurai (AIADMK) and Union ministers Ram Nath Thakur (JD) and Ramdas Athawale (RPI-A).

According to the Election Commission, the seats are spread across Maharashtra (seven), Odisha (four), Telangana (two), Tamil Nadu (six), Chhattisgarh (two), West Bengal (five), Assam

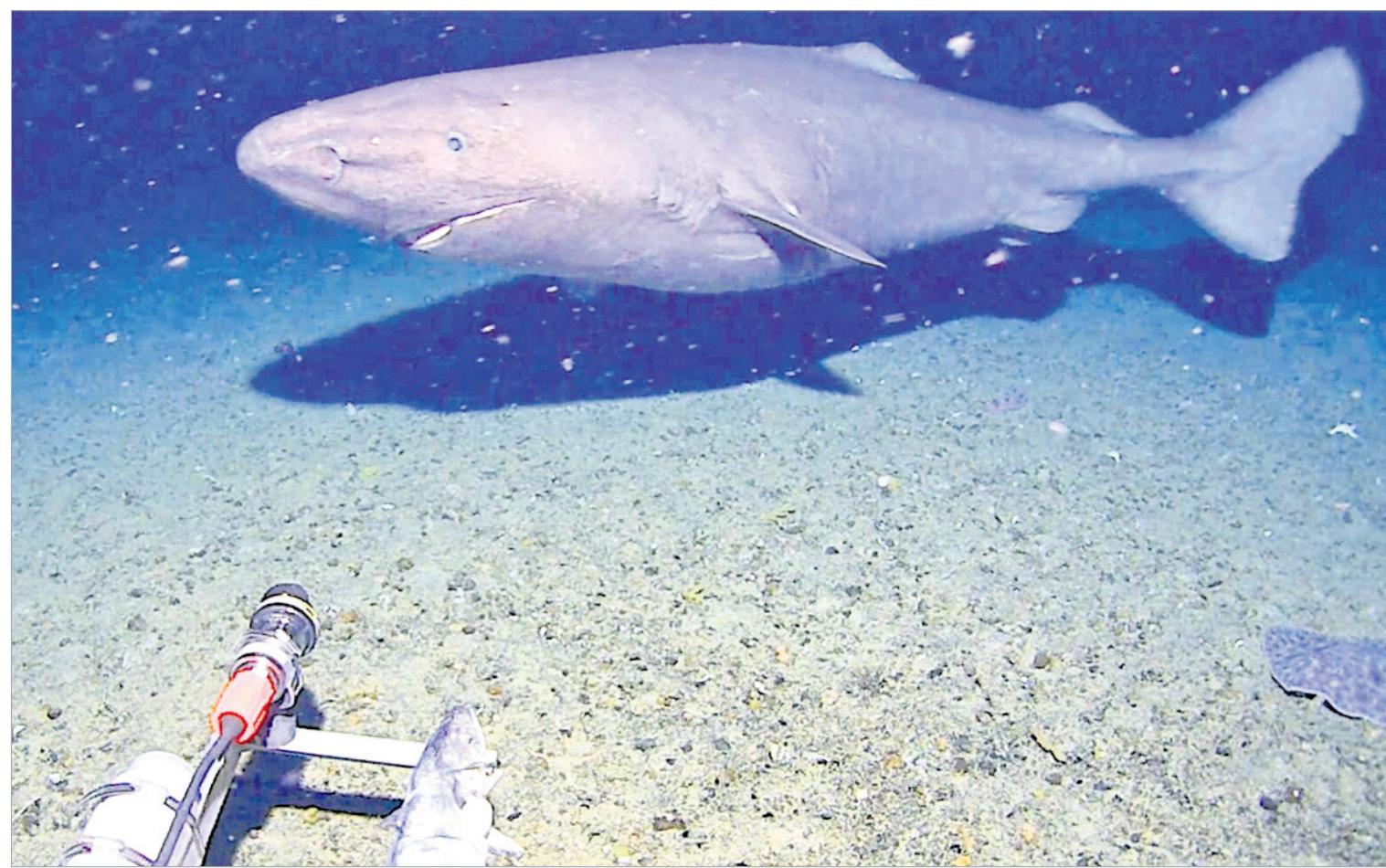
(three), Haryana (two), Himachal Pradesh (one) and Bihar (five).

Notifications for the polls will be issued February 26, and according to established practice, polling will be held between 9am and 4pm March 16, with counting scheduled from 5pm the same day.

Based on its legislative strength, the BJP is expected to win around 15 to 18 seats, while nine of its MPs are retiring next month.

The BJP has governments or is an alliance partner in Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana and Assam. It will help the party gain numbers in the Upper House.

In Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and West Bengal, Opposition parties are in power. The Congress is likely to win four seats – one each in Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Haryana – on the basis of the strength of its MLAs in the respective state assemblies.



SERENDIPITY: This image taken from footage released by the University of Western Australia shows a sleeper shark swimming past a baited camera on the seafloor of the Southern Ocean off Antarctica in January 2025, marking the first ever recorded sighting of the species in frigid Antarctic waters (Report P3)

PHOTO CREDITS: AP

Matric exam begins today

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The Board of Secondary Education, Odisha will conduct the Matriculation Examination 2026 from February 19 to March 2 across the state.

A total of 5,61,989 students will appear for the examination this year, including candidates under the State Open School Certificate stream.

To ensure smooth conduct of the examination, the board has set up 3,082 examination centres and 322 nodal centres across the state. Additionally, 50 centres have been designated for the evaluation of answer sheets.

All nodal and examination centres will remain under round-the-clock security cover and CCTV surveillance. Authorities have strictly prohibited mobile phones and other electronic devices inside examination centres.

School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond said comprehensive arrangements have been made to ensure smooth and transparent conduct of the examinations.

MAN KILLS WIFE

Malkangiri: A man allegedly killed his wife by striking her head with a wooden plank following a minor domestic dispute in Luler village under Mathili block of Malkangiri district, police said Wednesday. The accused Guru Nayak had an argument with his wife, Khamari Nayak, over a family matter. Guru reportedly lost his temper and hit her on the head with a wooden plank. Khamari died on the spot.

IRREGULAR by MANJU

Caught red-handed? Just say you support the govt and that your vision aligns with the PM's. You will be freed

Paddy pain sets House on boil

SECOND DAY WASHED OUT AS THE ASSEMBLY COULD TRANSACT ONLY FOR ABOUT 5 MINUTES DUE TO THE DIN

PNN & AGENCIES

Min: 8 milk, dairy product samples substandard

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The second day of the Assembly's Budget Session Wednesday was washed out, as chaos reigned supreme with MLAs of the Opposition BJD and Congress demonstrated, alleging mismanagement in paddy procurement.

Amid the ruckus, Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the Hosus twice before doing the same till Thursday.

As soon as the House assembled for the Question Hour, BJD members rushed to the Well and started a demonstration with placards.

Amid the sloganeering, BJD's Deogarh Romancha Ranjan Biswal, who came to the House dressed as a farmer, poured a bagful of paddy on the reporter's table.

When the House reas-

sembled, similar scenes were witnessed, forcing the Speaker to adjourn the proceedings till 4pm. Finally, Padhy adjourned the House for the day till 10.30am Thursday as members of both Opposition parties refused to stop the agitation on the floor of the House.

The House could transact for nearly five minutes in the entire day due to the din over the alleged mismanage-

ment in the paddy procurement across the state.

A day before commencement of the session, Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik had announced that the voice of farmers would "roar" in the Assembly as the government has ignored their pleas to procure their paddy at state-run mandis across Odisha.

Speaking to reporters outside the House, Congress legislature party leader Ram Chandra Kadam said they have no alternative but to agitate in the Assembly.

"The government is not procuring paddy from farmers, for which they have to undertake distress sales. Though we have drawn the attention of the government to the issue several times, but there was no result," he alleged, noting

that Congress MLAs will continue to protest until the problems being faced by farmers are resolved.

Opposition Chief Whip Pramila Mallik of BJD said, "Our party has drawn the attention to the government several times at different platforms. Our leader has written to the Chief Minister, and BJD leaders staged protests in all districts highlighting plights of farmers. But, the government keep on exploiting the farmers."

Asked how to bring back normalcy in the House, Mallik said they are ready to withdraw the agitation if the Chief Minister announces in the Assembly that the government will procure the entire surplus paddy from farmers and give them a suitable price.

New skywalk soon from Palasuni to Rasulgarh



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

hours. At least three major accidents have occurred at Palasuni in two months.

In a major step toward safer roads in Bhubaneswar, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) Wednesday said that it will build a 500-metre skywalk from Palasuni to Rasulgarh at a cost of ₹20 crore," the NHAI's regional office in Odisha informed on X.

The skywalk will create a secure, well-lit, and convenient pathway for pedestrians while allowing traffic below to move more smoothly and efficiently, it said.

Galgotias varsity leaves AI Summit with robodog's tail between its legs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The internet never forgets and the dog-eat-dog world of social media probably won't let you pass off a Chinese product as a Greater Noida innovation; private university Galgotias found out the hard way on being forced out of the AI Impact Summit Wednesday.

University representatives showcased a robotic dog named 'Orion' Tuesday, claiming it was developed by the Centre of Excellence at Galgotias, prompting social media users to highlight that it was a Unitree Go2, manufactured by China's Unitree Robotics and commonly used in research and education worldwide.

Bitten but not shy, the private university made a dogged attempt to brazen it out with bizarre justifications through Wednesday, such as one person's six could be another's nine, but issued an apology later in the evening after the organisers cut power supply to its stall at the event and asked



the occupants to leave.

IT Secretary S Krishnan said the government did not want any exhibitor to showcase items that were not its own. "We do not want such exhibits to continue," he said, after the organisers asked Galgotias to vacate the stall.

In its apology, Galgotias University said the person "manning the pavilion was ill-informed".

"She was not aware of the technical origins of the products and in her enthusiasm of being on camera, gave factually incorrect information even though she was not authorised to speak to the press," the university said.

Stating that there was "no institutional intent to

misrepresent this innovation", the university said it remained firmly committed to academic integrity, transparency and responsible representations of its work. It said it vacated the premises "understanding the organiser's sentiment".

Neha Singh, a professor of communications at the university's school of management, showed Orion to DD News Tuesday, saying that it "has been developed by the Centre of Excellence at Galgotias University". After social media users pointed out that the robot was actually a Unitree Go2, the episode invited widespread ridicule and drew political criticism Wednesday.

"Your six can be my nine. Maybe what I wanted to say I was not able to say because of the scarcity of time, or the noise around us," she said.

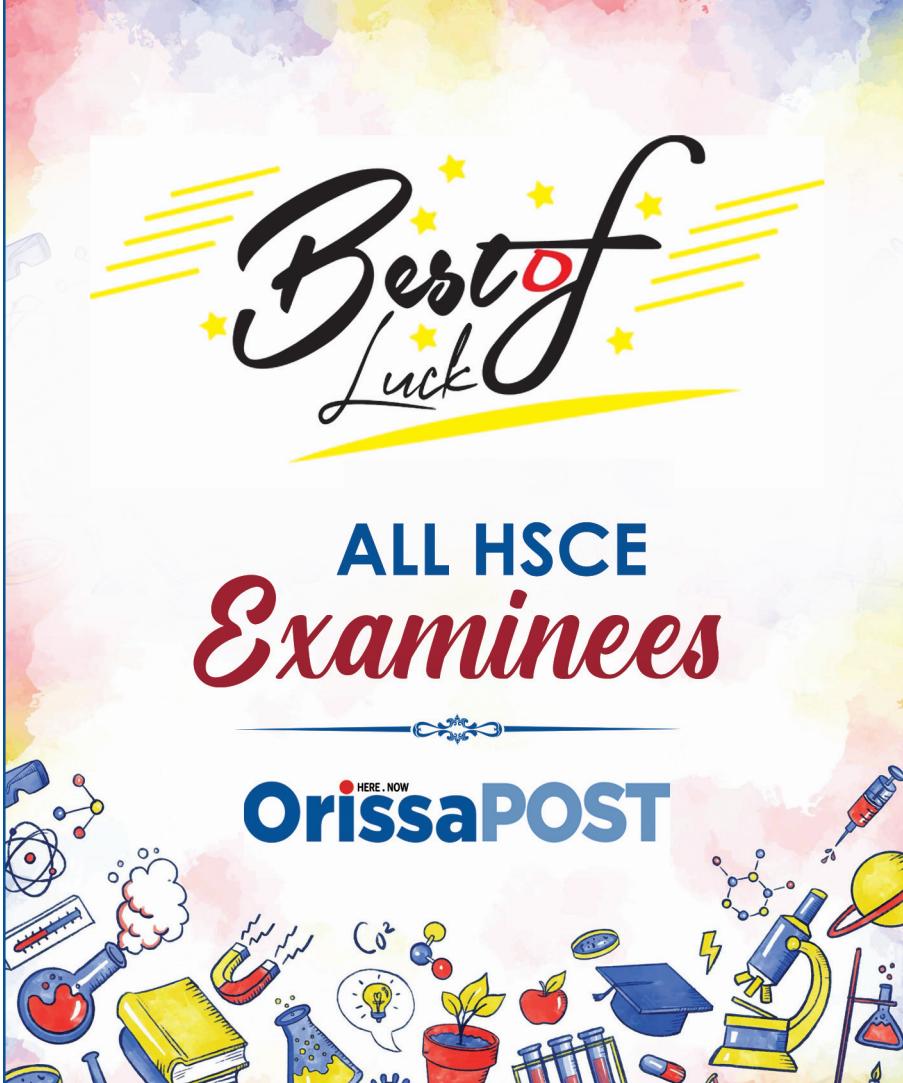
"Instead of leveraging

SHORT TAKES YOUTH GETS SHOT AT DURING FEAST, DIES

Cuttack: A man was allegedly shot dead from a close range during a feast here Wednesday, police said. A group of youth had assembled at Press Colony in Madhupatna police station area for a feast when a person opened fire at the man, identified as Soumyaranjan Jena. Jena suffered gunshot wound in the chest and was taken to SCB Medical College and Hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead.

ELEPHANT CALF'S CARCASS FOUND

Deogarh: A one-year-old elephant calf was found dead near the Rengali reservoir under the Thianala section of Barkote range in Deogarh district Wednesday morning, officials said. According to the officials, information about the death was received at around 8:30am near Kulsara village. Following the report, the DFO, ACF, range officials and other forest personnel rushed to the spot. Preliminary investigation suggests that the calf may have died due to drowning in the reservoir.



HERE . NOW
Orissa POST

**I HAVEN'T GONE TO UNIVERSITY: ROBBIE**

Hollywood star Margot Robbie shared that she worried she was "dumb" after deciding against going to university. *The Wuthering Heights* actress, who grew up in Australia, discovered her love of acting when she was in high school so she decided to chase her dreams of stardom instead of enrolling in higher education.

BAZ LUHRMANN TO BRING ELVIS' LIFE TO STAGE SHOW

Filmmaker Baz Luhrmann is set to adapt Elvis Presley's story for the theatres in a new stage show. The Hollywood director brought his love of the King of Rock and Roll to the big screen in his 2022 biopic *Elvis*, reports *Female First UK*.

**FORTUNE FORECAST**

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ARIES

Friends, friends, and more friends – that's what the day will be all about. Life seems to be one big party, even if all you're doing is having tea together! But reserve the evening for that one special friend, suggests Ganesha.

**TAURUS**

Prepare yourself to handle ordinary situations in an extraordinary way, foretells Ganesha. Today, you will get a lesson in how people work. Before arriving at any crucial decision, explore the pros and cons with a balanced mind, says Ganesha.

**GEMINI**

Today, you will be at complete peace with yourself and your surroundings. So, it is rather unlikely that you will give in to provocations and lose your temper. Health of a family member may cause some anxiety, but more or less, you will remain unperturbed by the world.

**CANCER**

Your peers will be impressed by your professional efficiency today, foretells Ganesha. You had better postpone auction bids or sealed tenders for some other day. You are likely to do well in interviews, says Ganesha.

**LEO**

It's an early thanksgiving for you today, says Ganesha, as you feel full of the spirit of joy and blessing. Academically, this might push you towards developing a penchant for subjects like philosophy and metaphysics. Culturally, this translates into a desire to learn and hone your creative skills. Make the best of this fruitful day and remember to thank God for the mercies and magnanimity bestowed upon you.

**VIRGO**

Ganesha warns that anger will run riot today. You will probably blow hotter than a volcano. During the afternoon, you could draw out the plans for a big business project. You will gain the support of your colleagues. But Ganesha advises that during the evening try to do some meditation so that you can soothe those frayed nerves.

**LIBRA**

Think long and hard about all things past, present and future, says Ganesha, since there are chances that you may be in a pensive mood today. But do not be in a brooding frame of mind. You might have to manage balancing your personal and professional life. But your business will progress as expected. So relax, and look forward to an evening that promises to be a pleasant one, especially in the company of the opposite sex.

**SCORPIO**

Once in a while, it's okay to enjoy the luxuries of life and pamper yourself. And if accompanied by your spouse, it adds a romantic touch to the entire experience. When it comes to work, people look up to you as an asset to the company. At times, even unknown people lend you a helping hand and contribute to your progress; appreciate them, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**

Success will knock your doors today and you may be in the limelight. The experience will be full of emotions for you. Romantic developments on cards today, predicts Ganesha.

**CAPRICORN**

You will do a commendable job solving complicated problems at work, says Ganesha.



In keeping with the circumstances, you will be spontaneous in coming up with solutions to pressing issues; and so accurate you may be in your assumptions about a likely situation that in future, your peers and subordinates will blindly accept whatever proposal you table. A news from outside the country can double your joys.

**AQUARIUS**

Friends – the pillars of your life are going to be your constant companions for the day. Ganesha suggests you come out of your shell and tread new paths. Bring the vibrant side of your personality to the fore and see the difference you make in every one's life.

**PISCES**

A conflict-ridden day awaits you. Avoid openly confronting people today, for petty issues could blow up into major disasters. Legal disputes may also hassle you. Meditative techniques will bring you peace of mind. Delay the start of important activities for a more opportune time, says Ganesha.



PeeCee turns emotional



Mumbai: Actor and global icon Priyanka Chopra Jonas aka PeeCee turned emotional while addressing students during an India Week session at Harvard Business School. She was invited to deliver a fireside keynote. The theme of the session was "The India We Imagine."

Priyanka later shared her experience on social media, writing, "So, this is how my day started. I was supposed to give a fireside keynote address to conclude India Week at the prestigious Harvard Business School.... no big deal, I thought. You can do this, Priyanka."

The actress said her emotions shifted the moment she saw the audience dressed in sarees and kurtas, "But looking out into the audience today, I only had one thought, you are the India I imagined. Let me explain."

Priyanka told the crowd that she felt immense pride seeing so many young Indian students and Desi allies filling the auditorium. She said the sight reminded her of how representation and belonging have evolved.

Expressing her pride further, she added, "To see an auditorium full of students, dressed in sarees and kurtas, at the campus of HBS (@harvard) in Boston, Massachusetts,

where I grew up... to see so many people from my community at one of the best schools in the world, made my heart burst with pride. You are the future."

AGENCIES

NEENA'S UNCOMFORTABLE MEMORY

Mumbai: Veteran actor Neena Gupta recently revisited an uncomfortable memory from the shoot of the popular song *Choli Ke Peeche*, reflecting on how her perspective has evolved over the years. Speaking on Shubhankar Mishra's podcast, she spoke about filmmaker Subhash Ghai asking the costume designer to "make her appear fuller" for the sequence and suggesting that she wear a padded bra.

Recalling the moment, Neena said, "At that time, I felt very angry and thought it was inappropriate to say something like that. But now I feel he was just doing his job. He had a certain image in mind for the character in the song, and he expressed it plainly. I was new then – today I understand it differently."

The actor explained that while the remark initially upset her, with time she has come to view it within



the context of filmmaking and character presentation. Her reflection offered insight into how her understanding of creative decisions and professional expectations has matured over the years.

On the professional front, Neena is currently seen in *Vadh 2*, which released on February 6. The film co-stars Sanjay Mishra and is backed by filmmaker Luv Ranjan's production banner.

AGENCIES

FUN POST

5-day nat'l drama fest from Jan 20

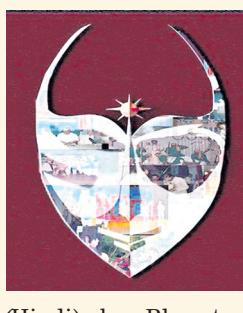
Bhubaneswar: Satabdira Kalakar, one of the oldest theatre troupes of the state, is celebrating its golden jubilee year here at Rabindra Mandap from Friday.

A five-day drama festival comprising six plays will be held to mark the occasion.

On the first evening, the host organisation will stage Odia play *Maha Sangramara Maha Nayaka*. Written by Biswabhusan Harichandan the play is directed by Dhira Mallik.

Other plays to be staged over the next four days of the festival are – Bengali play *Andha Yug* by Ebam Amra of West Bengal (Playwright – Dharamveer Bharati; Adaptation and direction – Kallol Bhattacharya) on 21.02.26, *Ab na banegi dehari*

SATABDIRA KALAKAR'S GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS



(Hindi) by Bharatendu Natya Akademy of Lucknow (Novel – Padma Sachdev; dramatisation – Asif Ali; direction – Bipin Kumar) on 22.02.26, *Maya Mridung* (Bengali) by Dumdum Sabdomugdha Natya Kendra (

Asi) by Bharatendu Natya Akademy of Lucknow (Novel – Padma Sachdev; dramatisation – Asif Ali; direction – Bipin Kumar) on 22.02.26, *Maya Mridung* (Bengali) by Dumdum Sabdomugdha Natya Kendra (

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MISSION SHAKTI BUILDING ON WATERBODY IN PURI

SC sets aside NGT's demolition order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: The Supreme Court Wednesday set aside an order of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordering demolition of a woman's self-help group (SHG) building at a village in Puri district on the ground that it was constructed on a waterbody.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was hearing the appeal of Gopinathpur Gram Panchayat Samiti challenging the Orissa High Court's order of July 2022.

The high court had declined to pass any order against the NGT's demolition order and instead directed the authorities to

take remedial action.

The bench noted that the structure was raised under the state government's flagship scheme Mission Shakti which empowered women through SHGs.

"How can NGT direct the demolition of a government building?" the CJI said, underlining that it was a challenge to provide basic amenities to people.

The CJI said, "You want to stall all this by filing such petitions. There are enough ponds. If the local self-help group used this building, then there should be no issue."

The counsel for the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) then submitted that the matter concerned a water stream.

"I know how these state



pollution control boards function," the CJI said, adding that it was expected for the NGT to take the help of an expert body in such matters.

The bench said the stream had been incorrectly described as a waterbody. "It cannot be overlooked that providing self-employment and sus-

tainability to rural women is a constitutional goal, and it has to be protected, including by judicial forums," the CJI said.

The CJI said that action could only be taken if there was a "brazen violation of the laws".

He said that the petitioner in the matter was a resident of the same area, and he chose to raise a legal dispute only after the building was constructed.

"At no point in time was it pointed out that the building shall obstruct the flow of the stream. We find no justification for the NGT to entertain this plea after the building is constructed. Thus, the demolition order cannot be sustained, and the high court order and the tribunal's order to that extent are set aside," CJI Kant said.

He said that since it was

allegedly a running stream, all stakeholders, including the SPCB, had to ensure there was no obstruction to its flow by devising a suitable mechanism through consultation with experts.

Meanwhile, the building had to remain intact,

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, Feb 18: A 22-year-old woman reportedly committed suicide after jumping into Mahanadi River from a bridge in Sambalpur Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Anju Kumbhar,

a native of Talabhatapada under Khetrapur police limits in Sambalpur Town and a resident of Mahatab Nagar in Burla. However, the circumstances leading to her death remain unclear.

While initial reports

suggested suicide, her family denied the claim and termed the incident as an accident. Her mother Anjali Sahu lodged a complaint at Burla police station stating that her daughter accidentally fell off the bridge into the river.

Based on the complaint, Burla police registered a case (115/2026) of unnatural death and launched an investigation.

Police and Fire Services personnel reached the spot after being alerted by locals and recovered the body. The body was sent for postmortem.

six months with a youth Mukesh Chhatrapal of Talabhatapada after being separated from her former husband.

The video of the incident, which occurred around 11am, went viral showing several passersby trying to stop the woman from jumping off the bridge along National Highway 53.

Police and Fire Services personnel reached the spot after being alerted by locals and recovered the body. The body was sent for postmortem.

Publications Division
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India

APPEAL

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AI TIE-UP: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Google CEO Sundar Pichai during a meeting, on the sidelines of AI Impact Summit 2026, in New Delhi, Wednesday

PTI PHOTO

Google unveils India-US subsea cable initiative

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 18: Betting big on India's AI potential, Google CEO Sundar Pichai Wednesday announced a new subsea cable initiative to boost AI connectivity between India, the US and other locations, alongside partnerships for cloud infrastructure platform support to over 20 million public servants across 800 districts.

Pichai, who is here to attend the AI Impact Sum-

mit 2026, said the recently announced USD 15-billion AI hub at Vizag in Andhra Pradesh will house a gigawatt-scale compute facility and an international subsea cable gateway. When finished, it will bring jobs and benefits of cutting-edge AI to people and businesses across India, said the top boss of Google, the tech company behind foundational AI models such as Gemini and Gemma, which serve as the backbone for enhanced

search, cloud services, and enterprise-grade tools. "I believe India is going to have an extraordinary trajectory with AI, and we want to be a partner," he said at a media event held on the sidelines of the Summit.

Pichai highlighted India's extraordinary potential in AI. "AI is the biggest platform shift of our lifetime...for countries like India, AI presents a chance to leapfrog age-old gaps and create new opportunities."

The deceased was identified as Pushpanjali Rana. Police said the accused, Krupa Rana, allegedly used the saree she was wearing to strangle her at their Jamapada-Khuniapada residence.

According to police, the accused attempted to flee the scene after committing the crime. However, he was caught by a team of Sindhukela police. He has been brought to the police station and detained for questioning.

Police recovered the body and began an investigation. A scientific team also visited the scene to collect evidence.

Shark spotted in Antarctic waters

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Melbourne, Feb 18: An ungainly barrel of a shark cruising languidly over a barren seabed far too deep for the sun's rays to illuminate was an unexpected sight.

Many experts had thought sharks didn't exist in the frigid waters of Antarctica before this sleeper shark lumbered warily and briefly into the spotlight of a video camera, researcher Alan Jamieson said this week. The shark, filmed in January 2025, was a substantial specimen with an estimated length of between 3 and 4 metre (10 and 13 ft).

"We went down there not expecting to see sharks because there's a general thumb rule that you don't get sharks in Antarctica," Jamieson said.

And it's not even a little one either. It's a hunk of a shark. These things are tanks, he added.

The camera operated by Minderoo-UWA Deep-Sea Research Centre, which investigates life in the deepest parts of the world's



oceans, was positioned off the South Shetland Islands near the Antarctic Peninsula. That is well inside the boundaries of the Antarctic Ocean, also known as the Southern Ocean, which is defined as below the 60-degree south latitude line.

The research centre Wednesday gave 'The Associated Press' permission to publish the images.

The shark was 490 metre (1,608 feet) deep where the water temperature was a near-freezing 1.27 degrees Celsius (34.29 degrees Fahrenheit).

A shark appears in frame motionless on the seabed and seemingly unperturbed by the passing shark. The shark, a shark relative that looks like a stingray, was no surprise

since scientists already knew their range extended that far south.

Jamieson, who is the founding director of the University of Western Australia-based research centre, said he could find no record of another shark found in the Antarctic Ocean.

Peter Kyne, a Charles Darwin University conservation biologist independent of the research centre, agreed that a shark had never before been recorded so far south.

Climate change and warming oceans could potentially be driving sharks to the Southern Hemisphere's colder waters, but there was limited data on range changes near Antarctica because of the region's remoteness, Kyne said.

The slow-moving sleeper sharks could have long been in Antarctica without anyone noticing, he said.

This is great. The shark was in the right place, the camera was in the right place and they got this great footage, Kyne said. It's quite significant.

The sleeper shark population in the Antarctic Ocean was likely sparse and difficult for humans to detect, Jamieson said.

The photographed shark was maintaining a depth of around 500 metre (1,640 ft) along a seabed that sloped into much deeper water.

The shark maintained that depth because that was the warmest layer of several water layers stacked upon each other to the surface, Jamieson said.

The Antarctic Ocean is heavily layered, or stratified, to a depth of around 1,000 metre (3,280 ft) because of conflicting properties including colder, denser water from below not readily mixing with fresh water running off melting ice from above.

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Fish production down

Bhubaneswar: Fish production in Chilika Lake went down by around 1,200 tonnes in 2024-25 in comparison to the figure in 2023-24, F&ARD Minister Gokulandran Mallik told the Assembly Wednesday. Responding to a question of Jatni MLA Bibhuti Bhushan Balabantary, he said, "Chilika saw fish production of 20,947.42 tonnes in 2023-24. It registered 19,754.30 tonnes of fish production in 2024-25 – 1,193.1 tonnes less than previous year."

CLASSIFIED**AFFIDAVIT**

I hereto known as Suman Chandak, W/o. Rakshit Mundhra, R/o. House No. 1658, Sector - 7, Near Jan kalyan Mandir, Sector - 7, Faridabad, Haryana - 121006 have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Suman Mundhra.

Rishikesh Ray, age - 20 years, S/o Srikanta Ray of Vill/PO - Ratalanga, PS : Bari, Dist. : Jajpur at Present M-III R/84 Madhuban, PO/PS : Paradeep, Dist. : Jagatsinghpur, Odisha do here by declare by virtue of this affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Jagatsinghpur dtd. 13.02.2026. I will be known as Rishikesh Ray, S/o 'Srikant Ray' or 'Srikanta Ray' for all Purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Jajpur, Odisha dated 16.02.2026. I Manoranjan Swain, S/o : Laxmidhar Swain, At/PO-Gopalpur, PS : Tritol, Dist : Jagatsinghpur, State : Odisha, PIN : 754104, declare that, I have changed my name from Manoranjan Swamy to Manoranjan Swain. Henceforth, I shall be known as Manoranjan Swain for all purpose.

An affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Bhawanipatna on 18.02.2026, I Sushree Sangita Panigrahi, D/o. Anil Kumar Panigrahi declare that after getting married on 23.04.2008 to Ajaya Kumar Panda, S/o. Banamali Panda of Shaktinagar Para, Bhawanipatna have changed my name from Sushree Sangita Panigrahi to Sangita Panda. Henceforth I shall be known and identified as Sangita Panda for all purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Kundra, I, Shri Ambu Patra, resident of At- Khotalapadar, P.O. Bhusangaguda, P.S.- Kundra, Dist. Koraput declared by this affidavit No. 27, Dtd.-16.02.2026 that in my son's actual name is 'ANKUS KUMAR PATRA', but in his school certificate has been wrongly mentioned as ANKUSH KUMAR PATRO. That now he wants to change his name from Ankus Kumar Patra for all purposes. So I swear that Ankus Kumar Patra and Ankush Kumar Patro is one and same person i.e. my son's name only. Ambu Patra Deponent

CoE status for 22 ITIs



Making youth industry-ready priority of government: SD&TE Minister Sampad Chandra Swain

POST NEWS NETWORK

₹779 CRORE PROJECT

- The state government will bear 14% of project cost, while Tata Technologies will contribute 86%
- The upgraded ITIs will be equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories and industry-grade equipment, bringing training infrastructure at par with modern industrial standards
- The CoEs will focus on high-growth and emerging sectors such as automobile
- Tata Technologies will extend comprehensive handholding support for five years

and global competitiveness," he said, adding that empowering youth with relevant and future-ready skills is essential to achieving the state's long-term development goals.

A key highlight of the ceremony was the partnership with Tata Technologies to upgrade 22 government ITIs across Odisha to CoEs at a total project cost of ₹779.00 crore.

As per the pact, the state government will bear 14 per cent of the project cost, while Tata

Technologies will contribute approximately 86 per cent. The upgraded ITIs will be equipped with state-of-the-art laboratories and industry-grade equipment, bringing training infrastructure at par with modern industrial standards.

The CoEs will focus on high-growth and emerging sectors such as automobile including electric vehicles, design and verification tools, 3D printing and additive manufacturing, Internet of Things (IoT), robotics and advanced manufacturing, advanced CNC and VMC machining, advanced plumbing technology, and process control and automation technology.

Tata Technologies will also extend comprehensive handholding support for five years, including deployment of trainers, maintenance of equipment, and facilitation of placements to ensure strong industry linkage and sustainable outcomes, it was learnt.

On the occasion, three other MoUs were also exchanged. "A collaboration with UNICEF will leverage the YouthHub platform to facilitate placement of over 2,000 girls through digital skilling and an outcome-based funding model. A partnership between the World Skill Center and Kawasaki Robotics India Pvt. Ltd. aims to strengthen capacity in robotics, automation, and Industry 4.0 technologies, preparing youth for advanced manufacturing ecosystems," according to the Industries and SD&TE departments.

"Another MoU between the World Skill Center and Atreya Global Pvt. Ltd. will create structured overseas employment pathways in Germany and other European countries by integrating skilling, language training, placement facilitation, and post-placement support," they said.

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TRAINING PROG FOR NEW ASST EXE ENGINEERS

Harichandan for maintaining high construction standards

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Making optimal use of modern technology and maintaining high construction standards are essential to realising the vision of a developed Odisha by 2036 and a developed India by 2047, Works Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan said Wednesday.

Addressing the inaugural session of the training programme here for newly appointed Assistant Executive Engineers under the Works department, Harichandan said under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Odisha is currently moving rapidly on the path of progress.

"While the state has set a goal of building a developed Odisha by 2036, the Central government has set a target of achieving a developed India by 2047. However, the dream of building a developed state and a developed nation cannot be realised without robust infrastructure. Therefore, by making full use of modern technology and emphasising quality in construction, we can achieve this goal," Harichandan, who also holds the Law and Excise portfolios, said.

He said that the government has set a goal of constructing world-class roads in the state. "The state government is working to implement the best construction practices adopted in major cities in Odisha. As a result, in the coming days, traffic congestion on various roads

must be strengthened from rural areas to major cities.

"New techniques and knowledge must be extensively utilised in the construction of roads and bridges. The newly appointed assistant executive engineers possess considerable skills, and through this training programme, they can further sharpen their abilities and become key drivers of the state's development."

RABI NARAYAN NAIK | RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER

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GARG SETS MARCH DEADLINE FOR KEY WATER PROJECTS

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Chief Secretary Anu Garg Wednesday directed officers to ensure completion of all single-village and solar-powered drinking water projects across the state within March 2026.

The Chief Secretary held a comprehensive review meeting with Collectors of all districts to assess the progress of major development schemes and government programmes being implemented at the grassroots level.

Garg reviewed the progress and fund utilisation under key schemes such as the MLA Local Area Development Fund (MLALADF), MP Local Area Development Scheme (MLADS), and the Chief Minister's Special Assistance. She directed officers to ensure the timely completion of pending projects and to expedite works that are yet to commence.

Issues relating to the management of minor minerals were also discussed in the presence of senior officers from the Mines department. Emphasising the importance of the District Survey Report (DSR) for effective identification and regulation of mineral resources, Garg instructed districts that have not yet submitted their reports to do so at the earliest.

The status of mega drinking water projects was reviewed in detail. Officers were directed to strengthen inter-departmental coordination, resolve land acquisition bottlenecks, and ensure timely electricity connections to accelerate project implementation.

Garg set a deadline of March 2026 for completion of all single-village and solar-powered drinking water projects across the state.

HDFC Bank's 'Parivartan' impacts 38.74L in Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: HDFC Bank's CSR initiative— Parivartan has impacted over 38.74 lakh lives across Odisha since 2017, said bank's CSR head Nusrat Pathan while addressing a press meet here Wednesday.

Bank's interventions are designed to address region-specific needs and promote inclusive growth at the grassroots level, Pathan added.

"We believe CSR is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Through Parivartan, we implement need-based interventions that respond to the unique challenges of each region. Our work in Odisha reflects this philosophy, from supporting farmers with sustainable agriculture to strengthening education and skilling. We remain committed to fostering inclusive growth and creating lasting impact,"

The holistic rural development programme has covered more than 230 villages in districts such as Bolangir, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Nayagarh, Puri and Rayagada. Focused development programmes have also been implemented in Angul, Baragarh, Dehkanal, Ganjam, Jagatsinghpur, Jajpur, Kalahandi, Kandhamal and Koraput, among others.

A total of 2.56 lakh students are enrolled in the Arts stream, 1.14 lakh in Science, and 24,621 in Commerce, CHSE's Controller of Examinations Prasanta Kumar Parida said, adding that there are also 5,932 students of Vocational studies.

The exams began at 10am and concluded at 1pm for the day, he added. Parida said arrangement has been made for live-streaming from all examination centres. Altogether 211 question

papers are appearing for the exams across 1,364 centres, they said. The exams will continue till March 28, they added.

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The practical examinations were conducted between January 2 and 15.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi extend-

Class XII exams begin amid tight security

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: The Class XII, or Plus II, final examinations being conducted by the Council of Higher Secondary Education (CHSE) began amid heavy security Wednesday, officials said.

A total of 4.01 lakh students are appearing for the exams across 1,364 centres, they said. The exams will continue till March 28, they added.

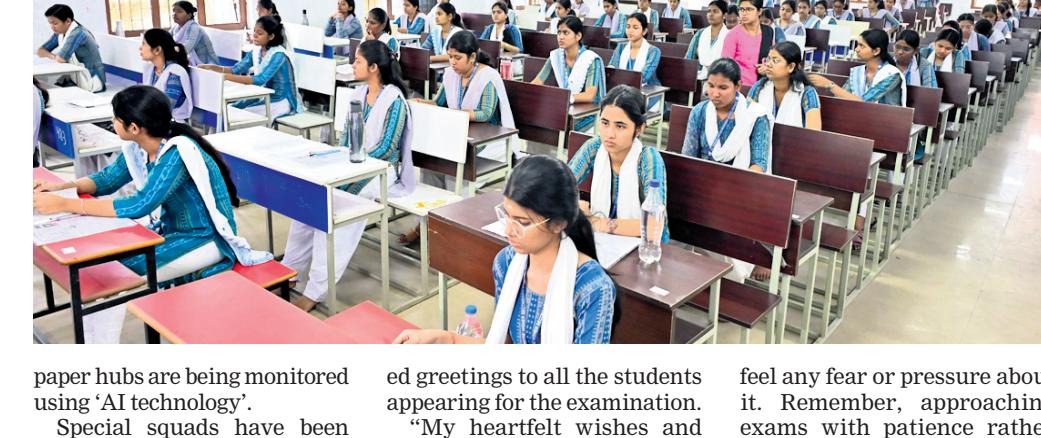
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Pregnant woman killed in Keonjhar road mishap

POST NEWS NETWORK

Barbil, Feb 18: A four-month pregnant woman was killed and her husband critically injured after a speeding truck ran them over near Bhusugaon on Bhadrashri-Barbil stretch of State Highway 10 under Barbil police limits in Keonjhar district Wednesday afternoon, police said.

The deceased was identified as Madhusmita, wife of Manoranjan Mohanta of Padabhabha area in Uchhabali under Bamebari police limits.

Manoranjan sustained serious injuries and was admitted to the Barbil community health centre (CHC).

According to sources, Manoranjan works in a private firm in the Barbil area. He had taken his wife on a motorcycle (OD-09K-6328) to a hospital in Joda for a medical check-up Wednesday morning. While they were returning to Barbil in the afternoon, an iron ore-laden Hyva truck allegedly hit their motorcycle from behind near Bhusugaon.

The truck reportedly ran over the woman's head, killing her on the spot.

Although many families come under below poverty line (BPL) category, they do not receive subsidised rice from

Basic amenities elude Dongrias

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada/Kalyansinghpur, Feb 18: Despite a slew of development initiatives undertaken by the Union and the state governments, especially for tribals, basic amenities like drinking water, healthcare, proper roads, continue to remain a far cry for the Dongria Kondh community, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) living in the world-famous Niyamgiri hills of Rayagada district.

Residents of Parsali gram panchayat (GP) under Kalyansinghpur block alleged that most of the benefits of the government schemes remain confined to official records and have not reached the intended beneficiaries.

Villagers from Lakapadar, Patangapadar, Dangamati, Guma and Lamba said they have repeatedly brought their grievances to the notice of the district administration, but there has been little progress in ensuring essential services.

Although many families come under below poverty line (BPL) category, they do not receive subsidised rice from



the fair price shops. Residents of Lakapadar village have to travel about 15 km to Parsali GP office to collect rice. They alleged that they incur unnecessary transport expenses to avail of the subsidised grain and demanded that a local distribution point be set up in their area.

The villagers also pointed out that there is no government bus service between Kalyans-

inghpur and Lakapadar, even after 78 years of Independence. Safe drinking water remains a major concern, with residents depending on streams for their daily needs due to the absence of a proper water supply system.

Healthcare facilities are equally inadequate, they said, adding that quality medical services remain inaccessible in the region. The condition of roads is also deplorable. Residents

alleged that road construction work is of poor quality and remains incomplete, making communication and transportation difficult.

The villagers have urged the state government and the district administration to take immediate steps to provide safe drinking water, healthcare, improved road connectivity and accessible public distribution services to the region.

Drive to destroy bait bomb traps in wildlife habitats

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, Feb 18: Amid growing threat of illegal home-made explosives to poach animals in the state's wildlife corridors, Odisha Police joined hands with the Forest personnel to intensify joint patrolling and ground-level intelligence sharing to arrest dangerous ploys by law-breakers.

The explosive trap using a mixture of 'gandha-katosh' (potassium nitrate and sulphur), crushed stones and other materials, before covering it with wheat dough has become a cause of worry for Forest personnel with reports of wild animals and domestic animals foraging in the forest falling prey to the dangerous practice.

A high-level virtual coordination meeting chaired by the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Central Range, Cuttack, Satyajit Naik was held Wednesday to curb the alarming rise in bait bombs employed by the poachers targeting the wild animals.

This strategic summit brought together the Superintendents of Police from the Central Range Districts, the Field Director of Satkosia Tiger Reserve, and Divisional Forest Officers of the Athgarh and Cuttack Divisions to address the alarming rise of "bait bombs" within the sensitive landscapes of Athgarh, Badamba, and Narasinghpur.

The coordination meeting identified these crude yet deadly devices—often concealed in food items—as a critical crisis that severely undermines conservation efforts while posing an indiscriminate and lethal risk to livestock and public safety.

To combat this menace, IGP directed the Odisha Police and Satkosia Tiger Reserve authorities to formally merge their operational capabilities into a unified front, establishing a "zero-tolerance" policy towards the manufacture and deployment of illegal explosive devices. The core of this offensive includes the immediate implementation of joint intelligence gathering, where law enforcement and forest officials will share real-time data to identify poaching networks and manufacturing hubs.

Authorities emphasised to neutralise the explosive threat and fortify the safety of the Satkosia corridor for its inhabitants and the animals that traverse it. By aligning the tactical expertise of the police with the specialised ground knowledge of the Forest department, the state aims to create a high-security environment that deters such criminal activities permanently.

Contractor dodges murder attempt

Bhawanipatna: A man escaped death by a whisker when a bullet fired by a miscreant missed him near Dayanidhi Chhak in this headquarters town of Kalahandi district Tuesday night, police said. The accused allegedly threatened the contractor, demanding money and attempted to shoot him late Tuesday night. However, a youth present there pushed the assailant, causing the bullet to be fired in the air. The complainant, Pradeep Nial, 26, of Mandar Bagicha Pada, lodged a complaint at Town police station Wednesday morning following which a case (64/26) was registered and the accused, identified as Jashobant Naik, 40, alias Jhas of Arakabhalapida in Bhawanipatna, arrested.

He was later produced in court. "Police seized two country-made pistols, four live rounds, a mobile phone and an empty cartridge from the accused," said Kalahandi SP Nagaraj Devarakonda told the media at the district police headquarters in Bhawanipatna.

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender No. 61-KUR-TRD-OT-2025-26

NAME OF WORK : PROVISION OF CATENARY WIRE AS ANTI CREEP WIRE IN PLACE OF GALVANIZED STEEL WIRE IN KHURDA ROAD (KUR) DIVISION.

Advertised Value: ₹ 79,10,763.04, EMD: ₹ 1,58,200/-, Period of Completion: 365 Days.

Bidding Start Date: 19.02.2026

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1300 Hrs. of 05.03.2026.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Complete information including e-Tender documents and corrigendum is available in website www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), PR-1130/Q/25-26

Khurda Road

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

Tender Notice No. CKP-SOUTH-25-26-31. Divisional Railway Manager/Engg., Chakradharpur acting For & On behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Open Tender.

Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Name of work:** Balance work of Soft Upgradation of BARBIL Railway station over Chakradharpur Division under Sr. DEN (South). **Tender Value :** ₹ 3,16,668.31, **EMD :** ₹ 3,08,300/-.

Cost of Tender form : ₹ 0. The tender can be viewed at Website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>

The tenderer/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered under on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer/ bidder can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. **Note :** e-Tender Forms shall be issued free of cost to all tenderers. (Authority-Rly. Bd.'s letter No. 2020/CE-I/CT/3E/GCC/Policy dtd. 16.07.2020). (PR-1207)

Man jailed for bid to burn wife at in-laws' residence

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baliapal, Feb 18: A man was arrested and sent to jail Wednesday after allegedly attempting to kill his wife by pouring petrol on her and setting her ablaze at her parents' house at Narayanpur village under Baliapal police limits in Balasore district, Tuesday night. The woman's father, mother and brother were injured while trying to rescue her, police said.

Police said Rajendra Samantaray had married off his daughter Jogamaya to Karunakar Kabi of Manatri village in Soro area about seven years ago. The couple has two children. However, frequent quarrels had been reported between them. Unable to bear the alleged harassment by her husband, Jogamaya had sought legal recourse and returned to her parental home about a month ago.

Karunakar allegedly reached his in-laws' house Tuesday night, and picked up a quarrel. Jogamaya alleged that he poured petrol on her and tried to set her on fire. Family members intervened, during which her father, mother and brother sustained burn injuries.

The injured were first admitted to Pratappur community health centre (CHC). Police said the father suffered nearly 40 per cent burn injuries and was later shifted to the district headquarters hospital for advanced treatment. The condition of the other injured family members was reported to be stable. Locals overpowered Karunakar and handed him over to police.

Based on a complaint lodged by Jogamaya, Baliapal police registered a case (88/26) and arrested Karunakar. He was produced before a court that rejected his bail plea and remanded him to judicial custody, police said.

Further investigation is underway.

EAST COAST RAILWAY**NOTIFICATION FOR ENGAGEMENT OF HALT AGENTS FOR PASSENGER HALTS**

No. C/SBP/Appointment/Halt Agent/I/26

Date : 11.02.2026

Applications are invited for engagement of Passenger Halt Agent to sell unreserved tickets to the passengers for a tenure of 5 years at passenger halt station on commission basis in the Sambalpur Division of East Coast Railway. Interested person fulfilling the stipulated conditions may apply in the prescribed format to the **Divisional Railway Manager (Commercial), Sambalpur Division.**

Address **Passenger Halt** **Tenure**
2nd Floor, Divisional Railway Manager, (Commercial), East Coast Railway, DRM Office Complex, Sambalpur, Post-Modipara, Pin-768002, Odisha.

COMMISSION PAYABLE

Amount of Sale of tickets per month	Commission Payable
₹ 1-15,000/-	15 %
₹ 15,001-50,000/-	12 %
₹ 50,001-1,00,000/-	9 %
₹ 1,00,001-2,00,000/-	6 %
₹ 2,00,001/- and above	3 %

Security Deposit for above halt is ₹ 2,000/- (Rupees Two Thousand) only. The last date for submission / dropping of duly filled application in the box is 1030 hrs of 13.03.2026. Application sent through postal service or by any other means shall not be entertained. Applications received after due date & time shall not be entertained under any circumstances.

For complete details, application format and other terms & conditions please visit our website www.eastcoastrail.indianrailways.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager / Sambalpur PR-1133/Q/25-26

भारतीय खेल प्राधिकरण**SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA****भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA****खेल विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS**

(युवा कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्रालय के तहत एक स्वायत्त निकाय)

(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)

(मानव संसाधन प्रभाग-II / Human Resources Division-II)

J N Stadium Complex, East Gate, No. 10, Lodhi Road, CGO Complex, New Delhi-110003, East Gate No. 10

एफ. सं. 01-04001 (01)3/2025-एचओ - कार्मिक प्रभाग दिनांक: 09.02.2026

F. No. 01-04001(01)3/2025-HO - Personnel Division Date: 09.02.2026

NOTIFICATION**Recruitment to the post of Junior Engineer - An opportunity to be part of India's quest for Sporting Excellence**

Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India invites online applications from eligible candidates for 03 posts of Junior Engineer (01- UR, 01-OBC & 01-SC) on regular basis in Pay Matrix Level-06 (7th CPC), in continuation of Notification dated 16.07.2025, based on "PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF SCORES", Junior Engineer Examination, 2023" issued by SSC. Candidates may apply through the SAI e-portal using the same email ID as mentioned in the SSC Public Disclosure List. In case of change/non-functionality of email ID, candidates may write to recruitment.cell.sai@gov.in and itdivisionhq.sai@gov.in with the subject "Updation of Email ID for Junior Engineer Application - Public Disclosure List." Candidates are advised to carefully go through the detailed notification available on the SAI website as well as MYAS& Website before submitting the online application.

The invitation to apply does not imply final acceptance of candidature.

Online Application Period: 11.02.2026 (10:00 AM) to 26.02.2026 (05:00 PM) For queries: recruitment.cell.sai@gov.in

cbc 47103/12/0018/2526

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No. ST-OT-QUAD-CABLE-KUR-542, Dt : 11.02.2026

NAME OF WORK : REPLACEMENT OF 6 QUAD CABLES AGAINST FAULTY PATCHES OF VARIOUS SECTIONS OVER KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Tender Value : ₹ 3,21,12,194.00, END :

₹ 3,10,600/-

Bidding Start Date : 19.02.2026.

Tender Closing Date and Time : At 1100 Hrs. of 05.03.2026.

No manual offers sent by Post/ Courier/ Fax or in person accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-tender is available in website: www.ireps.gov.in

Note : The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 15 days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigendum issued for this tender.

Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer, PR-1131/Q/25-26

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public, clients, customers, vendors, creditors, bankers and all other concerned stakeholders that K C Nath Resources & Co, carrying on business under the said name as a Proprietorship has been acquired and converted into a Private Limited Company in accordance with applicable provisions of the Companies Act, 2013.

Pursuant to such acquisition and conversion the business shall hereafter be carried on in the name and style of:

"K C NATH RESOURCES PRIVATE LIMITED"

Effective Date: 10th January 2026

Upon acquisition, all business operations, assets, liabilities, contracts, agreements, rights, obligations and undertakings of K C Nath Resources & Co. have been taken over and vested in K C Nath Resources Private Limited with effect from the above date. The continuity of business operations remains unaffected and all existing contracts and arrangements shall continue to be valid and binding on the Company. All persons having any dealings with the erstwhile firm are requested to take note of the above change and update their records accordingly.

For K C NATH RESOURCES PRIVATE LIMITED

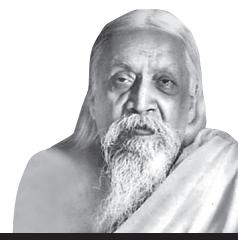
(Company incorporated pursuant to acquisition of K C Nath Resources & Co.)

Kanhu Charan Nath



All problems of existence
are essentially problems
of Harmony.

SRI AUROBINDO



Widening Rift

As soon as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio rose to address this year's Munich Security Conference, it was evident that the Trump administration intended to change its rhetoric toward America's longstanding European allies. While Vice President JD Vance used his remarks last year to hector and insult European leaders, Rubio seemed eager to flatter. After paying homage to European history and culture – highlighting various achievements, from the Sistine Chapel to the Beatles – he acknowledged that the United States is itself a child of Europe.

It all sounded very nice to European ears after a year that had horrified everyone committed to the transatlantic relationship. Not only has the administration Rubio represents accused Europe of inviting "civilizational erasure." It has even threatened to seize Greenland, the sovereign territory of a fellow NATO member (Denmark). Was Rubio signaling a change?

On the contrary, after the applause died down, it soon became obvious that the Trump administration's basic message remains the same. Both in its substance and its perspective on the world, Rubio's speech revealed a deep gulf between the Trump administration and the Europeans in the room. Notably, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was mentioned only in passing, and with nary a hint of criticism of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Yet with casualties around 1.2 million, a front line stretching 1,200 kilometers (746 miles), and more than 400 Russian attack drones targeting Ukrainian infrastructure and civilian centers the previous week, one would think the horror show playing out on NATO's eastern flank would merit some mention.

The threat that Russia poses is a dominant concern for Europeans, because they recognize that the defense of Ukraine today is vital to European security tomorrow. For the Trump administration, however, the issue does not even bear mentioning. In terms of basic threat perceptions, the gulf between the US and Europe could hardly be wider.

Before praising European culture and history, Rubio outlined the MAGA, fun-house-mirror version of events leading up to the present moment. The decades since the end of the Cold War were based on a "dangerous delusion" and a "dogmatic vision of free and unfettered trade," he argued. The "rules-based global order" is an overused term" that ignores the lessons from 5,000 years of human history and has driven too many societies to "appease a climate cult."

It is no secret that the "rules-based order" is a MAGA bogeyman. Another member of the Trump administration in attendance, Elbridge Colby, the grandson of Richard Nixon's CIA director, William Colby, noted with satisfaction that he had heard the term mentioned only once at a recent NATO ministerial meeting.

Obviously, no European outside of the continent's most extreme political fringes shares this attitude. We understand that the rules-based global order was never perfect, and that anyone who is inclined to list its failures and shortcomings can do so easily. But we also know that its achievements following the last bloody conflict between great powers have been close to miraculous.

During the decades-long period of relative peace and stability following World War II, the global population tripled, life expectancy doubled, and the world economy grew 15-fold. It was the longest period without a war between great powers since the end of the Roman Empire. There simply is no denying that networks of global rules, norms, and agreements were a key factor in making this possible.

Nor is there any doubt that the rules-based order is under severe threat. Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a blatant violation of one of its most fundamental rules: respect for territorial integrity. Similarly, China has ignored international judgments concerning its territorial claims in the South China Sea, and the Trump administration has violated rules and norms with gleeful abandon. In addition to disparaging the United Nations and launching a trade war against the entire world, it has broken numerous international agreements and withdrawn the US from international bodies that oversee everything from global health to climate change.

By contrast, Europeans believe that what remains of the rules-based order is worth preserving. In fact, they are taking pains to strengthen many of its core pillars. That is what the European Union's new free-trade agreements with South America's Mercosur bloc (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) and India are about. Moreover, Europeans are joining with others to maintain global progress on combating climate change and mitigating health threats.

Europe has no interest in a world subject to the capricious whims of the mighty, where rights have no meaning because the vulnerable can always be thrown to the wolves. Rubio's remarks didn't go quite that far, but statements from others in the Trump administration have. America's top diplomat may have offered a kinder, gentler presentation than his master would have given, but the message was the same. The transatlantic divide has become massive, and it is still widening.

The writer is a former prime minister and foreign minister of Sweden.

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WISDOM CORNER

There is frequently more to be learned from the unexpected questions of a child than the discourses of men.

JOHN LOCKE

The only way to discover the limits of the possible is to go beyond them into the impossible.

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved; loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.

VICTOR HUGO

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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



OrissaPOST
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HOPE & DISAPPOINTMENT

FOCUS INDIA



India's promise is undeniable and its talent abundant, yet politics and empty rhetoric continue to undermine its prospects



THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE CASTING A SHADOW OVER INDIA'S FUTURE IS POLLUTION

Kaushik Basu

Last month, I travelled across India, listening, observing, and taking stock. While the journey was energising and often inspiring, it left me with an open question: Where is the world's most populous country headed?

My trip began in West Bengal's Purulia district, a relatively poor region marked by beautiful landscapes of lakes and rolling hills, some crowned with small, ancient temples. Purulia's population is a mosaic of cultures and tribal communities. Among them are the Santhals, an Adivasi community whose ancestors arrived in the subcontinent thousands of years ago, long before the Indo-Aryan migrations around 1600 BCE reshaped its social order.

In the midst of this stark terrain stands something remarkable: the Filix School. Founded in 2014 by two women, it has grown into a state-of-the-art English-language institution, drawing students from villages near and far. I was there to teach during the school's week-long Discover the World of Economics course, an annual programme – now in its second year – that invites upper-secondary students from across India. A select group joins local village students for five days of lectures and field trips.

This year's speakers included Mahan MJ, a monk and renowned mathematician; Prabhat Patnaik, a celebrated Marxist economist from Delhi; and economists from leading universities and the World Bank. Watching young Hindus, Muslims, and Christians from the surrounding villages sit alongside students from Bangalore, Mumbai, and Pune – listening intently to lectures on economics, history, and mathematics, and occasionally challenging the speakers – was deeply heartening. By cultivating such intellectual curiosity, India could

unlock its full potential.

My optimism deepened in Bangalore, where I attended the Infosys Science Foundation's annual ceremony honouring six prize winners in computer science, economics, mathematics, life sciences, physical sciences, and the humanities and social sciences. Laureates spoke about their research and its wider implications, while the keynote address was delivered by the American cell biologist Randy Schekman, winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. The packed auditorium conveyed attendees' deep confidence in scientific scholarship.

From Bangalore, I travelled to Pune, a three-hour drive from Mumbai, to visit Symbiosis and FLAME universities. These institutions serve India's more affluent classes, and their campuses rival those of leading European and American universities. At the annual conference of the Indian Society of Labour Economics, which was held at Symbiosis, scholars from around the world gathered to debate the impact of technological change and shrinking labour demand. The discussions were rigorous and unsparing.

After weeks of intense discussions with students, researchers, bureaucrats, and

policymakers, I spent the final leg of my trip in Delhi. There, poring over the latest economic data and listening to political leaders respond to mounting challenges with familiar slogans, my optimism began to fade. India's promise is undeniable and its talent abundant, yet politics and empty rhetoric continue to undermine its prospects.

Compounding the problem is the lack of reliable statistics. India was once known for the transparency and credibility of its data. But the quality of official statistics has eroded, and there appears to be a growing reluctance to release figures that reveal any economic weakness. This, in turn, implies that necessary corrective measures are not taken.

This trend is not confined to statistics. India was once a leader among emerging economies in engineering, science, and higher education. The establishment of the Indian Institutes of Technology in the early 1950s, along with major investments in science and mathematics, positioned the country as a research hub for the Global South. That standing, too, has weakened in recent years.

One telling measure is patient activity. After overtaking

the US as the world's leading patent filer, China had roughly five million patents in force in 2023, compared with America's 3.5 million. India's total, by contrast, was just 188,785, despite five consecutive years of double-digit growth.

To be fair, this problem is not new. When I was advising the Indian government around 2009, I argued that far greater attention needed to be paid to intellectual-property rights. In today's increasingly competitive global economy, that imperative has only become more urgent.

In my view, however, the biggest challenge casting a shadow over India's future is pollution. Over the past decade, air quality in Delhi and much of northern India has reached intolerable levels. If left unchecked, it will deter foreign investors, dampen tourism, and jeopardize long-term growth.

What should be done? First, the central government must acknowledge the severity of the problem and stop shifting blame to state and local authorities. Air pollution does not respect state boundaries; it requires coordinated national action. To this end, the government should urgently convene the country's leading scientists and policymakers to craft and implement a coherent, time-bound national strategy.

China offers a useful model. Through binding targets, tighter emissions standards, and strict enforcement, it managed to cut air pollution dramatically, showing what determined policy can achieve in just a few years.

The writer, a former chief economist of the World Bank and chief economic adviser to the Government of India, is Professor of Economics at Cornell University.

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SPECTRUM ODISHA

Gender budget: Big numbers, bigger questions

Since centuries, the contribution of women (care economy) has been ignored in national accounts. It is specifically predominant in India and especially in Odisha due to the orthodox socio-cultural customs and traditions. The patriarchal society deeply ingrains the conviction that women will take care of the family without remuneration. This belief largely widens gender inequality. However, recently the state government has tried to reduce gender inequality through macroeconomic policies, especially annual budgets.

Odisha's engagement with gender budgeting predates many states. The Gender Budget Statement, introduced in 2012-13, became a routine part of the state's fiscal architecture. In recent past, Odisha has emerged as one of the most consistent practitioners of gender budgeting.

The State's gender budget has expanded steadily in scale, institutional coverage and political visibility. In budget 2025-26, the government allocated Rs 89,861.77 crore under gender budget (an increase of 18.85% from Rs 75,611.58 crore in 2024-25). Yet, behind the impressive numbers lies a more complex question: has gender budgeting moved from fiscal commitment to real capability-building for women?

COVID-19 pandemic exposed

the disproportionate burden borne by women - loss of livelihoods, increased unpaid care work, health risks and rising vulnerability. This forced gender budgeting to shift from a technical exercise to a policy necessity. In 2020-21, women-specific schemes accounted for less than 2% of total state expenditure, while women-related components in composite schemes formed roughly one-third of the budget.

The post-pandemic years saw a clear fiscal expansion. By 2022-23, the total gender budget crossed Rs 56,000 crore, accounting for nearly 45% of total state expenditure and over 10% of GSDP. These ratios place Odisha among top States nationally in terms of gender-responsive fiscal effort. Two shifts stand out during this period. First, women-specific allocations grew sharply, particularly after the strengthening of Mission Shakti as a dedicated department. Allocations for women's livelihoods, SHGs, nutrition and safety more than doubled between 2020-21 and 2022-23, signalling a strong political commitment to women's economic empowerment.

Second, the bulk of gender-responsive spending continued to flow through gender-sensitive schemes - those where at least 30% of allocations benefit women. For instance, the Subhadra Yojana, a major women-centric initiative (2024-2029), has a total

estimated budget allocation of Rs 55,825 crore to provide financial assistance of Rs 50,000 to eligible women over five years. The 2024-25 Budget Estimate (BE) specifically allocated Rs 10,000 crore for this scheme.

The sharp rise in female labour force participation (LFPR) in Odisha since 2020 coincides with a significant expansion in the state's Gender Budget allocations. Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, women-specific expenditures nearly doubled. During the same period, rural female LFPR rose from 34.7% to 52.6% by 2023-24, while overall female participation increased from 32.9% to 49.4%. This parallel movement suggests that expanded gender-responsive fiscal interventions may have contributed to easing women's entry and re-entry into the workforce.

However, this structure also reveals a limitation. Gender budgeting in Odisha remains heavily concentrated within a few social sector departments. Women and Child Development, Mission Shakti and Health and Family Welfare dominate women-specific spending year after year. While this ensures administrative focus, it risks reinforcing the idea that gender is the responsibility of a handful of departments rather than a cross-cutting concern. Infrastructure, transport, energy and urban development sectors

that deeply influence women's mobility, safety and employment remain peripheral to the gender budgeting narrative.

Another concern is that Odisha's gender budget remains largely input-driven. Budget documents meticulously track allocations and departmental shares but offer limited evidence on outcomes. The next phase of gender budgeting in Odisha must therefore focus on depth rather than scale. First, allocations need to be explicitly linked to outcomes - employment, health, education and safety; rather than only scheme-wise expenditure. Second, departments outside the traditional social sector must be systematically integrated into the gender budgeting framework. Third, greater transparency and public engagement are needed so that gender budgeting becomes a tool of democratic accountability, not just fiscal reporting.

Odisha's experience shows that gender budgeting is no longer about whether the state spends on women. The real challenge now is how effectively that spending reshapes women's economic opportunities and everyday lives.

Sourav Mohanty is Assistant Professor of Economics at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune. Dillip Kumar Muduli is Lecturer in Economics at SVM Autonomous College, Jagatsinghpur.

Beyond jets & missiles

Sir, India and France have unveiled a wide-ranging set of initiatives that further deepen their already robust strategic partnership following the summit in Mumbai between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron. At a time when global politics is marked by disorder and uncertainty, the announcements spanning defence, technology and supply chains underline how the Indo-French relationship can function as a stabilising force. The decision to establish an Indian assembly line for Airbus's H125 utility helicopter in Kolar and to manufacture French HAMMER missiles domestically signals strong confidence in India's defence-industrial ambitions. Beyond security, both leaders agreed to deepen cooperation on securing critical and rare-earth minerals vital for future technologies and economic competitiveness. France's steadfast support for India since the 1998 nuclear tests has reinforced Paris's credibility as a reliable partner. From civilian nuclear cooperation to advanced defence platforms, mutual trust has expanded steadily. Both leaders also advocate a rules-based international order and maintain complicated equations with Donald Trump. Yet, the partnership must move beyond jets and missiles.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Encouraging move

Sir, It is encouraging to note that former cricketing greats, including World Cup-winning captains Kapil Dev, Clive Lloyd and Steve Waugh have issued a joint statement, expressing their concern for former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's health inside prison. In their statement, these legendary cricketers have addressed the alarming reports on Imran Khan's deteriorating health, particularly issues related to his vision while in custody. The cricketers' appeal to the Pakistan government, calls for comprehensive medical care, transparent legal proceedings and humane conditions for the 73-year-old cricket star-turned-politician. Khan is in detention with a sentence for 14 years imprisonment over charges of corruption and sharing state secrets. It is important that he must be treated with humanity and dignity, and be provided with all basic needs inside the cell, which reportedly lacks natural light and even adequate ventilation.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI



Branded witch, woman burnt alive with baby in arms

The incident has once again highlighted the persistent menace of witch-hunting in certain rural pockets, despite stringent legal provisions against such practices

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Singhbhum district, officials said Wednesday.

The incident occurred late Tuesday night under the Kumardungi police station limits.

According to police, the accused allegedly barged into the family's house, poured petrol on the woman and her child,



and set them ablaze. Both died on the spot. The woman's husband also sustained severe burn injuries while attempting to save them and has been admitted to a nearby hospital, where his condition is stated to be critical.

Preliminary investigations suggest that rumours had been

circulating in the village for several days linking the family to certain illnesses and other incidents. The woman was allegedly branded a "witch" by some villagers, which ultimately led to the brutal attack.

Police said that around 12 villagers allegedly conspired to execute the crime. In a dramatic turn, all 12 accused appeared at the Kumardungi police station on Wednesday morning and surrendered. They have since been taken into custody and are being interrogated.

Senior police officials rushed to the spot to assess the situation, and additional forces have been deployed in the village to prevent any further unrest. A forensic team has also been pressed into service to collect evidence from the crime scene.

An FIR is being registered under relevant sections pertaining to murder, attempt to murder, criminal conspiracy, and other serious offences.

Authorities said a detailed investigation is underway to ascertain the exact sequence of events and identify any additional persons involved.

The twins from Bhubaneswar, students of Allen Career Institute here, appeared for the JEE Main 2026 in the same shift at the same centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kota, Feb 18: Competitiveness ended at home for identical twins Mahroof Ahmed Khan and Masroor Ahmed Khan, as they both scored an identical 285 in their JEE Main, hitting the 99.998th percentile.

The twins from Bhubaneswar, students of Allen Career Institute here, appeared for the JEE Main 2026 in the same shift at the same centre.

The exam result was declared Monday.

Born May 7, 2008, the brothers studied together throughout, from school to coaching classes.

According to their coaching institute, their mother, Dr Zeenat Begum, had been a gynaecologist working with the Odisha government since the 1990s, before she resigned to move to Kota with them in 2023.

"We shifted to Kota in 2023,

initially for Olympiad preparation after both brothers qualified for the International Science Olympiad. They later decided to pursue JEE coaching," Begum said.

She said the brothers have been high achievers all along, with Mahroof scoring 95.2 per cent and Masroor 97.2 per cent in Class 10. They have also won nearly 40 medals (each) in national and international Olympiads, she said.

The twins followed similar study strategies and timetables, often competing against each other in tests. If one scored lower, they motivated and helped each other analyse mistakes to improve in subsequent exams.

"They had an interest in maths from the beginning, so they chose to go for engineering rather than medicine. They aspire to pursue BTech in Computer Science at IIT Bombay. Their priority is computer science," she said.

Beyond academics, karate held both brothers' interest in their childhood, Begum said.

The twins are now preparing for JEE Advanced. Their father is also a doctor, and is currently working in Odisha.

Ruckus hits Raj Assembly



RAJASTHAN GOVERNMENT FLAYED FOR COLLECTION OF RS 1,000 FEE FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

OPPN ALLEGES THAT AROUND RS 223CR WAS RAISED FROM NEARLY 22.5L STUDENTS WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION

Jaipur, Feb 18: The Rajasthan Assembly witnessed heated exchanges and uproar on Wednesday over the collection of a "consultation fee" of Rs 1,000 allegedly being charged from students in state universities and colleges, with Opposition members accusing the government of irregularities and lack of transparency.

Congress MLA from Shahpura, Manish Yadav, raised the issue in the House and accused the government of allowing unauthorised and arbitrary fee collection from students over several years. During Question Hour, he questioned the legality and purpose of the so-called "discussion fee", alleging that it had been collected by universities since the 2016-17 academic session in violation of established rules and without statutory backing.

He cited Rajrishi Bhartrihari Matsya University, Mohanlal Sukhadia University and Rajasthan University, alleging that former vice-chancellors had imposed the fee without proper authorisation and in contravention of existing provisions governing university finances.

Responding to the question, Higher Education Minister Prem Chand Bairwa informed the House that the fee had been collected by Rajrishi Bhartrihari Matsya University amounting to Rs 22.16 crore between 2018-19 and 2024-25,

students received guidance or counselling? Where exactly was this money spent? A detailed account must be presented in the House," he said.

He also alleged that there was no provision under the University Act to charge such a fee, particularly from private students, and accused the government of failing to provide clarity on the utilisation and legal basis of the collected funds.

Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jully also accused the government of misleading the Assembly and providing inconsistent responses on the issue.

"You are reading an order, not the Act. Under which law are you charging this fee? The government's replies to earlier questions have been contradic-

tory," Jully said, questioning the legality of the fee collection.

Both Jully and Yadav demanded that the fee be discontinued immediately and that the amount collected from students be refunded.

Calling the fee collection a "robbery of students' pockets", Manish Yadav alleged that there was no evidence to show that the Rs 223 crore collected had been used for academic discussions or student counselling services. He termed the matter a serious violation of financial norms and demanded intervention by the Governor, a probe into the alleged irregularities, immediate discontinuation of the fee, and refund of the collected amount to students.

Jully further accused Minister Prem Chand Bairwa of violating the privilege of the House by providing contradictory answers on the same issue. He alleged that the minister's responses regarding the "discussion fee" were inconsistent and misleading, further escalating tensions in the Assembly.

Amid the heated exchanges, the Speaker ruled that the matter could not be taken up for detailed discussion during Question Hour.

The issue led to prolonged disruption in the Assembly, reflecting sharp differences between the ruling government and the Opposition over the legality and utilisation of funds collected from students by state universities.

TOURIST ATTRACTION

Jamshedpur zoo gets pair of African lions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jamshedpur, Feb 18: A pair of African lions were brought to the Jamshedpur zoo in Jharkhand from the Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad as part of an animal exchange programme, a statement said.

The lion pair, named Manohar and Sridevi, is set to be a major attraction at the Tata Steel Zoological Park, it said.

Under the exchange programme, two male mandrill monkeys were transferred to the Hyderabad zoo, the statement issued by Tata Steel said.

Manohar and Sridevi are approximately nine years old and are in their prime breeding age, it said. A team from the zoo here departed for Hyderabad February 11 in two specially-designed vehicles for the safe and comfortable transport of the animals.

After completing all necessary documentation and health formalities, the team commenced the return journey and safely brought the lions to Jamshedpur around Monday midnight, the statement said.

At present, the zoo here houses three African lions -- two males, Jumbo and Edd, and one female, Zoya -- all approximately 14.5 years old.

Rajasthan JJM scam back in spotlight

Jaipur: The alleged Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) scam in Rajasthan has once again come into focus, with state minister Kirodi Lal Meena reiterating his claim of large-scale irregularities worth Rs 20,000 crore. Recent arrests of senior officials including chief engineer (administration), in connection with the case have revived political debate and intensified scrutiny of the investigation. The controversy dates back to June 2023, when Meena staged a two-day sit-in protest outside the Ashok Nagar police station in Jaipur, demanding registration of an FIR over alleged irregularities in JJM tenders. At that time, the Congress government led by Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot was in power. Kirodi Lal Meena has alleged that serious irregularities occurred in the tender process under the Jal Jeevan Mission, claiming violations of the Rajasthan Transparency in Public Procurement Act, 2012. He stated that violations under the Act can attract punishment ranging from six months to five years in prison. During his 2023 protest, Meena questioned the state government's claim that FIRs were being registered on every complaint.

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, DASPALA

3rd Corrigendum on Tender Call Notice No.66 Dt.08.01.2026 Bid Identification No.NAC-Daspalla-(SAN)-2025-26

Dt.12.02.2026

No.516 No.13001/278/2526 : Corrigendum hereby issued for Tender Call Notice No.66/Dt.08.01.2026 for Sanitation Work of Daspalla NAC regarding extension of date opening of Financial Bid due to unavoidable circumstances.

1. Date & time of opening of Financial Bid : Dt.20.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M. *All other terms & conditions remain unaltered.

Sd/- Executive Officer OIPR-13001/13141/1/25-26/0003 Notified Area Council, Daspalla

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF DISTRICT MEDICAL & PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, BHADRAK (SUB STORE, DHH, BHADRAK)

Open Tender Notice No. : 1817/SUB-STORE/Bhadra/Dated. 18.02.2026

No.10001/68/2526 : Sealed tenders are invited by the CDM & PHO, Bhadrak from register firms / agencies / companies / authorized dealers / suppliers / authorized distributors / Manufacturers for supply of Medicines, Consumables, Chemicals, Reagents, EIF & BCL and other items. The tender proposal in the prescribed format, along with all supporting documents must reach the Office of the CDM & PHO, Bhadrak on or before **17.03.2026 up to 5:00 P.M.**

through registered post, sealed post, courier only. The technical bid will be opened on **18.03.2026 at 11:30 A.M.** at the Conference Hall of the Office of the CDM & PHO, Bhadrak. The detailed tender documents, terms and conditions and other relevant information can be downloaded from the official district website <https://bhadra.odisha.gov.in>

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.

Sd/- (Dr. P.K. Praharaj) Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, Bhadrak



A view of the city from Isarlat Sargasooli on a rainy day, in Jaipur, Wednesday

Ramgarh gets cafe run by transgender persons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



For far too long, members of the transgender community have faced social exclusion and economic marginalisation, and it is time we correct these historic injustices through concrete action

FAIZ AQ AHMED MUMTAZ | DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

been opened for them recently at different public places. We have also employed two members of the community, one in the DC office and another in Sadar Hospital, through outsourcing," he added. A self-help group has been formed, and it will run the cafe, the DC said.

SHG president Himanshi Pradhan said the initiative would help transgender persons to lead a respectful life.

while respecting their identity and rights. We are committed to creating an inclusive Ramgarh where everyone can live with respect, safety, and opportunity," he said.

"Our initiative aims to integrate them into the mainstream

The DC said dedicated OPD services are being provided to the transgender community at the district hospital every Saturday afternoon.

"Three dedicated toilets have

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER RURAL WORKS CIRCLE, KENDRAPARA-JAJPUR	
No.25001/195/2526	
1st Corrigendum to Bid Identification No. Tender Online RCK-03/26 invited by this office vide Letter No.-276 Dt. - 28.01.2026	
1st Corrigendum Notice	
Last Date & Time of seeking tender Clarification	
Technical Bid	
Date & Time of opening of Tender	
Financial Bid	
Procurement Officer	Identification No.
Previously fixed on	Presently Modified on
From 09.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 26.02.2026 upto 05.00 P.M.	From 09.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M. to 05.03.2026 upto 05.00 P.M.
Previously Modified on	Presently Modified on
26.02.2026 upto 02.00 P.M.	26.02.2026 upto 02.00 P.M.
Previously Modified on	Presently Modified on
27.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	06.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.
Will be intimated later	Will be intimated later

All other conditions of NIT remain unaltered.

OIPR-25001/25129/1/25-26/0024

Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer Rural Works Circle, Kendrapara-Jajpur

national



Proud to share that the United Nations has recognised our initiative yet again. The Food and Agriculture Organization of UN has awarded internationally valued certificate to us for our community initiatives in our innovative 'Matir Srishti' programme

MAMATA BANERJEE | WEST BENGAL CM

GRAP II RESTRICTIONS REVOKED IN DELHI-NCR

The Commission for Air Quality Management Wednesday revoked GRAP Stage-II restrictions in Delhi-NCR after an improvement in air quality levels amid changing weather conditions, according to officials



of the day quote



A substantial portion of funds has been channelled into capital expenditure, infrastructure development, power sector reforms and asset creation, strengthening long-term growth potential

OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM



The Congress indulged in vote bank politics in Assam. They had no policy, intention and capability to run the state. But the BJP has all three qualities and we are working with the people

NITIN NABIN | BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT



Alliance politics has only harmed the BSP in the past. Therefore, party workers are fully committed to contesting the 2027 Assembly elections alone with full dedication

MAYAWATI | BSP PRESIDENT

SC: Groping, untying pant attempt to rape

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, Feb 18: The Supreme Court has ruled that grabbing of breasts and pulling the pyjama string amount to "attempt to rape", setting aside a controversial Allahabad High Court order which said these were only "preparation to commit rape".

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and N V Anjaria said the impugned order was liable to be set aside on account of the "patently erroneous application of the settled principles of criminal jurisprudence".

The court passed the order February 10 on a suo motu plea in which it had taken cognisance of the Allahabad High Court order, which stated that mere grabbing of the breasts and pulling the string of a pyjama did not amount to the offence of rape.

While setting aside the HC judgement, the top court restored the original stringent charge of attempt to rape against two accused under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

"The facts alleged being so, we cannot agree with the finding of the High Court that the allegations only amount to preparation, but not an attempt, towards the commission of the offence of rape."

The apex court said a bare perusal of these allegations leaves no "modicum of doubt" that the case sought to be made out is that the accused persons proceeded with a pre-determined intent to commit an offence under Section 376 (rape) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)."

"The impugned judgement dated March 17, 2025, is set aside, and the original summons order dated June 23, 2023, passed by the Special Judge

In its order dated March 17, 2025, the HC ruled that mere grabbing of breasts and pulling the pyjama string did not amount to the offence of rape

The order was passed by Justice Ram Manohar Narayan Mishra on a revision petition filed by two persons who moved the court, challenging the order of a special judge of Kasganj by which the court had summoned them under Section 376 of the IPC, apart from other sections

(POCSO), Kasganj, is restored."

"It goes without saying that the observations made by this Court through this judgement are only from a prima facie perspective on the case made by the complainant, and they shall not be taken to be any opinion on the guilt of the accused persons, which is the subject matter of the ongoing trial," the bench said.

In its order dated March 17, 2025, the HC ruled that mere grabbing of breasts and pulling the pyjama string did not amount to the offence of rape, but it did fall under the ambit of assault or use of criminal

force against a woman with the intent to disrobe or compel her to be naked.

The order was passed by Justice Ram Manohar Narayan Mishra on a revision petition filed by two persons who moved the court, challenging the order of a special judge of Kasganj by which the court had summoned them under Section 376 of the IPC, apart from other sections.

According to facts of the case, an application was moved before the court of Special Judge, POCSO Act, alleging that November 10, 2021, she (informant) was returning from the home of her sister-in-law along with her 14-year-old daughter.

The accused -- Pawan, Akash and Ashok -- were from her village and met her on the way. They offered a lift to her daughter.

It was alleged that the accused stopped their motorcycle on the way to the village and started groping the minor. Akash allegedly dragged her and tried to take her beneath the culvert and pulled the string of her pyjama. Two persons reached the spot on hearing the cries of the girl, causing the accused to flee.

SNIPPETS

Three cheetah cubs born at Kuno National Park

New Delhi: Three cheetah cubs have been born at Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park, taking India's total population of the big cat to 38, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav announced Wednesday. The cubs were born to Gamini, who was translocated from South Africa as part of the ambitious project to revive the population of the world's fastest land animal in the country. "Kuno welcomes three new cubs - A roaring new chapter at Kuno on the occasion of the completion of 3 years of arrival of cheetahs from South Africa."

SC seeks Shami reply on wife's transfer pleas

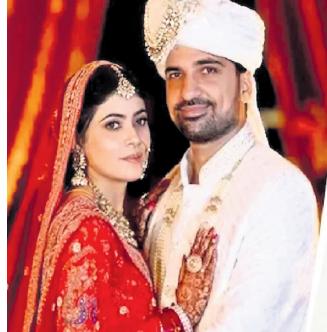
New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday sought a response from cricketer Mohammad Shami on pleas filed by his estranged wife seeking transfer of cases, including the one alleging domestic violence, from West Bengal to Delhi. A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Mamnahan agreed to hear the two separate transfer petitions filed by Shami's wife. The top court issued notice to the respondents, including Shami, seeking their responses on the pleas and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks. The transfer petitions have been filed in the apex court through advocate Deepak Prakash.

Ramzan fasts to begin in India from today

New Delhi: Ramzan fasts will begin Thursday in India as the crescent moon marking the start of the fasting month was sighted in various parts of the country Wednesday. After the sighting of the moon, the holy month begins and for the next 30 days, Muslims fast from dawn to dusk. Shahi Imam of Chandni Chowk's Fatehpuri mosque Maulana Mufti Mukarram Ahmed announced that the crescent moon was sighted and the month of fasting will start from February 19. Naib Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid Syed Shaban Bukhari also declared that the moon was sighted.

CA murders pregnant wife, spins robbery-kidnap tale

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Inspector Suresh said. When police reached the

spot, they found the woman's body near a dry canal with in-

jury marks on her neck, he said.

Suspecting inconsistencies in Anshul's version of events, police took him into custody for interrogation. He confessed that he had killed Mehek with a pair of scissors, wearing gloves, over suspicions about her character, SHO said.

The accused initially claimed a robbery and kidnapping, but police found inconsistencies in his story
The man confessed to slitting his wife's throat with scissors due to suspicions about her character
The victim's sister stated the family suspected the husband and seeks justice for the murder of her sister and unborn child
Police investigation revealed the murder was pre-planned, and the accused is now in custody

During his questioning, it came to light that he had pre-planned the murder. His wife worked in a private bank in Gurugram. He had doubts that she talked to her friends, and he did not like it," SHO added. Following the confession,

Anshul was arrested Monday. Further investigation into the matter is underway, police said. Mehek's sister, Shruti, told the reporters that the family had doubts that Anshul was involved in the murder. She said, "We want justice; the killer should be hanged. He did not even think that his wife was two months pregnant."

She said February 15, Anshul came to their house and stayed only for ten minutes and left with Mehek for Gurugram. Shruti alleged that Anshul had pre-planned the murder.

ED issues biggest-ever attachment in PACL case



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 18:

Fugitive businessman Vijay Mallya informed the Bombay High Court Wednesday that he is unable to provide a definite timeline for his return to India, citing the revocation of his passport and also being legally barred from leaving the UK.

A statement from Mallya was submitted by his counsel Amit Desai in response to a mandate from a bench comprising Chief Justice Shree Chandrashekhar and Justice Gautam Ankhad, which had last week signalled that it would refuse to hear Mallya's petitions against his "fugitive economic offender" status unless he clarified his intent to return to face trial.

Based in the UK since 2016, Mallya has filed two petitions in the high court -- one challenging an order declaring him a fugitive economic offender and the other questioning the constitutional validity of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act.

Mallya's legal team argued that his absence is a consequence of international legal constraints rather than choice, noting that his Indian passport was revoked in 2016 and that the orders of courts in England and Wales prohibit him from leaving the country. The businessman said in his statement that he cannot give a definite date of return to India as he did not have an active passport after it was revoked by the Indian government in 2016, and also because there are orders of courts in England and Wales that prohibit him from leaving the country.

"Mallya is not permitted to leave or attempt to leave England and Wales or apply for or be in possession of any international travel document. In any event, the petitioner is unable to precisely state when he will return to India," Desai read out the statement in the court.

The attached 247 properties have been identified as having been acquired from investor funds, constituting proceeds of crime. They have been valued at ₹10,021.46 crore, it said. This is probably the highest single attachment order in terms of value and number of properties issued by the agency, ED officials said. There have been instances when more assets

with higher value have been attached in money laundering cases but they are linked instances and not a single case, they said.

The ED probe stems from a February 2014 CBI case against PACL Ltd, its late promoter Nirmal Singh Bhangoo and some others.

Bhangoo died in August 2024. The accused entities and individuals of PACL operated an "illegal" collective investment scheme,

more than ₹48,000 crore from lakhs of investors across India under the guise of sale and development of agricultural land, according to the ED. Investors were induced to invest through cash down payment and installment payment plans and were made to sign "misleading" documents, including agreements, powers of attorney and other instruments, it said. Four chargesheets have been filed by the ED till now as part of this case registered in 2016. With the fresh order, the ED has so far attached movable and immovable properties worth ₹17,610 crore including some assets located abroad.

MP unveils 'rolling Budget' focussing on women, farmers

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhopal, Feb 18: Madhya Pradesh Finance Minister Jagdish Devda Wednesday unveiled the state's Budget for the financial year 2026-27 -- probably the first rolling budget of the country -- with an outlay of ₹4.38 lakh crore and a six-pronged development framework focusing on the women, poor and farmers.

The third Budget of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav-led state government was presented in the Assembly amid slogan shouting by the Opposition Congress members, who marched into the well of the House to protest against the government's failure to raise the MLA Local Area Development (LAD) fund. Unfazed by the Opposition protests and constant interruptions, Devda spoke for nearly 90 minutes, centred on what he called the 'GYANII' model of development -- the poor (Gareeb), youth (Yuva), farmers (Annadata), women (Nari), infrastructure, and industrialisation.



Drummer Gino Banks, Mridangam maestro Sridhar Parthasarathy, Tabla player Ojas Adhiya and other artists rehearse at the Marine Drive ahead of the Mumbai Drum Day 2026, in Maharashtra

PTI PHOTO

Case against Blinkit

Bomb scare at courts

Sarpanch shot dead

Short takes

11 Bangladeshis held

Case against Blinkit

Bomb scare at courts

Sarpanch shot dead

Short takes

11 Bangladeshis held

Case against Blinkit

Bomb scare at courts

Sarpanch shot dead

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Sarpanch shot dead

Short takes

11 Bangladeshis held

Case against Blinkit

Bomb scare at courts

Sarpanch shot dead

Short takes

11 Bangladeshis held

Case against Blinkit

Bomb scare at courts

Sarpanch shot dead</h2

national



According to the law, it is mandatory that electoral rolls revisions are held before elections, and as such, SIR (special intensive revision) was conducted in 12 states while SR was held in Assam

GYANESH KUMAR | CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER

RAJ THACKERAY, SHINDE MEET

MNS president Raj Thackeray met Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde at the latter's official residence Wednesday, their first in-person interaction after the Mumbai civic body polls last month



AI SUMMIT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

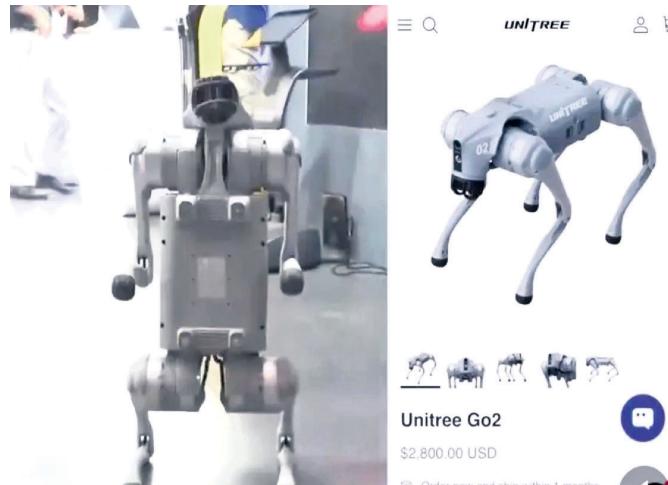
New Delhi, Feb 18: The Opposition leaders Wednesday said the display of a commercially available Chinese robot as an in-house innovation by an Indian university at the AI Summit was "shameful" and slammed IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav for sharing the image on a social media platform.

They also questioned the links between the university and BJP leaders.

In an X post, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas alleged that the Galgotias University, a private university located in Delhi's satellite town Greater Noida, enjoyed the "patronage and support of prominent BJP leaders". "Galgotias University has enjoyed the patronage and support of prominent BJP leaders, with Dr Sambit Patra to Union Minister Piyush Goyal having graced various university programmes. It is no surprise that the institution frequently emphasizes the 'Viksit Bharat' slogan," Brittas said.

"This close association was evident when the university blatantly showcased a commercially available Chinese robotic dog as an in-house invention, branding it as 'Orion' at the AI Summit, which was promoted in a tweet by none other than the IT minister! Whether ousted from the event or not, Galgotias University is set to remain firmly in the BJP's orbit," he said.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Priyanka Chaturvedi called the event a "shame" and said the damage it has caused is huge. "Galgotias University passing off Chinese robot as own invention at the AI Summit is a shame. Chinese media having a field day over it makes it



Galgotias University has been asked to vacate its pavilion at the AI Summit at Bharat Mandapam after it emerged that they have displayed a made-in-China robot as own innovation

worse. All this could have been avoided if before allotting the pavilions a thorough credibility check was done of companies, universities, start-ups and others," Chaturvedi said.

"The damage this has caused for India and the Summit is big. Asking the university to vacate their pavilion was a good step, I feel some strict penalty must also be imposed on them," she said.

Trinamool Congress MP Saket Gokhale questioned IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav's silence over the issue, and questioned if he had any information about it.

"A private university called Galgotias tried to pass off a Go2 Chinese robot as their own invention at the India AI Summit. But here's the real shameful part: Government-run DD News did an entire feature promoting them. Today, DD News and BJP

are the same. The channel runs as a propaganda outlet for the BJP," Gokhale said.

"Both the Ministry for Information Technology, which organised the AI Summit, and the Ministry for Information and Broadcasting, which controls DD News, are headed by the same minister. Was this fraud perpetrated with the full knowledge of Modi's minister Ashwini Vaishnav for cheap PR?" Gokhale asked.

"Did the BJP receive anything in return from this private university for being given a platform at the summit by a government channel? This incident has become a global embarrassment. Is the purpose of the India AI Summit merely to promote Modi even through fraudulent means?" the TMC leader asked.

"Why has there been pin

Oppn targets govt for Chinese robot

Rahul: Irreparable damage caused to country's image

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Wednesday dubbed the ongoing AI Summit a "disorganised PR spectacle" and alleged that Chinese products are being showcased there. Gandhi's remarks came amid a controversy over Galgotias University allegedly showcasing a robotic dog labelled "Orion" at the AI Summit Expo that critics said was actually a Chinese-made Unitree Go2 and not an in-house innovation. "Instead of leveraging India's talent and data, the AI summit is a disorganised PR spectacle - Indian data up for sale, Chinese products showcased," the former Congress president said in a post on X.

drop silence from Ashwini Vaishnav and the government on this shameful incident?" he asked. Galgotias University has been asked to vacate its pavilion at the AI Summit at Bharat Mandapam after it emerged that they have displayed a made-in-China robot as own innovation.

Neha Singh, a professor of communications at the university, was featured showcasing the robotic dog 'Orion' in DD News Tuesday. She said it "has been developed by the Centre of Excellence at Galgotias University." As the video went viral, social media users highlighted that the robot was actually a Unitree Go2, manufactured by China's Unitree Robotics and commonly used in research and education worldwide.

After the incident snowballed into a controversy, IT Secretary S. Krishnan said the government does not want any exhibitor to showcase items that are not their own.

AI Impact Summit: PM welcomes world leaders



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

and discussed issues of mutual interest with them.

The leaders with whom Modi held bilaterals included Bhutan's Tobgay, Spain President Pedro Sanchez, and Croatia's Plenkovic, among others. The prime minister held two separate meetings with the CEO of Google, Sundar Pichai, and the cofounder of Sun Microsystems and the founder of Khosla Ventures, Vinod Khosla.

In another post after meeting the Estonian president, Modi said, "Had an excellent meeting with President Alar Karis of Estonia, a nation which has made remarkable strides in tech and AI. Discussed how to add further vigour to our economic partnership, particularly in the context of the India-EU FTA, which is a historical agreement."

The AI Impact Summit is being held from February 16-20 at the Bharat Mandapam, in which more than 500 global AI leaders, 150 academicians and researchers, and 400 chief technology officers, vice-presidents, and philanthropists are taking part.

On Thursday, Modi will address the Summit, which aims to position the country as a leader in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and envisions a future where technology advances humanity and fosters inclusive growth.

DELHI SUV CASE

Fresh video shows minor SUV driver, sister blaming biker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Workers carry vermicelli for sale amid 'Ramadan' festivities, in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

PTI PHOTO

J&K: CRPF SETS UP 43 HIGH-ALTITUDE BASES

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

of temporary operating bases were established on the Pahalgam-Tral-Harwan axis immediately after the April 2025 terrorist attack in the Baisaran meadows of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and other security forces used one such temporary operating base to eliminate in July the three terrorists who were responsible for the Pahalgam attack. This operation was called 'Operation Mahadev'.

Operation Mahadev began May 22 as part of a security plan that was drawn a day after the April 22 attack in the scenic Baisaran valley of Pahalgam where 26 tourists were killed.

The central paramilitary force has procured some special equipment for these temporary operating bases like tactical boots, winter jackets, sleeping bags and satellite phones.

According to data, there are about two local terrorists active in the Union territory while there are about 100 foreign terrorists active at present.



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Feb 18: The BJP-led Maharashtra government has formally nullified the 5 per cent quota provided to Muslims in jobs and education, introduced by the erstwhile Congress-NCP dispensation

in 2014 through an ordinance, but which never became a law, putting an end to the legal limbo. The move evoked sharp

reactions from the Opposition, which flayed the government for its "anti-minority" mindset, and questioned the logic behind withdrawing an ordinance that had lapsed years ago.

The latest decision also brought to the spotlight the legal battle that once defined the policy.

The reservation was initially introduced under the Special Backward Class-A (SBC-A) cat-

egory by the then Prithviraj Chavan government, in which NCP (undivided) was a junior partner and late Ajit Pawar was Deputy CM. In November 2014, the Bombay High Court stayed the 5 per cent job quota but allowed it for educational institutions. Because the ordinance was not passed into law by the Maharashtra legislature by the deadline of December 23, 2014, it automatically lapsed.

The clip also shows locals confronting the accused 17-year-old driver and his sister. At one point, bystanders can be seen attempting to stop the duo from leaving the scene, with one shouting that the driver was trying to escape after killing a man.

The video also captures an argument between the bystanders and the accused's sister, in which she can be heard defending her brother by claiming that the motorcyclist was speeding.

Some locals question how the taxi suffered such heavy damage if it was not driven at a high speed, according to the clip. The accused can be seen attempting to blame the victim for the crash.

Police sources said the video is being examined to verify its authenticity. Sahil, a final semester BBA student who had discontinued his studies due to financial constraints, was on his way to work when the Mahindra Scorpio N, allegedly driven by the 17-year-old boy, collided head-on with his bike near the Lal Bahadur Shastri College in Dwarka.

Punjab wedding: ₹10cr cash shower sparks viral frenzy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

during the wedding. However, a DJ owner at the event dismissed the social media speculation as a gross exaggeration.

The ceremony, solemnised February 14 in Patti area, caught the attention of thousands of social media users as the groom was filmed pulling wads of cash from a bag and tossing them into the air. Several guests joined in the gesture, a practice commonly seen at Punjabi weddings, leaving the entire



dance floor covered in notes. Singh, the DJ owner, juked

claiming Rs 8 crore, 10 crore or Rs 10 lakh on their social media accounts. They are making such claims only to seek views," he said. He said the total cash involved was actually between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 3 lakh. The majority of the currency notes were in the denomination of Rs 10, though some dollars were also used, he added.

Singh urged social media account users to refrain from making exaggerated claims while sharing the video clip.

international

of the day **quote**

We will have a totally independent and universal scientific body (that will be) able to tell the world at each moment where are we in relation to AI?



ANTONIO GUTERRES | UN SECRETARY GENERAL

We have our relations with Cuba, and we value these relations very much. And we intend to further develop them - of course, during difficult times, by providing appropriate assistance to our friends



Politicians often avoid announcing their plans early so they wouldn't be the target of attacks

**SHORT TAKES****B'desh PM holds first cabinet meet**

Dhaka: Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman Wednesday chaired the first meeting of his newly formed cabinet, which set a 180-day priority plan with a focus on controlling commodity prices, maintaining law and order and stabilising supply chains. Rahman, the 60-year-old chief of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), was sworn in as the 11th prime minister on Tuesday after leading his party to a forceful victory in the 13th Parliamentary polls held on February 12. The first meeting of the new cabinet was held at the Cabinet Division in the Secretariat. Briefing reporters after the meeting, Home Minister Salauddin Ahmed said it is customary for a newly formed government to hold a session on its first day in office. The government has set a 180-day priority plan, with initial focus on controlling commodity prices, maintaining law and order, stabilising supply chains, and ensuring uninterrupted gas and electricity supply. Ahmed was quoted as saying by The Daily Star newspaper.

11 held for murder of far-right activist

Paris: French police investigating the beating of a far-right activist who died of brain injuries have arrested 11 people, prosecutors said Wednesday, in a case adding fuel to long-standing divides in French politics ahead of presidential elections in 2027. Quentin Deranque, a 23-year-old student described as a fervent nationalist, died in a hospital Saturday. He was beaten two days earlier by a group of people in the city of Lyon, in fighting that erupted between far-left and far-right supporters on the margins of a student meeting where a far-left lawmaker, Rima Hassan, was a keynote speaker.

An autopsy found that Deranque suffered a fractured skull and fatal brain injuries, according to Lyon's prosecutor, Thierry Dran. He launched the police investigation for homicide and other potential criminal charges. Dran's office said police detained a man and a woman on Wednesday morning, with nine other people taken into custody on Tuesday night. Hassan, a French-Palestinian who was born in a Syrian refugee camp, is a European Parliament lawmaker for the far-left France Unbowed party. In a post on X after the attack on Deranque but before he died of his injuries, Hassan expressed "horror" over the violence and condemned it.

Indonesia tightens control on nickel as US, China scramble

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hanoi, Feb 18: Indonesia is tightening state control over the world's largest nickel supply after years of betting the metal would anchor a home-grown electric-vehicle industry, and just as global demand begins shifting away from heavy reliance on nickel.

In 2025, Indonesia cracked down on what it called illegal exploitation of natural resources, saying many mining and plantation licenses were tainted by bribery or never properly approved. Authorities say they have seized more than 4 million hectares (9.8 million acres) of mines, palm oil plantations and processing sites, levied USD 1.7 billion in fines, and could seize another 4.5 million hectares this year.

But analysts warn the crackdown is coming just as nickel's payoff is starting to fade, with many Chinese EVs shifting to battery chemistries that use far less of the metal, relying instead on iron-based designs.

"The forests have been exploited to the brim," said Putra Adhiguna of the Jakarta-based Energy Shift Institute. "But you never got the electric-vehicle

Jakarta hoped that control over nickel would underpin a fully domestic EV industry, from mining and batteries to finished cars. Experts say that



Cutting the cost of living is my number one priority

RACHEL REEVES | UK TREASURY CHIEF



value chain."

China plays the leading role in Indonesia's nickel sector, using the metal to underpin its stainless steel and clean-energy industries.

The world's largest nickel reserves are concentrated on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi, which accounts for more than half of global nickel mine production, according to the US-based Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis or IEEFA.

Over the same period, North and South America's combined share of global nickel output

CHINA BUILDING SUBMARINES FASTER THAN US: REPORT

China has ramped up its production of nuclear-powered submarines over the past five years to the point where it is launching subs faster than the US, threatening to negate a sea-power advantage that has long belonged to Washington, the International Institute for Strategic Studies said. The build-up in the People's Liberation Army Navy's nuclear-powered sub force includes both ballistic-missile and attack subs



Polish army bans Chinese vehicles from military premises

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Warsaw, Feb 18: The Polish army has banned Chinese cars from entering military facilities hoping to prevent the collection of sensitive data by technologically advanced automobiles.

Meanwhile, mining drove the loss of about 370,000 hectares (roughly 914,000 acres) of Indonesian forests between 2001 and 2020 - more than in any other country - according to an analysis by the World Resources Institute. More than a third of that loss was old-growth rainforests which hold vast carbon stocks and are crucial for limiting climate change.

The heavy use of coal to run Indonesia's nickel smelters has also slowed the country's energy transition, adding new fossil-fuel demand even as it tries to cut emissions. A 2024 analysis by the IEEFA found that major nickel producers emitted about 15 million metric tons (16.5 million US tons) of greenhouse gases in 2023, largely because of coal reliance.

Vehicles are now able to collect video, sound and location and there is a fear that Chinese producers might share some of this potentially sensitive data with their authorities.

All cars capable of recording location, video and sound will be banned from secure military areas unless those functions are switched off, the Polish army said, meaning that the new restrictions do not apply to Chinese products alone.

It is also prohibited to connect official army phones to infotainment systems in any vehicle produced in China.

The measures introduced are preventative, the army said, and are consistent with practices used by other NATO countries.

The army also said it was looking into technical solutions to enable producers of cars with such advanced functions to ask for security clearance, which could potentially be used in the future instead of a blanket ban.

The presence of Chinese vehicles on the Polish market has expanded significantly in the last years, with Chinese models representing over 8 per cent of newly registered cars in Poland last year, according to Warsaw-based market research firm IBRM Samar.

At the same time, the US and its European partners have been making efforts to protect sensitive technology and information from foreign snooping, including by China.

Responding to earlier reports that Poland might be preparing such a ban, Guo Jiakun, a spokesman for China's foreign ministry, told reporters in January that China was following the developments and that the abuse of the concept of national security must be stopped.

Fallout from Epstein puts Britain's House of Lords under scrutiny

ASSOCIATED PRESS

London, Feb 18: Fallout from the Jeffrey Epstein files has landed on the gilded wood and plush red benches of Britain's House of Lords.

Parliament's upper chamber is in the spotlight after former UK ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson was forced to resign as a member of the Lords because of his friendship with the late sex offender.

The episode has emboldened critics who say the unelected house is antiquated, undemocratic and far too slow at punishing bad behaviour by its members. Supporters say the chamber of more than 850 members-for-life who sport the titles of "Lord" or "Lady" is an unwieldy but essential part of parliamentary democracy.

Almost everyone agrees it needs reform, but that task has eluded successive governments. "It's a mess," said Jenny Jones, one of two Green Party members of the Lords. "In spite of our being supposedly a

modern democracy, we have a semi-feudal system."

For most of its 700-year history, the House of Lords was composed of noblemen - not women - who inherited their seats, alongside a smattering of bishops. In the 1950s, these were joined by "life peers" - retired politicians, civic leaders and other notables appointed by the government, among them the first female members of the Lords.

In 1999, the Labour government of then-Prime Minister Tony Blair evicted most of the more than 750 hereditary peers, though to avoid an aristocrats' rebellion, 92 were allowed to remain temporarily.

A quarter century on, Prime Minister Keir Starmer's current Labour government finally introduced legislation to oust the remaining "hereditaries," calling them an indefensible relic of the past.

The lords have put up a fight, forcing a compromise that will see some hereditary members allowed to stay by being "recycled" into life peers.



Kaori Sakamoto of Japan competes during the women's short programme figure skating at the 2026 Winter Olympics, in Milan, Italy

AP PHOTO

'Difficult' Ukraine peace talks end

ASSOCIATED PRESS



outcome of the talks. Putin has been receiving reports about progress in Geneva, he said.

Both sides said a new round of talks is set to take place.

Zelenskyy described the military discussions as "constructive," adding that the armed forces of both countries considered how any future ceasefire might be monitored.

"Monitoring will definitely be carried out with participation of the American side," he said in a voice message shared in a media group chat on WhatsApp.

US President Donald Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, said on social media that Washington's push for peace in Ukraine over the past year has "brought about meaningful progress," without elaborating.

The two armies remain locked in battle on the roughly 1,250-kilometre front line, while Russia bombs civilian areas of Ukraine daily.

Hours after the first day of talks ended on Tuesday, Russian drones killed a woman and injured a six-year-old girl and 18-month-old toddler in the southern Ukraine city of Zaporizhzhia, officials said.

Overnight, Russia launched one ballistic missile and 126 long-range drones at Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian air

force.

Zelenskyy said that the Ukrainian and American envoys in Geneva met with representatives from the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland.

Europe's participation in the process is "indispensable," Zelenskyy said.

European leaders, mindful of Putin's wider ambitions, say their own security is at stake in Ukraine and have insisted on being consulted in peace efforts.

Russia and Ukraine appear to still be far apart on their demands for a settlement.

Zelenskyy has offered a ceasefire and a face-to-face meeting with Putin. But Moscow wants a comprehensive agreement before committing to a truce.

Putin's key goals remain what he declared when Russia invaded its neighbour on February 24, 2022: Ukraine must renounce joining NATO, sharply reduce the size of its army and protect Russian language and culture to keep the country in Moscow's orbit.

Additionally, Putin wants Kyiv to withdraw its forces from the four eastern regions Moscow has occupied but doesn't fully control.

Gisele Pelicot's memoir launches, turning horror into hope

ASSOCIATED PRESS

could assault her.

"Today I'm doing better, and this book allowed me to engage in self-reflection, to take stock of my life," she said. "I had to try to rebuild myself on this field of ruins. Today I am a woman standing strong."

Pelicot said her book is meant to deliver "a message of hope to all the women who are going through a very complicated period in their lives."

The shocking case - and Pelicot's decision to waive her anonymity and speak publicly - prompted a reckoning over rape culture in France and beyond, as her dignity and strength impressed many across the world.

Pelicot recounted her story of survival in the book and in her first series of interviews since the landmark 2024 trial that turned her into a global icon against sexual violence and imprisoned her husband, who drugged her so other men



of sexual abuse, paid tribute to Pelicot in a message broadcast by the BBC.

"Gisele has demonstrated to the world that it's not for victims of sexual abuse to feel shame - it's the perpetrators," Biles said. "By waiving her anonymity and refusing to

feel shame, Gisele paves the way for other victims to come forward."

At the "Des Femmes" ("Women's") bookstore in Paris, several readers were eager to buy Pelicot's book on the day of its release.

"I want to read it," said Ce-

cile Megueulle, who admires Pelicot. "But I tell myself that reading it will be a little scary. The fact of not being in her shoes but being able to see the other side of the mirror, how she experienced it and how she managed - I don't know if we can say that - to get through it."

Selma Memic, a lawyer from Geneva, Switzerland, said: "The case was known as the Pelicot case and now we're going to hear about Gisele". So, that's maybe what I'm looking for. Who is Gisele? What are her feelings? How does she look back at it (the trial)?"

In December 2024, Pelicot's ex-husband, Dominique Pelicot, and 50 other men were convicted of sexually assaulting her between 2011 and 2020

while she was under chemical submission. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison, while the other defendants received sentences ranging from three to 15 years.

An appeals court later increased the sentence handed to Husamettin Dogan, a construction worker who was the only defendant who challenged his conviction.

Dominique Pelicot, whom Gisele Pelicot had been married to for nearly 50 years, acknowledged that for years he mixed sedatives into her food and drink so he could rape her and invite other men to do the same.

The unprecedented trial exposed how online pornography, chat rooms and distorted notions of consent can fuel sexual violence.

of the
quote

India is going to add \$2 trillion of market cap using technology in the next decade

PRAYANK SWAROOP | PARTNER, ACCEL

INDIA, CANADA FTA SOON

India and Canada are expected to finalise terms of reference for initiating talks for a free trade agreement (FTA) during the visit of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney to India next month, an official said. The terms of reference (ToR) outline the scope and modalities of a proposed trade pact

**STRONG GLOBAL TRENDS****Silver rebounds ₹1K to ₹2.46L/kg**

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity fell by ₹300 to ₹1,56,700 per 10 grams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

around the policy outlook of the US Federal Reserve. However, safe-haven and ongoing central bank buying continue to provide support on dips.

In the international market, spot silver gained ₹2.06, or 3 per cent, to ₹75.60 per ounce, and gold rose nearly 1 per cent to ₹4,918.64 per ounce.

"Gold remained confined to a narrow trading range amid mixed global cues, as investors refrained from taking large directional bets ahead of the release of the FOMC minutes later in the day," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He added that the minutes are expected to provide insight into Fed policymakers' assessment of the potential timing of future rate cuts, elements that could have a significant impact on US Treasury yields, dollar, and subsequently, bullion prices.

GOLD & SILVER

10g = ₹1,56,700*

₹1,59,200

GOLD

10g

₹1,57,000

GOLD

10g

₹1,56,700*

GOLD

10g

1kg = ₹2,46,000*

₹2,50,000

SILVER

1kg

₹2,45,000

SILVER

1kg

₹2,46,000*

SILVER

1kg

Feb 16

Feb 17

Feb 18

Feb 16

Feb 17

Feb 18

Spot gold prices for 24-carat in Delhi for per 10 grams

Source: All India Sarafa Association

PTI
GRAPHICS

*Provisional

Silver prices are in national capital for per kg

*Provisional

Source: All India Sarafa Association

*Provisional

Men in Blue remain unbeaten

T20 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ahmedabad, Feb 18: Shivam Dube played a momentous knock before Varun Chakravarthy produced another incisive spell to set up India's convincing 17-run victory over the Netherlands in their final league fixture of the T20 World Cup here Wednesday.

Despite the top-order struggles against off-spinner Aryan Dutt, India managed to make a challenging 193 for six courtesy the fireworks from Shivam Dube (66 off 31) in the second half of the innings.

The Netherlands were always behind in the chase and doors on them were shut by Chakravarthy (3/14 in 3 overs), who did the damage in the powerplay as well as in the middle overs.

Staying true to his strength, the mystery spinner relentlessly attacked the stumps, removing Colin Ackermann and Aryan Dutt in successive balls in the 13th over to leave the Netherlands at 94 for four.

Overwhelming title favourites India now head into their opening Super 8 game against South Africa here as the only unbeaten team from Group A. However, they still have work to do against the spinners.

Opting to bat, India were hoping for Abhishek Sharma's return to form ahead of the Super 8, but the left-hander had to endure his third consecutive duck in the tournament. In the form of his life not so long ago, he is yet to score a run in his maiden ICC event.

It was the turn of Indian-origin offie Dutt to shine against a star studded home team at the world's largest cricket stadium.

Dutt, who is used to opening the bowling, was employed for three overs in the powerplay to

Dube, Varun star as India end league stage

with 17-run win over the Netherlands



TODAY'S CLASHES

West Indies vs Italy	Time- 11:00 am
Sri Lanka vs Zimbabwe	Time- 3:00 pm
Afghanistan vs Canada	Time- 7:00 pm

counter the left-handed trio of Abhishek, Ishan Kishan (18 off 7) and Tilak Varma (31 off 27).

Having played two dot balls in the opening over, Abhishek went for the pull off a faster

ball from Dutt only to see his stumps disturbed.

The in-form Kishan was quick to get off the blocks before falling to Dutt in a bizarre fashion. Trying to dispatch Dutt on the leg-side, Kishan played on to his stumps with the ball ricocheting from his thigh and elbow.

India would have been four down inside 10 overs had Michael Levitt not dropped a sitter off van Beek when Suryakumar Yadav (31 off 27) was on 13.

BRIEF SCORES
India 193/6 in 20 overs (Shivam Dube 66; Aryan Dutt 2/19) beat Netherlands 176/7 in 20 overs (Bas de Leede 33; Varun Chakravarthy 3/14, Shivam Dube 2/35) by 17 runs

Having stuttered to 74/3 in 10 overs, Dube gave the innings the much-needed steam with half a dozen sixes, most of them in the cow corner region. He shared a 76-run stand with Hardik (30 off 21) to provide the push in the last five overs that yielded 75 runs.

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