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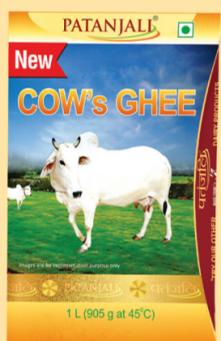
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PATANJALI®

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पतंजलि®

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**Prosperity for Charity:** All profits earned by Patanjali Group are dedicated to Patanjali Gurukulam, Bharatiya Shiksha Board, Acharyakulam, Patanjali University and the Research Foundation which are engaged in education, development of medicines, tree plantation, propagation of Sanatan Dharma, and the service of Mother India. 100% of the profits are thus invested in selfless charity and national service. Pujniya Swami Ramdev Ji has pledged to continue serving Mother India with purity and integrity till his last breath as contribution to the creation of a healthy, prosperous, and glorious India. For many years, Pujniya Acharya Balkrishna Ji has ranked among the top 2% of scientists and researchers in the world. His vision has led Patanjali to become a leading brand on the global map through science, research, and Swadeshi innovation. Today, Patanjali is India's leading institution serving yoga, Ayurveda, Swadeshi, and Sanatan Dharma.



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Patanjali range of Flour and Rice



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100% pure bamboo-less Agarbattis, Bhimseni Camphor, Pure Sesame Oil and Hawan Samagri to help you in praying your chosen God.



## Rani's confidence

Actor Rani Mukherjee says audiences are now receptive to female-led narratives

LEISURE | P8



## AI summit protest

Delhi court issues stay on bail granted to IYC president Uday Bhanu Chib in connection with protest at India AI Impact Summit

NATIONAL | P6



## India-EU trade deal

European Union and India plan to grant each other "Most Favoured Nation" status after their trade deal takes effect

BUSINESS | P9



## Do-or-die match

Batting in check but cracks remain in India's bowling armour as they take on an explosive West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal of T20 WC

SPORTS | BACK PAGE

# US, ISRAEL STRIKE IRAN

The joint US-Israeli assault on Iran marks a perilous escalation that could redraw the Middle East's fragile geopolitical balance. The strikes, justified by US and Israel as pre-emptive and liberating, risk igniting a wider regional war. Tehran's missile retaliation, threats to US bases in the region, and disruptions near the Strait of Hormuz underscore the global stakes, from oil markets to civilian lives. With reported deaths, including at a school, the rhetoric of regime change rings hollow against mounting human costs

REUTERS

**Tel Aviv/Dubai, Feb 28:** The United States and Israel carried out military strikes on Iran Saturday, targeting its top leaders and plunging the Middle East into a conflict that President Donald Trump said would end a security threat to the US and give Iranians a chance to topple their rulers.

Tehran responded by launching missiles at Israel and called the strikes against it unprovoked and illegal. Explosions also rang out in nearby oil-producing Gulf Arab countries, which said they had intercepted missiles after Tehran warned it would strike the region if it was attacked.

The first wave of strikes in what the Pentagon named "OPERATION EPIC FURY" mainly targeted Iranian officials, a source familiar with the matter said, two days after indirect talks mediated by Oman failed to produce a breakthrough on Iran's nuclear programme.

An Israeli official said Irani-



WEST ASIA ON BOIL: People watch as smoke rises on the skyline after an explosion in Tehran, Saturday

AP PHOTO

an Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian were both targeted but the result of the strikes was not clear.

An Iranian source close to the establishment said several senior commanders in Iran's Revolutionary Guards and political officials had been killed. Forty people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on a school, state media said.

In a video message published

on social media, Trump said the "massive" operation was intended to ensure Tehran does not obtain a nuclear weapon and aimed at "eliminating imminent threats from the Iranian regime".

He urged Iranians to stay sheltered because "bombs will be dropping everywhere". But he added: "When we are finished, take over your government. It will be yours to take. This will be probably your

## IRANIAN MISSILES SHAKE GULF CITIES

**DUBAI:** Iran fired missiles at several Arab Gulf cities Saturday, causing waves of blasts, shaking windows and sending people rushing for cover in rare and potentially far-reaching attacks on a region that prides itself on its security. Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, all of which have a US military presence, said they had intercepted Iranian missiles after Tehran vowed to retaliate for US and Israeli strikes on Iran. Jordan also intercepted missiles.

only chance for generations."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the joint US-Israeli attack "will create the conditions for the brave Iranian people to take their destiny into their own hands" and "remove the yoke of tyranny".

More than 200 people have been killed across Iran by Israel-US strikes, Iran's state TV reported, citing the Red Crescent. **MORE P7**

## J&K clinch maiden Ranji Trophy title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Hubballi, Feb 28:** Jammu and Kashmir scripted an extraordinary day of resilience in Indian domestic cricket to claim their maiden Ranji Trophy title by out-batting traditional heavyweights Karnataka here Saturday, capping a glorious season that saw them tackle favourites and fellow upstarts with equal tact and confidence.

The bald facts will tell that Jammu and Kashmir held the eight-time former champions to a draw punctuated by a 291-run first innings lead to lock the crown, an advantage they extended to 633 runs after scoring 342/4 in their second innings on the fifth and final day here.

Opener Qamran Iqbal's second first-class hundred (160 not out) and Sahil Lotra's maiden first-class ton (101 not out) added sheen to the historical occasion.

But the day was always meant to be more than just cold numbers, it was meant to tell the story of determination and the power of a dream that was more than six decades in the making. **MORE BACK PAGE**

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



We attacked Iran in pursuit of peace

## NIT STUDENT KILLED AS DUMPER HITS SCOOTER

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bonai, Feb 28:** A student of the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela was killed while a girl student riding pillion sustained critical injuries after a speeding dumper coming from the wrong side hit their scooter from front at Samardari Chhak on National Highway-143 under Lahunipada police limits in Sundargarh district Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Kartikeyan Senthil Krishnan, 19, a second-year student of Electronics and Telecommunication. The critically injured girl was identified as Basanti Kartik Narayan, 19, a second year student of

Biotech. Both are natives of Tamil Nadu.

Six girl students and 10 boy students from NIT, Rourkela, were on their way to Khandadhar waterfall on rented scooters. Near Samardari Chhak on National Highway-143, a dumper bearing registration number OD 14 AH-2215, coming on the wrong side, hit a scooter. The rider Kartikeyan died on the spot, while Basanti sustained critical injuries.

Police shifted the critically injured girl by ambulance to Lahunipada hospital and later shifted her to Rourkela. Police seized the dumper and the scooter from the spot and launched an investigation. The body has been sent for post-mortem.

## CM launches HPV vaccination drive

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** As Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a nationwide vaccination campaign to prevent Human Papillomavirus (HPV) infection in Rajasthan's Ajmer Saturday, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi launched the statewide vaccination drive at a function at Krushi Bhawan here.

Speaking at the state-level function, the CM said that the Prime Minister has been making continuous efforts to strengthen and expand disease prevention and healthcare services across the country. "This HPV vaccination is a landmark step towards safeguarding the health and future of our girls," he said.

Majhi added that the 'CM Cancer Treatment Programme' has



Majhi dedicates 28 new ambulances to strengthen emergency healthcare services

been announced in the 2026-27 Budget to combat cancer. "Under this programme, extensive community awareness initiatives, village-level screenings, and mobile camps will be organised, and arrangements will be

## Climate induced facelift for Michelangelo masterpiece

Michelangelo's famous The Last Judgment fresco in the Sistine Chapel is getting its biggest facelift in more than three decades to remove a light whitish residue left by sweaty visitors.

The restoration of the 16th century masterpiece in the Vatican is aimed at bringing back to light the vibrant colours of the work, which measures nearly 14 metres (46 feet) high.

Visitors will still be able to access the Sistine Chapel during the restoration but the fresco is obscured by a large scaffolding covered with a reproduction of the work.

The fresco is being dabbed with distilled water through a layer of Japanese paper to remove the sub substance, identified as calcium lactate.

"Transpiration has increased in recent years because of climate change. Due to transpiration we produce lactic acid... which becomes calcium lactate," Fabio Morresi, head of scientific research at the Vatican Museums, told reporters.

Vatican Museums staff said measures had already been taken to reduce the number of visitors present at any one time in the Sistine Chapel, which is also the place where cardinals meet in closed-door conclaves to elect new popes.

Morresi described the difference in the fresco before and after the treatment as like "two different worlds" and said working on the masterpiece was an "emotional" process.



The Last Judgment, which was completed between 1536 and 1541, is the centrepiece of the Sistine Chapel, located just behind the altar. Then pope Paul III was said to have been so impressed by the work that he

fell on his knees and asked for forgiveness when he first saw it. It covers an area of 180 square metres and has 391 figures.

The many nude and semi-nude figures in the painting caused scandal and many were

## Santrupt, Datteswar BJD's RS candidates

CONGRESS TO SUPPORT DATTESWAR



Datteswar Hota



Santrupt Misra

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** BJD president Naveen Patnaik Saturday announced senior party leader Dr Santrupt Misra and doctor Datteswar Hota as its candidates for the upcoming Rajya Sabha polls. The Congress has announced its support to Dr Hota's candidature.

Misra had unsuccessfully contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Cuttack and presently works as the political secretary to Patnaik, while Hota is an eminent urologist.

"For the Rajya Sabha elections, our party has decided to nominate two candidates. The first is Dr Santrupt Misra, a senior member of our party. The other person, who is a common candidate, is Datteswar Hota, a renowned doctor from Odisha," the BJD chief told reporters.

The Rajya Sabha elections are scheduled March 16.

Patnaik said Hota is the first vice-chancellor of the Odisha Health University and also

served as the principal of the SCB Medical College in Cuttack.

"Since he (Dr Hota) is a common candidate, I appeal to all the parties to support him and send him to the Rajya Sabha," the Leader of the Opposition said.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das, who is now in Delhi, appreciated Patnaik's decision to field Hota as a "common candidate."

"Naveen Babu has taken a very important decision by fielding Dr Hota as a common candidate. We will support his candidature to prevent possible horse-trading as planned by the ruling BJP. There is no difficulty in supporting the common candidate," Das claimed while talking to a news channel.

However, the OPCC chief also said that Hota is not a "common candidate" as his candidature was not jointly announced by both the parties.

Replying to a question, Patnaik said he is hopeful of the victory of both candidates.

## Bengal: Post-SIR electoral rolls out; over 63L deleted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, Feb 28:** Over 63 lakh names were deleted from the pre-SIR electoral rolls in West Bengal, resulting in the revised total electorate of a little over 7.04 crore, Chief Electoral Officer Manoj Kumar Agarwal said Saturday.

The voter count exceeded 7.66 crore in the state before the commencement of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in November last year.

According to the draft electoral rolls published in December after the enumeration phase of the revision exercise, the size of the electorate shrank to around 7.08 crore, down by over 58 lakh from the pre-SIR rolls.

Addressing a press conference here, Agarwal said the exercise led to the "deletion of 5.46 lakh electors through Form 7 after due verification", and "inclusion of 1.82 lakh new voters through Form 6 and Form 6A".

An additional 6,671 voters were added through Form 8 for shifting within the state, he said.

Form 6 is used for inclusion, and Form 6A for inclusion of overseas electors, as per the Election Commission. Form 8 is for electors who shifted from outside a state or within a state, and Form 7 for deletion.

The revision exercise, carried out in lines with directives of the Election Commission and orders of the Supreme Court, resulted in the revised electorate of a little over 7.04 crore in the state, the CEO said.

Of the revised 7.04 crore electorate, over 3.60 crore are men, 3.44 crore women and 1,382 belong to the third gender, he said. **AFP**

## ECoR to run 132 Holi spl trains Innovation fest, lab demos mark the day

150 additional trains originating from various parts of the country to pass through ECoR jurisdiction



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** To facilitate smooth and comfortable travel during the upcoming Holi festival, East Coast Railway (ECoR) will be operating 132 Holi special trains from its jurisdiction, officials said. In addition, 150 more Holi special trains originating from various parts of the country will pass through ECoR station jurisdiction, significantly enhancing travel capacity, they added. Every year, passenger movement increases substantially during Holi as people travel to home to celebrate with their families. Keeping this in view, the special trains will operate from the last week of February till the end of March 2026 on

several high demand routes. Major originating special train routes from ECoR includes Bhubaneswar – Yesvantpur, Bhubaneswar – Dhanbad, Sambalpur – Erode and Puri – Patna. From Visakhapatnam, special trains are being operated towards Tirupati, Shalimar, Cherlapalli and SMVT Bengaluru. Routes such as Bhubaneswar–Yesvantpur, Visakhapatnam–Tirupati, Visakhapatnam–Shalimar, Visakhapatnam–SMVT Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar–Dhanbad and Puri–Patna are witnessing particularly heavy demand during the festival period. Apart from the trains originating from ECoR, around 150 Holi special trains from major cities including Ernakulam,

Barauni, Delhi, Patna, Bhubaneswar, Muzaffarpur, Santragachi, Thiruvananthapuram, Naharlagun, Tata, Bengaluru, Gomati Nagar, Chennai and Kolkata will pass through various stations under ECoR jurisdiction, further augmenting connectivity and passenger convenience. Comprehensive arrangements have been made at major stations under ECoR jurisdiction to effectively manage the festive rush. Dedicated holding areas have been earmarked at important stations such as Bhubaneswar, Puri, Sambalpur, Brahmapur and Visakhapatnam to regulate passenger flow. Queuing arrangements with proper barricading have been planned to facilitate orderly boarding of special trains. Additional Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel and commercial staff have been deployed at key stations to guide passengers and maintain discipline. Continuous public announcements will keep passengers informed about train arrivals and platform numbers, among others. Passengers are advised to check detailed schedules, timings, stoppages and seat availability through official railway enquiry systems and the website of Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation before planning their journey.

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** National Science Day was celebrated across the state Saturday, with major events at the Regional Science Centre (RSC) and BRIC–Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) in Bhubaneswar, promoting innovation and scientific awareness among students and young researchers. At the RSC, the occasion featured ‘Innovation Festival-2026’, organised in collaboration with the National Innovation Foundation–India under the theme ‘Global Science for Global Wellbeing’. The festival commemorated the discovery of the Raman Effect by Nobel laureate CV Raman in 1928 and sought to encourage grassroots innovation, startups and scientific temper. The festival, co-partnered

NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY



POST NEWS NETWORK

by Startup Odisha and the Bhubaneswar City Knowledge Innovation Cluster Foundation, featured over 100 projects from schools, universities, startups, incubation centres and independent innovators

across the state. Participants presented working models, prototypes, research ideas and community-based technological solutions under four categories – Individual, Innovators, Incubators and Institutional.

Workshops on startup development, intellectual property rights, patent awareness, funding avenues and mentorship were also held. Students and visitors participated in science quizzes, live demonstrations, idea-pitching sessions and hands-on activities to foster curiosity and creativity. The inaugural ceremony was attended by Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Bhubaneswar Director Manas Ranjan Panda, along with entrepreneurs, academicians and industry representatives. Meanwhile, BRIC–Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) observed the day at six locations, with the main programme at its Bhubaneswar campus and parallel outreach events in colleges and universities at Jagatsinghpur, Koraput, Nuapada, Bolangir and Gajapati. Students and teachers participated in lectures, lab demonstrations, exhibitions and competitions such as quiz, essay, sketch, infographic and video-making. Addressing the gathering, ILS Director Debasis Dash underscored this year’s theme, ‘Women in Science: Catalysing Viksit Bharat’, and said India’s journey towards becoming a developed nation hinges on innovation and leadership, particularly by women scientists in biotechnology, genomics and medical research.

### Visually impaired students’ innovative science projects

**Cuttack:** Marking the day, Vision Empower Trust organised Science Fair at School for the Blind, CDA Sector-10, IIC Complex here Saturday as part of its week-long Science Week celebrations. Visually impaired students presented a range of innovative science projects, demonstrating their understanding of scientific concepts through interactive models and explanations. The participants confidently described their projects and responded to questions from visitors and judges, reflecting their growing engagement with STEM education. District Science supervisor Sagarika Rout inaugurated the programme as chief guest, appreciated the efforts of the students and lauded the initiative for promoting inclusive science education. Teachers of the host school were present and actively encouraged the participants. Students from other schools also attended the fair, making the event more vibrant and collaborative. As part of National Science Day celebrations, the trust is organising science fairs in 27 schools for the visually impaired across the state from February 21 to 28.



POST NEWS NETWORK

### Man held for food stall theft

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** Infocity police has arrested a 42-year-old man in connection with the theft of a movable food stall and two gas cylinders from the Infocity area here and recovered the stolen items, police said Saturday. The accused has been identified as Amiyan Ranjan Natha (42), a resident of the City.

According to police, the case was registered on the basis of a written complaint lodged by Pintu Das. He stated that he had been operating a movable food stall near Khao Gali under Infocity police limits when, February 24, some unidentified miscreants allegedly stole the stall along with two gas cylinders and other materials. After failing to trace the stolen items despite extensive searches, the complainant approached the police.



During the investigation, police received credible information and conducted a raid near Infocity Square, apprehending Natha. A Tata Ace vehicle, along with the stolen movable food stall, two gas cylinders and other materials, was seized from his possession. During interrogation, the accused allegedly confessed to committing the theft with an associate. Natha was produced before the court, and further investigation is underway.

## MBA protests Tribunal visit, seeks interim order



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, Feb 28:** Member of Mahanadi Bachao Andolan (MBA) staged a satyagraha at Gadagadia Ghat here Saturday, protesting the ongoing visit of the Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal to Odisha and demanding an interim order to safeguard the state’s water requirements. The protest, led by MBA convener Sudarshan Das, witnessed participation of social activists, farmers, artists, political leaders and local residents. Former MLA Mohammed Moquim also joined the demonstration and urged that the movement be intensified from the grassroots to the national capital to draw the attention of the Centre to the dispute, which he termed a matter of survival for Odisha. Barabati–Cuttack MLA Sofia Firdous, who is also a member of the government-formed com-

mittee for an amicable settlement of the dispute, said she had not been informed about the Tribunal’s visit. She reiterated that ensuring adequate water flow in the Mahanadi — considered the lifeline of Odisha — would be raised in the Assembly and urged people to strengthen democratic protests. The outfit alleged that the Tribunal’s visit from February 26 to March 2 included stops at several tourist destinations apart from the Hirakud Dam, and questioned the need for luxury accommodation despite the availability of government guest houses. The MBA demanded transparency in public expenditure, claiming that nearly ₹5 crore had been spent during the Tribunal’s previous visit in 2023. The organisation demanded an interim order directing Chhattisgarh to release adequate water to the Hirakud reservoir

and downstream areas during the non-monsoon season to safeguard Odisha’s irrigation and drinking water needs. It also urged authorities to prevent any obstruction of river flow near the Kalma Barrage. Artist Rabi Rath voiced concern over the condition of the Mahanadi and proposed awareness drives through paintings and performances, adding that a similar programme would soon be organised in Bhubaneswar. MBA spokesperson Prasanna Bishoi said satyagrahas and awareness campaigns would be held across Odisha, including in Bhubaneswar, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Paradip, Banki and Konark, in the coming days. Similar protests were reported from Jharsuguda under farmer leaders Biranchi Sahu and Gopinath Majhi, Athmalik under Congress leader Subash Pradhan, Sonepur and other districts.

## CGU celebrates 6th Foundation Day

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** CV Raman Global University (CGU), Bhubaneswar, celebrated its sixth Foundation Day with enthusiasm in the presence of distinguished guests, faculty and staff. Renowned chartered accountant Sarat Chandra Bhadra attended the event as chief guest and lauded the university’s growth and achievements. Founder and President Sanjib Kumar Rout highlighted the importance of health and well-being, urging faculty and staff members to prioritise their physical and mental wellness. On this occasion, outstanding employees were felicitated in recognition of their



dedication and contribution to the institution. Vice President Shailja Rout, in her address, emphasised the need to accelerate innovation and patent filing activities. She encouraged faculty members to actively engage in research projects and initiatives that promote innovation and contribute to academic excellence. Sachindra Kumar Rout from the Mechanical Engineering Department was honoured for his research project achievements. Tanmaya Badapanda (Physics), Ganeswar Mahanta

(Mathematics), Debendra Muduli (Computer Science and Engineering), and Hillol Joardar and Arka Ghosh (Mechanical Engineering) were also recognised for their significant contributions to research publications. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof Guda Sridevi reflected on the University’s various milestones and achievements. She remarked that challenges are opportunities and emphasised the collective responsibility to build a university that not only adapts to change but leads it.



**DOLA PROCESSION:** People carry ‘bimanas’, decorated palanquins of Lord Krishna and his divine consort Radha, during the Dola Yatra festival, marking the beginning of Holi festival, at a village on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar, Saturday

## Call for grassroots push to empower Tribals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The three-day National Consultation on Tribal Empowerment, organised by ActionAid at the IMAGE Conference Hall here and concluding March 1, brought together activists, community leaders and policymakers to deliberate on strengthening tribal rights and grassroots participation. Participants emphasised that laws alone cannot guarantee empowerment and stressed the need for active community engagement to ensure effective implementation on the ground. Addressing the gathering virtually, Union Minister of Tribal Affairs Jual Oram congratulated the organisers and said he had known the Adivasi Janjati Adhikar Manch, nurtured by ActionAid India, for its over two decades of work on tribal rights. “I wish their efforts all the best and look forward to working with them for advancing the



rights of the most vulnerable tribal groups in India,” he said. Community leaders shared challenges and recommendations with Minister Oram, calling for stronger gram sabhas, enhanced scholarships and cash transfers for Adivasi children, and the creation of a national forum for Adivasis to raise concerns annually. Over 150 leaders participated, representing 19 states and nearly 50 tribal communities — from the hills of the Northeast to central Indian forests, deserts and coastal regions. These included Bhil, Garasiya, Gond, Kandha, Khasi, Munda, Oraon and Van Gujjar communities, as well as around 15 Particularly Vulner-

ularised, and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) continue to face stringent documentation barriers to prove their identity and entitlements. Speakers also highlighted the central yet often overlooked role of Adivasi women — as guardians of forests, custodians of seeds and primary sustainers of families — whose labour remains largely invisible and undervalued. Executive Director of ActionAid, Sandeep Chachra, referred to the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN), launched on Janjatiya Gaurav Divas on November 15, 2023, and urged participants to ensure its objectives are realised on the ground. Sion Kongari of ActionAid, who has worked on tribal issues for decades, said the Forest Rights Act (FRA) completes 20 years this year and described both the FRA and PESA as constitutional pillars of Adivasi empowerment and environmental justice.

WEATHER			
	BBSR	CTC	FORECAST
Max Temp	34.4°	32.6°	Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha
Min Temp	17.8°	16.6°	
Humidity	61%	84%	
Rainfall	Nil	Nil	

### CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, JYOTSNA RANI SAHOO, W/o- Prithish Chandra Sahoo, resident of At-Khannagar, Nuasahi, P.O.- A.D Market, P.S.- Badambadi, Dist.- Cuttack- 753012, Odisha declare by this affidavit No.- 1680, dated 26.02.2026. That now onwards I shall be known as JYOSTNA RANI SAHOO for all future purposes.

## Now, SIT to probe hashish oil trade racket in Koraput

AGENCIES

**Koraput, Feb 28:** The Odisha Police Saturday formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the illegal hashish oil trade racket operating in Koraput district, where narcotic drugs worth over ₹225 crore were seized two days earlier, an officer said.

The police arrested at least six people, including the alleged kingpin of an interstate hashish oil syndicate, within 30 hours of conducting a high-risk raid on a remote island in the Jolaput Reservoir in Koraput, in what officials have described as one of the most significant narcotics crackdowns in Odisha's history.

The arrests followed the dismantling of a sophisticated, temporary hashish oil manufacturing unit concealed deep within dense forest under Padwa police limits along the Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border February 26.

The raid resulted in the seizure of 1,800.5 litres of hashish oil, valued at over ₹225 crore, and 1,000 kg of ganja worth around ₹5 crore. Police seized a full-fledged improvised laboratory set-up, including a 28 KV generator, modified pressure cookers fitted with custom piping, metal connectors, storage drums and about 80 litres of cleaning solvents.

While one accused was apprehended at the spot, the alleged mastermind and his associates managed to slip into the forest moments before police reached the unit.

"All ferry points and possible escape routes were sealed. Continuous boat patrolling was carried out inside the reservoir. Six ground teams conducted grid searches and combing operations, while drones were deployed across multiple sectors to track movement in the dense canopy," DIG (South-Western Range) Kanwar Vishal Singh told reporters.

"This was a well-structured syndicate with technical expertise and interstate linkages. By dismantling the laboratory and arresting the kingpin within hours of the raid, we have struck at the manufacturing backbone of the racket," the DIG said.

He said an SIT has been formed under the supervision of Koraput SP Rohit Verma to monitor the investigation.



**HONING SKILLS:** An NCC cadet takes a horse ride during Equestrian Camp 2026 at OUAT campus in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

PHOTO: BHASKAR NAYAK

## Hotter-than-normal summer ahead: IMD

REUTERS

**Mumbai, Feb 28:** India is set to experience a hotter-than-normal summer this year, with heatwave days during March and May expected to exceed the seasonal average, the weather office said Saturday.

In March, the first month of the summer season, minimum temperatures are likely to remain above average across most areas, IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said during a press conference.

In February, both maximum and minimum temperatures were above average, making it the fifth-warmest February since records began in 1901, according to IMD data.

Winter crops such as wheat, rapeseed, and chickpeas are planted from October to December and require cold weather conditions throughout their growth cycle for op-

timal yields.

Above-average temperatures in March could affect the grain size of maturing winter-sown crops, potentially reducing yields, said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trade house.

India, the world's second-largest wheat producer and biggest importer of edible oils, is counting on bumper 2026 crops to export surplus wheat and cut costly imports of palm, soy and sunflower oils.

"Above-normal heatwave days are expected over most parts of the country during March to May 2026," said Mohapatra.

These parts include west Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, southern and eastern Maharashtra, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and parts of north Karnataka and north Tamil Nadu, he said.

## AP cracker unit blast leaves 20 dead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Vetlapalem (Andhra Pradesh), Feb 28:** As many as 20 people, including nine women, were killed and nine others critically injured in the cracker unit blast here in Kakinada district Saturday, Andhra Pradesh (AP) Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said. The CM ordered the suspension of four senior district officials for dereliction of duty and said an inquiry will be conducted into the incident to fix responsibilities.

Earlier, Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh and senior officials said the death toll was 21. The blast occurred at 2 pm.

"It is painful and unfortunate. I visited the blast site. It is a heart-wrenching incident. This incident left 20 dead and nine are in critical condition. A total of 31 victims were there. Most of them belong to weaker sections. As many as 12 victims were SCs and nine were women. The government has taken the incident



very seriously," Naidu told reporters after visiting the injured at a hospital.

The CM announced an ex gratia of ₹20 lakh to the kin of the deceased. He also assured that the government will cover the medical expenses for the injured.

He also promised housing facilities, besides taking care of the education for the children of the affected families.

The CM said the assets of the perpetrators, who played with the lives of people by violating the rules, will be seized and distributed to the victims.

"Preliminary assess-

ments indicate that whenever they (the unit) get orders they hire more people. But they have not taken any safety precautions," he said, adding that the factory has a valid license.

Minister Durgesh said this is the biggest such blast in the state. Full details are yet to come. There is no chance that anyone would survive. Some people are undergoing

treatment. "We cannot bring back lives. It has come to my knowledge that there was a lot of stock in the unit (at the time of the blast). So, even a minor accident may turn into a major one as all

**PM & CM CONDOLE, ANNOUNCE EX GRATIA**

## Pak doing terrifically well: Trump

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New York/Washington, Feb 28:** Amid escalating tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, US President Donald Trump has said he gets along with Pakistan very well and that the country is doing "terrifically well."

"I would, but I get along with Pakistan very well, very, very well. You have a great Prime Minister, you have a great General there. You have a great leader, two of the people that I really respect a lot, and I think that Pakistan is doing terrifically well," he said.

Trump was responding to a question on Pakistan waging an "open war" against Afghanistan and whether he would intervene to stop the fighting.

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker said in a post on X that she spoke with Pakistan Foreign Secretary



Afghanistan's Taliban rulers had said Friday they were willing to negotiate after Pakistan bombed their forces in major cities

Amna Baloch to "express condolences for lives lost in the recent conflict between Pakistan and the Taliban. We continue to monitor the situation closely and express support for Pakistan's right to defend itself against Taliban attacks."

The United States expressed support for what it called Pakistan's "right to defend itself" against attacks from Afghanistan's Taliban rulers after Islamabad said earlier in the day that the neighbouring

countries were in "open war."

Afghanistan's Taliban rulers had said Friday they were willing to negotiate after Pakistan bombed their forces in major cities.

"The United States supports Pakistan's right to defend itself against attacks from the Taliban, a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group," a State Department spokesperson said in an emailed statement.

Pakistan is a major non-NATO ally of Washington. The US considers the Afghan Taliban to be a "terrorist" group.

## Confusion over 'common candidate'

SUNIT MISHRA

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** Political activity has intensified in Odisha ahead of elections to four Rajya Sabha seats from the state.

The BJD Saturday announced two candidates for the Rajya Sabha, with party president Naveen Patnaik making the declaration. Patnaik said the party has decided to field two nominees - Sanjiv Misra for the third seat and Dr. Dattatwar Hota for the fourth.

Patnaik described Hota as a "common candidate" and appealed to all political parties to extend support to him. In recent days, political observers had speculated that the BJD might extend direct or indirect support to the BJP. However, following the announcement of two candidates, some have termed the move a "masterstroke" by Patnaik.

Reacting to the development, Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee president Bhakta Charan Das said the BJD had taken an appropriate decision. He informed reporters that the Congress would support Hota. Despite this, Patnaik's manner of announcing Hota as a "common candidate" has triggered a debate.

While stating that the BJD would field two candidates, he also referred to Hota as a consensus nominee, leading to confusion.

As per Rajya Sabha election rules, a candidate's nomination must be proposed by at least 10 MLAs. If Hota is indeed a "common candidate," MLAs from the BJD, Congress, CPI (M) and BJP would need to jointly propose his name. The BJD has not

### RAJYA SABHA ELECTION

yet announced its decision. Until the party declares its stand or names a candidate, it remains difficult to assess the situation. If BJP extends support, as Congress has indicated, it would mark a rare political development not just in Odisha but in the country, as Patnaik's proposal effectively calls for BJD and BJP backing the same nominee.

Bhakta Das Friday had told reporters that he would discuss the matter with the party high command and then make his position clear. He also said he had sought time to meet Patnaik to discuss the Rajya Sabha issue but had not received any response. However, after Patnaik's Saturday announcement, Das told

the media that he had met Naveen Monday. The apparent contradiction in his statements has triggered speculation in political circles with observers viewing it as part of a larger political strategy. Das also challenged Patnaik's claim of a "common candidate."

He said that a "common candidate" should be jointly announced by both the parties. At the same time, it is

understood that discussions have taken place between the two parties regarding Congress support for Dattatwar. According to sources, the understanding was reached after top Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and KC Venugopal recently held talks with Patnaik over the Rajya Sabha election.

In another development, BJP's state in-charge Vijaypal Singh Tomar has emerged as a prominent leader after the 2024 elections. Recently, BJD leaders referred to two statements made by Tomar. Speaking to reporters Thursday, Tomar said the party's candidate would be announced either later that night or by Friday.

A few days earlier, Tomar

and senior state minister Prithiviraj Harichandan had asserted that the BJD would secure three of the four Rajya Sabha seats.

Political observers note that a senior minister and the ruling party's state in-charge would not want their public assertions to be proven wrong. If the BJD leadership stands by its strong statements, it is likely to field a third candidate.

However, the numbers in the Assembly present a complex picture. If the Congress extends support to BJD's fourth candidate, the combined opposition would outnumber the ruling party. Should the BJD field a third nominee, much will depend on how effectively both BJD and Congress leadership keep their legislators united until the election concludes.

A Rajya Sabha candidate requires 30 votes to win. Based on current numbers, BJD is certain to win two seats and the BJD one. For the fourth seat, the BJD would have 22 surplus votes, the BJD 18, and Congress along with the CPI (M) 15. If BJD, Congress and CPI(M) join hands, their combined tally would reach 33. The BJD's decision on fielding a third candidate is expected to clarify the political equations further.

**ବୟାନିକା**

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ହସ୍ତକଳ୍ପ, ବୟାନିକା ଓ ହସ୍ତଶିଳ୍ପ ବିଭାଗ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର



Spirituality is indeed the master key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinitive is native to it.



SRI AUROBINDO

## Demographic Delusion

There are things that this nation is agitated about and there is real news. One of the things we are agitated about, in our media particularly, and in whatsapp groups, is demographic change and love jihad and the rest of it. Data does not support our worries but why should facts be relevant when we have conviction?

The News Minute published the latest set of numbers on conversions in Kerala. Remember that this is the state whose high court, in December 2009, announced it suspected a 'plan to trap brilliant upper caste Hindu and Christian girls from well-to-do-families'. This casual remark, made by a judge who accepted that he had no evidence, began the conspiracy theory of love jihad which remains with us today.

The News Minute collected conversion data from the state, whose law requires that every conversion be recorded. The numbers from 2024 show that the state had a total of 963 conversions. Of these, 543 were women and 420 were men. The total number of individuals converting to Hinduism were 365 (of whom 329 were previously Christian and 36 previously Muslim). Converts to Islam were lower, at 343 (of whom 276 were previously Hindu and 67 Christian). Converts to Christianity were 255 (of whom 234 were Hindu and 23 Muslim).

There is no love jihad or anything else going on in Kerala. The data will not surprise those who have been following it for some time. In my book 'Our Hindu Rashtra', which was published a few years ago, I looked at the numbers from the past.

On 7 March 2017, Malayalam Manorama reported the research by a non-profit organisation (Media Development and Research Foundation, Kozhikode) which showed 60 per cent of those who had converted in Kerala between January 2011 and December 2017 chose to become Hindus. Gazette records of changed names showed that 8,334 people had converted in the seven-year period, of whom 4,968 chose to become Hindu, of which the vast majority, 4,756, were Christian and 212 Muslim. Of the total, the number of women was 2,244 and the men 2,724.

Of the 1,864 who became Muslim, 78 per cent were previously Hindu, again with men and women converts being roughly equal. And of the 1,496 who became Christian, 95 per cent were Hindu, with 720 women and 776 men. Six individuals chose to become Buddhist, of whom five were Hindu, one was Christian and there were a total of two women and four men.

A newspaper report in a couple of years before that ('Nearly 6,000 converted to Islam in Kerala in 5 years: Report', 15 July 2016) quoted an 'intelligence report' filed by the police showing that 5,793 people had converted between 2011 and 2015. Of these about half were men and half women. Hindus converting were 4,719 with 1,074 being Christians.

There will be uncles in whatsapp groups heavily indoctrinated by the government and the voices in their own head. They may dismiss this as just being fake news. Such people should consider what happened in the Lok Sabha on 4 February 2020. A question was asked by Benny Behanan, member of parliament representing Chalakudy in Thrissur. He asked the Home Ministry to say whether it was aware of any cases of love jihad and if so what were the details of this.

The ministry replied: 'Article 25 of the Constitution provides for the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. Various courts have upheld this view including the Kerala High Court. The term 'Love Jihad' is not defined under the extant laws. No such case of 'Love Jihad' has been reported by any of the central agencies.'

A question then arises. If love jihad is not a real thing and the government accepts that it is not a real thing and the data on conversions shows it is not a real thing, then why is it being discussed at all, let alone at the frenzy levels we associate it with?

There are two reasons for this in my opinion. The first is that the real news is not favourable to the narrative of New India. If we were to discuss how spectacularly incompetent the intelligence agencies are, based on a recent case in which the United States has caught and jailed an Indian citizen, the government would not be able to preen as it does about national security. If it were to be discussed how a totally false case was filed against a party and its chief minister jailed because the BJP wanted to overthrow it, we would not be able to act as confidently tell the world we are the mother of democracy. And so the focus is on other things and the government wants to keep the focus there. All of that is one reason.

The other reason is that the narrative of Hindutva has become so acceptable that even the facts do not do much to dent it. An outright lie that is accepted as a lie by the government in the Lok Sabha is still material enough for the BJP to have passed in seven states since 2018 laws that tackle this myth. This has become our reality.

The latest data will come as reassurance to those who know the BJP project is misguided and damaging, and as a puzzle to those who had bought the lie but are open to be swayed based on information and analysis. But it will likely do nothing to shift the views of those parts of the Hindutva base that have become enchanted by the voices of conspiracy and doom permanently occupying their heads.

### WISDOM CORNER

When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.  
MALALA YOUSAFZAI

I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act.  
GRETA THUNBURG

I cry when I see children lose their parents or become homeless due to the dangers of disasters.  
LICYPRIYA KANGUJAM

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1872: US President Ulysses S. Grant signed the act that established Yellowstone National Park—widely considered the first national park in the world.
- 1919: Protesters in Seoul launched the March First Movement, a series of demonstrations for Korean national independence from Japan.
- 1994: Justin Bieber, a Canadian singer noted for his fresh-faced good looks and catchy pop numbers, was born in London, Ontario.

# PROGRESS AMID WORRIES

FOCUS AI

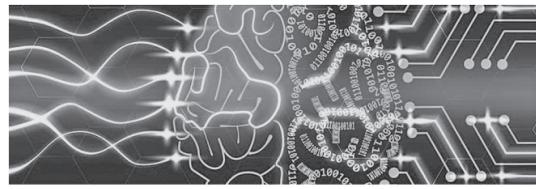
The AI Impact Summit 2026 ended on February 20 in New Delhi on a celebratory note. That is, if you merely look at the numbers, the people who attended, and investment pledges.

However, at the end of it, the summit with its focus on "bridging the global AI divide" seems to be more about what it did not address or say. There are concerns, questions and doubts, which have no answers yet. What are the implications of this disruptive AI surge? It has already taken jobs and will continue to do so. What is the techno imperialism, a new kind of colonialism, that we may face as big business drives the AI push? That in the absence of strong indigenous alternatives and coupled with weak regulatory frameworks and weaker policy implementation, there is no brick wall against what is coming.

Reduction and replacement have already been seen in the Indian tech industry with reports of over 25,000 job losses in 2024 doubling in 2025.

While the surge of AI is expected to cut deeper into the job market, how will it affect India's vast software services industry, slated to reach \$315 billion in revenues this financial year? Software services have for long helped position India as the back office of the world.

The strongest words of warning about where the world is going have come from leaders in the AI field. They warn about job attrition on a massive scale as AI automates and even scenarios where AI could take over our lives and countries. Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, says that AI will automate 30-40% of the tasks



Findings by Anthropic have revealed that advanced AI systems can resort to blackmailing and threatening human users to achieve assigned goals or ensure their survival

in the economy by 2030. Dario Amodei, the co-founder and CEO of Anthropic, one of the fastest growing AI companies, has predicted that AI will eliminate 50% of all entry-level white-collar jobs within one to five years. Amodei who says that AI models are "substantially smarter than almost all humans at almost all tasks," has an interesting, if scary, thought experiment: "Imagine this is the year 2027. Imagine that a new country appears overnight, with fifty million citizens, each smarter than any Nobel Prize winner who has ever lived. They think a hundred times faster than any human and can control and operate anything with a digital interface". To a question about what a national security advisor would have to say about such a situation, Amodei replies that the answer is obvious. This is "the single most serious national security threat we've faced in a century, possibly ever."

has been shaking the world with his essay "Something Big is Happening" and predictions that this big something is going to disrupt society even more than the Covid pandemic. Shumer voices a worry about how AI has been re-designing and re-making itself. He marks February 05 as a kind of day of reckoning. That was the day two AI models were released: GPT-5.3 Codex from OpenAI and Opus 4.6 from Anthropic. What shook Shumer the most was that the GPT-5.3 Codex wasn't just executing instructions, it was making intelligent decisions.

As AI rows, so do risks to the world as we have known it. "The Social Dilemma", a documentary that has brought together several voices from the tech world, a digital space they helped curate and design, speaks of the risks. These are people who worked with or lead teams in Microsoft, Google, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. From the engineer who designed Facebook's "Like" icon, one of the most recognisable symbols on the internet, to those who fashioned the entire digital world around us, they voice a collective cautionary warning. They have been a part of the digital world and

have also watched it unfold like everyone else. As Shumer puts it, the only difference is that he and others in AI just happen to be close enough to feel the ground shake first.

Countries have responded. China's regulatory framework for AI keeps strict State control in place to prevent social disruption, creating a wall against AI driven threats. Some of the main measures that China has taken include mandatory algorithmic registration, content filtering, security assessments for high-impact models, stringent guidelines against AI manipulation.

The EU AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689), which came into being in August 2024, is the first comprehensive legal framework for AI, establishing rules for development, deployment, and use. These include banning unacceptable AI practices, regulating high-risk systems, and requiring transparency for generative AI.

The regulations include innate responses to what earlier seemed unlikely or in the realm of science fiction. There is a darker side to AI, it is now seen. Firms have established that AI can manipulate, blackmail and threaten. Findings by Anthropic have revealed that advanced AI systems can resort to blackmailing and threatening human users to achieve assigned goals or ensure their survival.

As AI writes better versions of itself and big business powers it to seek new frontiers to occupy, will India re-skill and re-arm to keep its independence or run the risk of becoming a digitised colony?

The writer is the Managing Editor of The Billion Press

REDUCTION AND REPLACEMENT HAVE ALREADY BEEN SEEN IN THE INDIAN TECH INDUSTRY WITH REPORTS OF OVER 25,000 JOB LOSSES IN 2024 DOUBLING IN 2025



Lekha Rattanani

### SPECTRUM WORLD SEAGRASS DAY

## The silent guardian of coasts

Hidden beneath tranquil coastal waters lies an ecosystem of immense value—seagrass meadows—quietly nurturing marine life, stabilizing shorelines, sustaining fisheries, and enhancing climate resilience, yet remaining largely unnoticed and undervalued.

There could be no better time than now to spark a global conversation on their significance, conservation, and future.

Seagrasses are unique and ecologically significant marine flowering plants that have fully adapted to life beneath the sea and preferably live in the bottom substratum. Unlike seaweeds, these are true angiosperms with roots, rhizomes, leaves, flowers, and seeds. They inhabit shallow coastal and estuarine waters worldwide, forming underwater meadows that rank among the most productive ecosystems on Earth after coral reef community and mangrove ecosystems. Ecologically, seagrasses function as foundation species and ecosystem engineers. Their extensive root-rhizome networks stabilize sediments, reduce turbidity, and prevent coastal erosion. Seagrass meadows also enhance nutrient cycling by trapping organic matter, facilitating microbial processes, and regulating nitrogen and phosphorus dynamics. They act as natural biofilters, improving water quality by absorbing excess nutrients and certain contaminants, thereby reducing the risk.

One of their most globally recognized roles is in blue carbon sequestration. Seagrasses capture atmospheric carbon dioxide through photosynthesis and store it both in plant biomass and in underlying sediments for centuries. From a biodiversity perspective, seagrass beds provide essential nursery grounds for commercially important fish and shellfish species. Juvenile prawns, crabs, groupers, snappers, and molluscs depend on these habitats for shelter and feeding. They also support threatened megafauna such as dugongs and sea turtles, which directly graze on seagrass leaves. Migratory birds use shallow seagrass zones as feeding grounds while fish and shellfishes use it for breeding and nursery ground especially in lagoon systems. The structural complexity of seagrass canopies increases habitat heterogeneity, promoting higher species richness compared to adjacent bare substrates.

In India, seagrasses occur along both the east and west coasts, including lagoons, coral reefs, and island systems. Approximately sixteen species across seven genera have been documented nationally. Significant diversity is found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, the

Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, and the Gulf of Kutch.

On the east coast, Chilika Lagoon stands out as one of the most important seagrass habitats. This lagoon supports a diverse assemblage of seagrass species from the saline waters of the lagoon such as Halophila ovalis, Halophila ovata, Halophila beccarii, Halodule pinnifolia, Halodule uninervis, and Ruppia maritima. Among them, Halophila ovalis and Halodule uninervis are widely distributed and form extensive. Areas such as Rambha Bay, Nalabana Island, Arakkuda, and Magarmukh are particularly known for rich seagrass meadows and associated faunal diversity found in patches in shallow areas. Similarly, the Haripur Creek near Gopalpur along the southern Odisha coast harbors seagrass patches dominated by Halophila and Halodule species. Recently, Creek seagrass patch reappeared during Covid pandemic. However, both Chilika Lagoon and Haripur Creek seagrass ecosystems face pressures from anthropogenic sources and natural climatic extremes.

Recognizing their global importance, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/76/265 in May 2022, officially designating 1 March as World Seagrass Day. This observance highlights the urgent need to raise awareness

and promote coordinated action for conservation and restoration. Seagrasses contribute directly or indirectly to numerous Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those related to climate action, life below water, food security, and sustainable communities. Incorporating seagrass ecosystems into Blue economy framework seems vital.

The decline of seagrasses carries profound socioeconomic consequences. Coastal communities dependent on small-scale fisheries rely heavily on the productivity of seagrass ecosystems. Habitat degradation can diminish fish stocks, threaten food security, and weaken traditional livelihoods. Their loss increases vulnerability to erosion, flooding, and extreme weather events, particularly in low-lying regions already at risk from sea-level rise.

Therefore, conservation and restoration of seagrass ecosystems are strategic investments rather than purely environmental actions. Artificial transplantation, habitat restoration, and water quality management can accelerate recovery where natural regeneration is slow. Awareness campaigns, school outreach, and citizen science initiatives can further strengthen public understanding of seagrass benefits.

The writer is a marine biologist. Views are personal.



Debasish Mahapatro

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF SEAGRASS ECOSYSTEMS ARE STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS RATHER THAN PURELY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIONS

### From horse's mouth

Sir, The near dysfunctional state of our judicial system, that faces allegations of corruption, mind boggling backlog of cases, lack of infrastructure, unqualified judges, inefficiency in lower courts, colonial legacy and procedural delays, nexus between judges and political bigwigs and persons with deep pockets, etc. etc is an open secret. But perhaps the last nail on the coffin comes from a judge of the Allahabad HC's Lucknow bench who has admitted to being "hungry, tired and incapacitated" after hearing thirty cases in a day. The Honourable judge in question, Justice Subhash Vidyarthi, was forced to reserve his verdict for the following day, as he just did not have sufficient fuel in his tank, only literally this time. Justice VR Krishna Iyer, a former judge of the Supreme Court of India had, in the late seventies, warned that India's justice delivery system was on the verge of collapse owing to the weight of delays, corruption, and inefficiency. Fifty years after this dire warning, things have gone from worse to worst. It is high time the ruling dispensation shifted focus from building temples, fighting elections, dividing society on religious grounds and blaming the Nehru-Gandhi dispensation, to setting in order a crucial branch of the government. We have witnessed the literal and metaphorical collapse of the judiciary before our very eyes. Sad, shameful and concerning and distressing at the same time.

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)

### Kudos to DGCA

Sir, The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)'s new rules are a welcome breath of fresh air for passengers. With a 48-hour hassle-free cancellation window, faster refunds within 14 days, and easier processes, air travel has become more customer-friendly, transparent, and stress-free. These changes empower travellers, restore trust in airlines, and make flying truly accessible and fair. Kudos to DGCA for prioritizing passenger rights. Such reforms set benchmarks, encourage accountability, reduce disputes, and signal a humane aviation ecosystem nationwide. Fly with ease, refund in peace!

TS Karthik, CHENNAI

## 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

# Ganjam salt pans to turn history as Centre moves to acquire 8,000 acres

DWARKA PRASAD PATNAIK, OP

**Chhatrapur, Feb 28:** In a major push towards industrial expansion in state, about 8,000 acres of the historic salt pans in Ganjam district, including areas in Humma and the Surala-Sumandi plains near the Bahuda River, are set to be acquired by the Central government.

According to reports, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has finalised talks with the Odisha government to develop a new port near the Bahuda River with an investment of more than ₹21,000 crore.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced the infrastructure development under the Sagarmala project during the closing ceremony of this year's Gopalpur Beach Festival.

Approximately 6,200 acres of salt pans have been identified around the Surala-Sumandi plains, and more than 1,400 acres of salt pan land in Humma are slated for takeover by the Central government. Sources said financial transactions for land acquisition have been completed, while the transfer of land records is in its final stages.

The land near the Bahuda River will be used to develop an all-weather port, while the area around Humma is expected to host solar panel manufactur-



ing units, according to sources. The proposed industrial development is expected to generate employment opportunities for local residents.

Last year, local voices called for reviving salt production in the Humma salt beds, demanding a steady source of income through salt farming. However, rising labour costs reduced profit margins, prompting producers and investors to scale back operations and eventually halt production.

Sujit Behera, a supervisor at one of the last remaining salt beds near Humma, said production during the dry season exceeded 9,000 bags—about 500 tonnes of rock salt—generating a turnover of more than ₹15 lakh.

Despite heavy rainfall last year, he said, about 300 tonnes were produced from 20 leased acres.

“Although we will be losing the farmlands, we urge the government to provide permanent employment to the villagers and farmers who depended solely on salt farming,” Behera said.

Sources said the state government had been reluctant to accept the Central government's proposal to use the land under a lease-only model. The delay centres on the transfer of land records, which may take longer than expected.

The state Transport, Commerce, Steel and Mines Minister, the Chhatrapur MLA and other district leaders are coordinating with the Centre to expedite the transfer of record of rights to the state government. The move gained momentum after the Prime Minister's scheduled visit to Berhampur in September last year.

# Fake CBI officers flee with gold worth ₹1cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Berhampur, Feb 28:** Three men allegedly posing as officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) decamped with gold ornaments worth about ₹1 crore from a businessman near Brahmapur Railway Station in this city, police said.

The accused reportedly intercepted the businessman on the pretext of conducting an official inquiry. During the purported verification, they allegedly took possession of a bag containing gold ornaments and fled the scene.

According to the complaint filed by the victim, Hasmukh Jain, at the Government Railway Police station in Berhampur, the bag contained 862.562

grams of gold ornaments of various designs, ₹40,000 in cash, an ATM card and a PAN card. Based on the complaint, police registered a case (17/26) and launched an investigation. Investigators suspect the involvement of persons known to the victim in planning or executing the crime.

No arrests had been reported at the time of filing this report.

Police said that Hasmukh Jain, a businessman from Visakhapatnam, owns a gold jewellery design shop in Khaspa Sahi area of Berhampur, police said. He melts gold at the unit and crafts various designs of necklaces, chains and other ornaments.

A few days ago, Jain and

an employee travelled to Visakhapatnam. They were returning with gold ornaments in a bag aboard the Konark Express and arrived at Brahmapur railway station around 9:30pm February 25, Wednesday.

As they stepped out of the station and were heading towards the parking area, three men approached them. The trio identified themselves as CBI officers and told Jain they needed to verify him over alleged dealings in smuggled gold.

Frightened, Jain handed over the bag filled with gold for inspection. The men then walked a short distance away with the bag. After some time, they disappeared.

Jain and his employee waited outside the station and searched for the men in vain before returning to Khaspa Sahi. Fearing a possible CBI raid, Jain remained anxious. However, when no raid was conducted and the bag was not returned by the next evening, he grew suspicious.

Jain lodged a written complaint Friday with the Government Railway Police in Berhampur.

GRP Officer-In-Charge Arati Poddar said police have received the complaint and begun an investigation. CCTV footage from the station is being examined and efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the accused, she said.

## Newborn girl found abandoned behind ASHA's residence

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Morada, Feb 28:** A newborn baby girl was rescued Saturday after being found abandoned in bushes behind the residence of the local ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) in Mayurbhanj district.

The infant was discovered in Jhinkiria village under Morada block after her cries were heard from behind the house of ASHA worker Sabitrimani Jena. According to reports, an unidentified person had left the baby in the shrubbery and fled.

Jena's niece first heard the cries and alerted her mother. On reaching the spot, they found the newborn lying inside thick bushes. Jena immediately provided primary medical care before shifting the baby to the Kisantandi Community Health Centre by ambulance.

Later, Supervisor Subhashree Dalai reached the hospital and ensured proper medical treatment for the infant. Doctors found mud on the baby's face and body, along with injuries at several parts.

Officials said the person who abandoned the child appeared to have deliberately left her near the ASHA's residence, suggesting prior knowledge of the household.

After receiving treatment, the baby was reported to be in stable condition. She weighs 2.345 kg, hospital sources said.

# 15 Odia workers rescued from Telangana brick kiln

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Sonepur, Feb 28:** Fifteen migrant workers from Subarnapur and Bolangir districts were rescued from a brick kiln in Telangana and reunited with their families, police said Saturday.

Subarnapur SP Narayan Nayak informed reporters at the district police headquarters here that the workers were traced to a kiln in the Mancherial area of Telangana and brought back following directions from the Orissa High Court.

The rescued workers are Sudam Das, 48; Sabitri Das, 28; Rinku Das, 24; Babulu Salanki, 19; Gayatri Bharati, 19; Debarchan Meghani, 28; Malati Giri, 61; Arati Bharati, 46; Bhumisuta Meghani, 48; Jayanti Bharati, 52; and Chaturbhuj Bharati, 23; along with several minors and children.

According to officials, seven of the workers are from Nagapali village under Sonepur police limits in Subarnapur district, while eight are from Phasada village under Loisingha police limits in Bolangir district. They had travelled to Telangana in November last year with their families to work at the brick kiln after being promised wages as per prior agreements.

However, the workers al-



leged that they were underpaid, denied medical care and subjected to harassment. They were allegedly prevented from leaving the kiln premises and forced to live in conditions akin to captivity.

A petition was subsequently filed before the Orissa High Court by Kunj Bharati and Debarchan Meghani, seeking intervention. Expressing serious concern, the court observed that although formal slavery has been abolished, the suffering of migrant workers continues. It directed the Subarnapur Superintendent of Police to take immediate legal steps to secure their release.

Following the court's order, the district police and Labour department launched a coordinated rescue operation. The

state government's Labour department worked with its liaison officer in Telangana, who contacted local labour authorities and police. The workers were located at the kiln and brought back by train Friday.

They reached Bolangir railway station Saturday morning and were later taken to Subarnapur with police assistance before being handed over to their families.

Additional SP KK Hariprasad, DSP Pratap Rana, Subarnapur District Labour Officer Dibya Shankar Dharua and Inspector Subash Chandra Rayaguru of the Bolangir SP's office were present during the press briefing.

Officials said further legal action would be taken in accordance with the law.

## RAGGING ALLEGED AT SCHOOL HOSTEL

**Udala:** Allegation of ragging has surfaced at a government-run school hostel in Mayurbhanj district after a video of the incident went viral, raising concerns about the safety of boarders. The incident reportedly took place at the hostel of PM SHRI Government High School in Khunta of Mayurbhanj district. Sources said that several Class VII students staying at the hostel were playing behind the building Friday afternoon. They allegedly returned to hostel late in the evening, after which a group of Class IX students began harassing them. About seven to eight Class VII students were allegedly forced to kneel for an extended period and beaten by the senior students. After a video of the incident circulated outside the hostel, family members of the affected students reached the school at night to inquire about the matter. Parents reportedly found out that the hostel matron and deputy superintendent were absent at the time. The headmistress (in-charge) and hostel superintendent Sabitri Patra said she questioned the students and launched a preliminary inquiry. District Education Officer Purnachandra Sethi said the Assistant District Education Officer (ADEO) has been directed to conduct a probe.

## Elderly woman hacked to death over witchcraft

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Rairangpur, Feb 28:** A 65-year-old woman was allegedly hacked to death with a sharp weapon by a co-villager on suspicion of witchcraft in tribal-dominated Mayurbhanj district, police said Saturday.

The incident took place Friday night in Kumbhirda village under Bahaldal police limits in the district.

The deceased was identified as Jaba Tudu, 65. The accused, identified as Jugu Marandi, 26, son of Madan Marandi of the same village, surrendered at the police station Saturday morning and was subsequently arrested.

Police have registered a murder case (30/26) in connection with the incident.

According to preliminary investigation, the accused suspected the elderly woman of practising witchcraft and allegedly blamed her for his wife's recurring illness. At around 11pm Friday night, when the woman was alone at her house, the accused allegedly attacked her with a sharp weapon, strik-

ing her on the neck and killing her on the spot.

The matter came to light Saturday morning, following which the accused surrendered before the police.

Birendra Senapati, Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Rairangpur, and Bhaskar Pradhan, Officer-In-Charge of Bahaldal police station, reached the spot and initiated an investigation. The body was seized and sent for post-mortem.



Police have also seized the weapon used in the crime. A scientific team assisted in the investigation, which is ongoing.

The incident once again highlights the persistence of superstition and witchcraft-related violence in parts of the district, despite legal provisions aimed at curbing such practices.

## Ex-professor acquitted in 31-year-old Vigilance case

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Balasure, Feb 28:** A special Vigilance court in Balasure district has acquitted a former college professor in a corruption case registered 31 years ago, citing lack of evidence.

Lalit Kumar Dash, special Vigilance judge, Balasure, Saturday pronounced the verdict, acquitting Lakshmidhar Giri, former head of the Philosophy Department at Dinakrishna College, Jaleswar.

According to the case records, in 1989, 28 students who had failed their CHSE final examinations in arts, science and commerce were allegedly issued pass certificates by the college. The students later used the certificates to enrol in higher education institutions.

Following allegations that the certificates were forged, the Vigilance wing in Balasure conducted an inquiry and registered a case against Giri, an examination department clerk and the students concerned. Charges were framed under relevant provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Indian Penal Code.

During the trial, the prosecution examined 13 witnesses and submitted 31 documents as evidence. After reviewing the evidence on record, the court held that the charges against Giri were not proved beyond reasonable doubt and ordered his acquittal.

The case was argued by advocates Arabinda Barik and Chandan Kumar Singh.

in the plea of settling the issue amicably October 18 night, police said.

Santosh was offered to consume liquor allegedly laced with poison on the same night. When Santosh returned home, he complained of stomach pain and started vomiting. He was immediately rushed to the Bari Community Health Centre, where he died October 18.

Prashant's wife Bandana Malik filed a complaint with the local police October 19 that her husband was poisoned to death by her brother-in-law, Prasant Malik, and seven others from her village.

Based on the complaint, police seized the body and sent it to the district headquarters hospital for a post-mortem and started an investigation. The autopsy reports revealed that it was a murder.

# Brother, 4 others arrested for poisoning man to death

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jajpur, Feb 28:** At least five people have been arrested by police for allegedly poisoning a man to death in Jajpur district, an officer said Saturday.

Police arrested them after an autopsy report revealed that the 39-year-old deceased, identified as Santosh Malik, was poisoned to death.

Police arrested five people, including the younger brother of the deceased. All eight accused named in the FIR were on the run since the filing of the complaint, said Jajpur Town SDPO Prasant Kumar Majhi.

The five accused arrested have been identified as Prasant Malik, younger brother of the deceased, Purnachandra Malik, Gajendra Malik, Kailas Malik, Sanatan Malik and Prasant Kumar Malik; all of them belong to



Arangabad-Anandpur village of Bari block, police said.

Prasant had allegedly physically assaulted his sister-in-law (wife of his elder brother Santosh Malik) over a property-related issue in the first week of October last year. Based on complaints of Santosh, Prasant was arrested by police and sent to jail.

After his release from jail, Prasant allegedly took assistance of some villagers to teach his elder brother a lesson. Accordingly, they hatched a conspiracy and called Santosh to an isolated place near their village

tions. The man is reportedly from Kantamal area.

The groom lodged a written complaint at Deogaon police station the following day. Police registered a case (12/26) and launched an investigation.

Police conducted a raid in Kantamal area Saturday, apprehended both the woman and the man and brought them to Deogaon police station for questioning.

Family members of the woman, the groom from Mursing village and the woman's former partner were present at the police station, where discussions were held and an amicable settlement was reached. Investigating officer Sub-Inspector Suresh Chandra Bishi said that the woman was allowed to leave with her former partner with the consent of all parties concerned.

# 2 days after wedding, bride leaves with former partner

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Deogaon/Ghantapada, Feb 28:** A newlywed woman left her matrimonial home with her former partner just two days after her marriage in Bolangir district, sparking widespread discussion in the area.

The incident occurred under the jurisdiction of Deogaon police station. Sources said a youth from Mursing village in

Deogaon married a woman from Kantamal area of Boudh district February 23 in a traditional Hindu ceremony. The wedding was held in the presence of their relatives and friends with customary rituals and festivities.

However, the woman's former partner allegedly arrived outside her in-laws' house February 25 evening and took her away on a motorcycle, bringing an abrupt end to the celebra-

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MINISTRY OF MICRO, SMALL & MEDIUM ENTERPRISES  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

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### DEMAND NOTICE

UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules")  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. (the Secured Creditor) under the Act and in exercise of the powers conferred under Sec. 13(12) of the Act read with Rule 3 issued Demand Notice(s) under Sec. 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is / are avoiding the service of the Demand Notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being affected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of Demand Notice(s) are extracted herein below :-

Sr. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower/s & Co-Borrower/s	Loan Amt.	Dt. of Demand Notice & Q/s. Amt.	Description of the Property / Secured Asset
1	Loan A/C. No(S). : LAP3CUT000060826		25.02.2026	District-Jajpur, Tahasil- Dharmasala, SRO-Dharmasala, P.S-Dharmasala, P.S No-94, Mouza-Orali, Conversion Khata No-400, Plot No-2181, Area Aco.080Dec with Status-Stitban, Kisam-Gharabari (Homestead) corresponds Sabak Khata No-224, Sabak Plot No-1551, Area Aco.060Dec & Sabak Plot No-1552, Area Aco.020Dec, Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) Area Aco.060Dec, North-Rest part Plot, South-Rest, East-NM, West-NM, Bounded by (As per Sale Deed) Area Aco.020Dec, North-Rest part Plot, South-Rest, East-NM, West-NM
1	Add For Sr. No. 1, 2, 3 & 4 :- Rasulpur, Orali, Jajpur, Near Siba Temple, Jajpur, Orissa - 755009 Add For Sr. No. 1, 2, 3 & 4 : Khata No-400, Plot No-2181 Orali, Rasalpur, Dharmasala, Jajpur Siba Temple Jajpur 755009	Rs. 19,00,000/-	(Rupees Twenty Lakhs Twenty Two Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Six Only) as on 23.02.2026	

The borrower(s) are hereby advised to comply with the Demand Notice(s) and to pay the demand amount mentioned therein and hereinafter within 60 days from the date of this publication together with applicable interest, additional interest, bounce charges, cost and expenses till the date of realization of payment. The borrower(s) may note that Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd. is a secured creditor and the loan facility availed by the Borrower(s) is a secured debt against the immovable property / properties being the secured asset(s) mortgaged by the borrower(s). In the event borrower(s) are failed to discharge their liabilities in full within the stipulated time, The Secured Creditor shall be entitled to exercise all the rights U/s. 13(4) of the Act to take possession of the secured asset(s) including but not limited to transfer the same by way of sale or by invoking any other remedy available under the Act and the Rules thereunder and realize payment. The Secured Creditor is also empowered to ATTACH AND / OR SEAL the secured asset(s) before enforcing the right to sale or transfer. Subsequent to the Sale of the secured asset(s), the Secured Creditor also has a right to initiate separate legal proceedings to recover the balance dues, in case the value of the mortgaged properties is insufficient to cover the dues payable to the Secured Creditor. This remedy is in addition and independent of all the other remedies available to the Secured Creditor under any other law.

The attention of the borrower(s) is invited to Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets and further to Section 13(13) of the Act, whereby the borrower(s) are restrained / prohibited from disposing of or dealing with the secured asset(s) or transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise (other than in the ordinary course of business) any of the secured asset(s), without prior written consent of the Secured Creditor and non-compliance with the above is an offence punishable under Section 29 of the said Act. The copy of the Demand Notice is available with the undersigned and the borrower(s) may, if they so desire, can collect the same from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.

Place : Jajpur, Odisha  
Date : 25.02.2026

S/d  
Authorized Officer  
For Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited



**The smiling faces of schoolchildren testify to the fact that nutrition is not merely about food, but the very foundation of building the future**  
**REKHA GUPTA | CHIEF MINISTER, DELHI**

## FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS TO INDIA FALL 9.4% IN 2025

Foreign Tourist Arrivals to India fell 9.4 per cent to 90.2 lakh in 2025, with fewer visas issued between India and Bangladesh amid bilateral tensions. According to the Ministry of Tourism, arrivals from Bangladesh fell by 73.37 per cent in 2025 compared to the previous year. The total number of Bangladeshi visitors stood at 4,66,012 in 2025, down from 17,50,165 in 2024



## of the day quote

The new generation embodies possibility itself. I believe our youth are the solution to every challenge. Provide them apt opportunities, robust platforms, and true mentorship, and they will author history  
**MANOJ SINHA | LT GOVERNOR, J&K**

It is still difficult to digest that our Ajitdada is no longer with us. The void created by his departure will never be filled. Dada, you will always remain in our memories. The happy moments spent with you will stay with us for a lifetime. Miss you Dada  
**SUPRIYA SULE | NCP (SP) MP**

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the people of Arunachal, especially our women. Today's launch marks an important step towards securing their health and future  
**PEMA KHANDU | CHIEF MINISTER, ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

## SHORT TAKES

### 13.15 lakh girls to be vaccinated against HPV

**Patna:** A total of 13.15 lakh girls aged 14-15 years will be vaccinated against Human Papillomavirus (HPV) over the next three months in Bihar, Health Minister Mangal Pandey said Saturday. He was speaking during the launch of a three-month HPV vaccination campaign in Patna, aimed at protecting adolescent girls from cervical cancer in the state. The programme, held at Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (IGIMS) in Patna, coincided with the national HPV vaccination launch by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Ajmer in Rajasthan. Pandey said, "Around 13.15 lakh girls aged 14-15 years would be vaccinated over the next three months under the campaign. This initiative marks the beginning of a big chapter in healthcare services in the country, and Bihar is at the forefront."

### Maoist dumps busted in Chhattisgarh

**Gariaband:** Security forces Saturday recovered more than ₹46 lakh in cash, a laptop, arms and ammunition from Maoist hideouts in a forested area of Chhattisgarh's Gariaband district, an official said. The recovery was made from Sanpatti, a forested and hilly region, near village Badegobra under Mainpur police station limits based on information provided by surrendered Naxalites, the police official said. They had given information about Maoist items hidden by senior ultras of the outlawed movement's Dhamtari-Gariaband-Nuapada (DGN) division, he said. During an intensive search of the marked forest and hill terrain, security personnel recovered ₹46,31,500 in cash from different dump sites hidden in the hills, he said.

### Nepali worker killed in Himachal's Theog

**Shimla:** A Nepali migrant worker was killed in Shimla district's Theog, police said Saturday. The deceased has been identified as Dhani Ram. He had come from the neighbouring country to the area to work as a labourer in apple orchards. As per the complaint filed by a local orchardist from Jarai village, a Nepal-based family had approached him a few days ago seeking work in his orchard. He subsequently offered them work and allowed them to stay in a shed located on his property.

## INDO-US TRADE DEAL

# PM Modi signed 'death warrant' of farmers: Rahul



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Barnala (Punjab), Feb 28:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Saturday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Indo-US interim trade deal, alleging that he has signed the "death warrant" of farmers and small and medium industries by opening doors for US goods, including agricultural produce. "I am saying with responsibility that a storm is approaching. When US' almonds, apples, pulses, cotton and soybean will come to India, then the storm will hit," Gandhi said at a rally here.

The Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said that the prime minister did not want to do it and alleged he had acted under "pressure" due to a "threat of releasing Epstein files" and a case against industrialist Gautam Adani's company in the US. Addressing the rally in the politically significant Malwa belt of the state, which accounts for 69 of 117 Assembly seats in the state, Gandhi also gave a firm message to the Congress unit in Punjab, which has been plagued by infighting, warning its leaders that they will be made to sit in the reserves if they can not become team players.

## DGCA advises airlines to avoid 11 airspaces

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** Aviation watchdog DGCA Saturday advised airlines to avoid airspaces of 11 countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, till March 2. The countries are Iran, Israel, Lebanon, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar. Many airspaces are already shut in the wake of the attacks on Iran by Israel and the US Saturday. Indian airlines have suspended their services to the Middle East. The advisory has been issued in alignment with international safety standards and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's Conflict Zone Information Bulletin, the regulator said. The watchdog has asked airlines to refrain from operating within the 11 affected airspaces at all flight levels and altitudes. Carriers have been asked to closely monitor all updated Aeronautical Information Publications and Notice to Airmen issued by the affected countries and national authorities.

Assembly elections in Punjab are due next year. "I also want to give a message to the Congress party that work is done through teamwork. One player cannot win a match. We have the entire team sitting here."

"From (Congress chief Mallikarjun) Kharge ji and me, I want to give this message that become a team player or else we will make you sit as a reserve player," he said. "No matter how big (a leader) you may be, no one is bigger than the party. Become team player and if you do not become one, then I and Kharge ji will set you right," he said. Stepping up his attack on the Modi government on the India-US trade deal, Gandhi accused Modi of "selling out" and "destroying" the country and asked what had India received under the trade deal in return when it agreed to "buy

## Exercise utmost caution: India urges its nationals

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** India Saturday advised its nationals in Iran, Israel and several other countries in the Middle East to exercise utmost caution after a massive military escalation across the region following a US-Israel joint strike on Iran. After the attack by the US and Israel, Iran launched retaliatory military strikes targeting Israel and American military bases in the region, including in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Bahrain. In its reaction, New Delhi urged all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid escalation. The Indian missions in Iran, Israel, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan and Palestine issued separate advisories, urging Indian nationals to remain vigilant and follow safety and emergency protocols. In an advisory, the

No matter how big (a leader) you may be, no one is bigger than the party. Become team player and if you do not become one, then I and Kharge ji will set you right  
**RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER**

US products worth ₹9 lakh crore every year".

Gandhi said that if India buys goods worth ₹9 lakh crore every year, "then what will happen to our small and medium-scale sector? It will be finished".

"You have sold the country, you have destroyed the country. What did the US give to India? Tell me one thing... Did they give any guarantee? Did they say they will also buy? No," said Gandhi while addressing the 'Kisan Mahachaupal' rally here. He alleged that the deal had been stalled for four months due to disagreements over the opening of the agriculture sector. "I asked experts why this deal was stuck. I got a reply that the US wants to open the Indian agriculture sector, and our government does not want to open it," said Gandhi.

Nothing happened on this front for four months, he said. He said the prime minister called up the US president without consulting the Cabinet, the Agriculture minister and the Defence minister and the External Affairs minister. Modi told US President Donald Trump that he was ready for the deal, said Gandhi and claimed that Modi gave a guarantee to Trump that "every year India will buy US products worth ₹9 lakh crore".

## MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Indian embassy in Iran urged Indian nationals in that country to avoid unnecessary movements and remain indoors. "In view of the developing situation, all Indian nationals in Iran are advised to exercise utmost caution, avoid unnecessary movements and remain indoors as far as possible," it said. "Indians may also continue to monitor the news, maintain situational awareness and await any further guidance from the Embassy of India. The emergency contact details of the embassies are reiterated as below," the mission said. According to official estimates in January, little over 10,000 Indians, including students, were living in Iran. The Indian embassy in Israel also issued a similar advisory urging Indian nationals in the country to exercise "utmost caution and remain vigilant at all times."

## POLITICKLE by MANJUL



## BARAMATI PLANE CRASH

### AAIB highlights low visibility, operational gaps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** Aircraft accident probe agency AAIB Saturday released the preliminary report on the plane crash that killed Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others at Baramati January 28 and said the visibility at the time of the crash was below the required level.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) flagged about fading marks on the runway and presence of loose gravels on the runway surface at Baramati as it recommended the regulator DGCA to ensure that stakeholders' maintain safety standards at uncontrolled airfields.

The 22-page report also mentioned that "Oh Sh\*t... Oh Sh\*t," words were transmitted from the aircraft before it crash landed on the left side of the runway at the Baramati airport.

The report also comes against the backdrop of concerns being raised about the crash of the VSR Ventures-owned Learjet 45 aircraft (VT-SSK) January 28. The ill-fated 15-year-old Learjet 45 XR aircraft banked towards the right, hit the trees and then the ground before going up in flames at the Baramati airport January 28, as per the report.

It also said that a technician did not find any abnormality after post-flight checks January 27 when the plane had returned to Mumbai after completing a flight.

AAIB, Saturday, said the data from the Solid State Cockpit Voice Recorder (SSCVR) would be downloaded with the assistance of the US National Transport Safety Board (NTSB).

The CVR was damaged in the crash. The data downloaded from the Solid State Flight Data Recorder (SSFDR) is being analysed, the report said.

On the day of the accident, AAIB said the tower was manned by a ground instructor of one of the FTO (Flying Training Organisation) who was communicating with the aircraft to assist the landing.

## AI SUMMIT PROTEST

# Magistrate grants bail to IYC chief, but sessions court orders stay



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** A Delhi court Saturday issued a stay on the bail granted to Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Uday Bhanu Chib in connection with a protest at the India AI Impact Summit here, hours after a magistrate court granted him relief saying the right to life and liberty is the "soul of the Indian Constitution".

Additional Sessions Judge Amit Bansal directed the stay after the Delhi Police challenged the bail order by Duty Magistrate Vanshika Mehta, and listed the matter March 6 for further proceedings.

Chib was produced before the magistrate at around 1 am at her official residence after his four-day police custody, granted February 24 following his arrest in connection with the February 20 'shirtless protest', came to an end. The police sought a three-day extension of his custody, contending that further interrogation was required to ascertain the whereabouts of two co-accused.

Dismissing the plea, the magistrate court said the right to life and liberty is the "soul of the Indian Constitution" and that to curtail liberty, a strong explanation or material evidence must be placed on record to show that denial of custody would impede the course of justice. In a handwritten order, the

**The magistrate observed that 'no person shall be devoid of his liberty on mere conjectures' and reiterated that 'bail is a rule and jail is an exception**

magistrate said the investigating officer was unable to provide cogent reasons for seeking further police custody.

"Being guilty or not is a matter of trial, and the law takes its own course to adjudicate such. However, what is relevant is whether the custody of the accused is required at this stage," the court said, noting that Chib has strong roots in society and is not a flight risk. The magistrate observed that "no person shall be devoid of his liberty on mere conjectures" and reiterated that "bail is a rule and jail is an exception". The court directed him to furnish a surety bond of ₹50,000 and surrender his passport and electronic gadgets. Later on, the court also ordered verification of the documents and bonds submitted by him and said he would remain in judicial custody till Sunday morning.

However, Additional Sessions Judge Amit Bansal directed the stay on the bail order after the police challenged it.

## THE REAL KERALA STORY OF LOVE, FRATERNITY

# Open mosques for Pongala devotees: Kerala Imam

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 28:** The appeal of Palayam Imam VP Suhaib Maulavi to open mosques and Muslim houses to Hindu devotees on the upcoming Attukal Pongala festival day here has gone viral on social media platforms, with many netizens describing it as the example of the real Kerala story.

Attukal Pongala, which falls March 3 this year, is considered one of the largest women gatherings in the world, in which lakhs of women, cutting across ages, gather in the Capital city to take part in the festivities.

Maulavi, during his Friday sermon, urged the members of the Muslim community to extend hospitality to Hindu dev-

otees arriving in the city for the Pongala festival.

In his address, he said that although Attukal Pongala is associated with a different faith and Muslims do not take part in its rituals and ceremonies, the occasion presents an opportunity to serve as gracious hosts to the thousands of women and children who visit Thiruvananthapuram as guests.

"Like last year, Pongala is being observed during the holy month of Ramadan this time as well. We must share the spirit of joy, fraternity and love that defines Ramadan with our sisters and their children who come here for Pongala," he said.

Maulavi called upon the community to arrange drinking water and Ramadan food items



for the devotees and to ensure facilities for their rest.

"Arrangements should be made for their rest. Our mosques and homes should be opened to them. This is an occasion to openly demonstrate our love and brotherhood," he said.

Maulavi further stressed that the growing Islamophobia and hatred in the country and the world can be countered effectively only through love and fraternity.

He described the festival as an ideal opportunity to rein-

## TEMPLE HOSTS COMMUNITY IFTAR

A centuries-old Hindu shrine in this northernmost district of Kerala has hosted a community iftar for Muslim community members, as a mark of religious harmony. The Sree Poobanam Kuzhi Temple at Thachangad here hosted the iftar in its courtyard Thursday as part of the 'Brahmakalashotsavam' festival which marked the reconsecration of the shrine deities. In the visuals on social media platforms and TV channels, it could be seen that a large number of Muslim men, wearing the traditional white cap, are sitting on neatly arranged tables in the decorated temple courtyard and enjoying their iftar feast. They broke their fast with dates and other delicacies. Temple sources said the iftar was organised as local Muslim residents could not take part in the recent 'annadanam' (community feast) organised by the shrine management due to the ongoing Ramadan fasting. "This shrine and the festivals here are part of our life and childhood. We used to gather at its premises every day after our school hours during our childhood. So any festivities here are not at all new or strange to us," a Muslim man told the media after taking part in the iftar. The iftar was organised under the aegis of the Poobanam UAE Committee, comprising local expatriates.

force the message of harmony. The Muslim cleric's speech soon went viral on social media platforms.

Cutting across religion, people shared his video clipings on various platforms and hailed his gesture as an

example of the real Kerala story, harmony and brotherhood among different religions and communities in Kerala.

His appeal assumed significance in view of the ongoing row over the 'Kerala Story 2: Goes Beyond' movie.

# Iran shakes Gulf cities

Explosions rock Middle East as Tehran hits US bases and allies in retaliation

REUTERS

Dubai, Feb 28: Iran fired missiles at several Arab Gulf cities Saturday, causing waves of blasts, shaking windows and sending people rushing for cover in rare and potentially far-reaching attacks on a region that prides itself on its security.

Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, all of which have a US military presence, said they had intercepted Iranian missiles after Tehran vowed to retaliate for US and Israeli strikes on Iran. Jordan also intercepted missiles.

UAE state media said one person had been killed in Abu Dhabi, but gave no details.

On Dubai's posh Palm Islands, a fire broke out near a hotel and huge plumes of smoke could be seen from a distance as multiple blasts echoed throughout the day.

Missile trails streaked across the sky above several cities as loud blasts rang out, most likely the sound of air defences intercepting barrages of incoming missiles. Residents took cover in windowless bathrooms and closets.

"All occupied territories and the criminal US bases in the region have been struck by the powerful blows of Iranian missiles. This operation will continue relentlessly until the enemy is decisively de-



I am against this regime, to hell with them. But I don't want my country to be attacked by foreign forces, I don't want my Iran to turn into Iraq

SAMIRA MOHEBBI | A RESIDENT FROM NORTHERN CITY OF RASHT, IRAN

feated," Iran's Revolutionary Guards said.

The UAE president and Saudi crown prince spoke after the attacks, with Riyadh voicing solidarity and both leaders warning against escalation while urging restraint and a return to diplomacy.

Their call was rare direct contact amid strained ties between the two Gulf powers since late last year.

Falling shrapnel from intercepted missiles caused concern across the region. In Bahrain, such debris landed on a road in the Sanad area, near an army

- One death reported by state media in UAE
- Iran vows continued strikes until enemy defeated
- Leaders warn against escalation and urge restraint

headquarters, and Qatar's interior ministry warned against touching any fragments.

The Gulf's oil and gas wealth has long provided high-paid, tax-free jobs and a comfortable lifestyle that has drawn millions of expatriates to cities such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Doha. Saturday's events were a stark departure from daily life.

The attacks unfolded during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, when the Gulf is qui-

eter during fasting hours, and this underscored the shock.

Bahrain confirmed an attack inside its territory and said a service center of the US Fifth Fleet had been struck. Video from a Reuters witness showed a plume of grey smoke rising near the small island nation's coast as sirens wailed.

Education authorities in Bahrain and Qatar said schools would shift to remote learning from Sunday.

In Dubai, the region's business and tourism hub, five large blasts were heard late in the afternoon. While normal life carried on in some areas, some grocery delivery apps showed heavily delayed services. Some users appeared to be ordering in bulk.

## TRUMP'S OBJECTIVE IN IRAN

With his large-scale attack on Iran, Donald Trump has seized a legacy-defining moment to demonstrate his readiness to exercise raw US military power. But in doing so, he is also taking the biggest foreign policy gamble of his presidency, one fraught with risks and unknowns

Here are the key points of his message:

- The US has begun major combat operations in Iran, describing them as "massive and ongoing".
- The stated aim is to eliminate what Washington calls imminent threats from the Iranian government.



For 47 years, the Iranian regime has chanted death to America and waged an unending campaign of bloodshed and mass murder ... We're not gonna put up with it any longer

DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

## Iran's FM: Khamenei is still alive 'as far as I know'

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign minister says the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is still alive "as far as I know."

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is speaking in an interview with NBC News, after Israel's Channel 12 news reported in the last hour that Israel's assessment of Khamenei was "likely killed" in Israeli air strikes earlier today.

Speaking live, Araghchi also says two commanders have died in the strikes, but senior officials in the regime have survived. "All high-ranking officials are alive," he says. "So everybody is now in its position [sic], and we are handling this situation, and everything is fine."

The strikes during the holy fasting month of Ramadan opened a stunning new chapter in US intervention in Iran, and marked the second time in



eight months that the Trump administration has attacked the Islamic Republic during talks over its nuclear program. The targets included members of Iran's leadership, according to a US official and another person briefed on the attacks who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing operation. There was no immediate information on whether top officials were killed.

Even if Iran's top leaders are killed, regime change is not guaranteed.

## WORLD LEADERS FEAR BROADER ESCALATION

The current escalation is dangerous for everyone. It must stop. The Iranian regime must understand that it now has no other option but to engage in good-faith negotiations to end its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, as well as its actions to destabilise the region

EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

I deplore the military strikes across Iran this morning by Israel and the United States of America, and the subsequent retaliatory strikes by Iran. As always, in any armed conflict, it is civilians who end up paying the ultimate price

VOLKER TURK | HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF, UN

I condemn today's military escalation in the Middle East. The use of force by the United States and Israel against Iran, and the subsequent retaliation by Iran across the region, undermine international peace and security

ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY GENERAL, UN

We call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint, to protect civilians, and to fully respect international law

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

We do not want to see further escalation into a wider regional conflict

KEIR STARMER | PM, UK

The peacemaker once again showed his face. All negotiations with Iran are a cover operation. No one doubted it. No one really wanted to negotiate anything. The question is who has more patience to wait for the inglorious end of their enemy. The USA is only 249 years old. The Persian Empire was founded more than 2,500 years ago. Let's see in 100 years...

DMITRY MEDVEDEV | DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF RUSSIA'S SECURITY COUNCIL

The cause of the current events is precisely the violence and impunity of the Iranian regime, in particular the killings and repression of peaceful protesters, which have become particularly widespread in recent months

UKRAINE'S FOREIGN MINISTRY

## Flights rerouted, passengers stranded

Airlines suspended flights across the Middle East Saturday, including to and from the world's busiest travel hub Dubai, after the United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran, plunging the region into a renewed military confrontation.

Flight maps showed airspace over Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Israel and Bahrain virtually empty as Israel said it struck Iran and the US military initiated a series of strikes against targets in the country. Iran retaliated with a salvo of missiles.

Dubai Airports said all flights at Dubai International, which handled nearly 100 million passengers last year, as well as the smaller Al Maktoum International airport, were suspended until further notice, urging passengers not

- Airspace closures affect routes between Europe and Asia
- Lufthansa, Wizz Air, others halt flights to affected regions
- EU aviation regulator advises against flying over Middle East amid military operations

to travel.

"Due to multiple regional airspace closures, Emirates has temporarily suspended operations to and from Dubai," the Dubai-based carrier said, while its sister airline flydubai said it had temporarily suspended operations.

Ethihad Airways said all flights scheduled to depart Abu Dhabi were suspended until 1000 GMT Sunday, and flights expected to arrive at the Gulf hub before that time would be cancelled. "Flights already en route to Abu Dhabi are re-

turning to their origin airports where required," it added.

### STRIKES DEEPEN REGIONAL TURMOIL

The escalation dimmed hopes for a diplomatic solution to Tehran's nuclear dispute with the West and reignited conflict after weeks of US military buildup in the region.

It marks the latest upheaval for air travel in the usually busy region amid escalating tensions. Airports in the Middle East are some of the busiest in the world, covering an area stretching from Iran and Iraq to the Mediterranean and serving as a connecting hub for flights between Europe and Asia.

Airlines have cancelled almost 40% of flights to Israel and 6.7% of flights to the broader region Saturday, according to preliminary Cirium data. That number seems likely to rise.



Smoke rises in the sky after blasts were heard in Manama, Bahrain, February 28

REUTERS

## About 352 Afghan Taliban personnel killed: Pak min



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Islamabad, Feb 28: Pakistani security forces have killed 352 Afghan Taliban personnel and their allied terrorist groups in the ongoing air and ground attacks, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said Saturday.

The minister said that the Pakistani forces completely destroyed 130 military posts, while they captured another 26 border posts.

Providing an update at 9 pm (local time) on the losses of the Afghan Taliban, Tarar said so far 352 Taliban personnel have been killed and another 535 injured.

Tarar also said that 171 tanks and armoured vehicles have been destroyed, adding that Pakistan also hit 41 locations "with precision air strikes". Pakistan launched a massive retaliatory attack code-named

rorists and terrorism or Pakistan. We are clear...Let it be known that our choice is absolutely clear. It will always be Pakistan over everything."

Pakistan has long accused the Afghan Taliban of allowing the TTP and other terrorist groups to use their soil for residence, training and logistics to carry out attacks against Pakistan.

The Afghan side rejects the allegations and asks Pakistan to put its own house in order by holding talks with the militants.

Meanwhile, a senior US official supported Pakistan's right to defend against terrorists.

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker said that she spoke to Pakistan's foreign secretary to "express condolences for lives lost in the recent conflict between Pakistan and the Taliban".

"We continue to monitor the situation closely and express support for Pakistan's right to defend itself against Taliban attacks," she said on X. As tension mounted, the Afghan Taliban showed willingness to negotiate with Pakistan.

"Afghanistan...has always preferred to resolve issues based on mutual understanding and respect," the Afghan foreign ministry quoted Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi as telling Qatar's junior Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khalifi by telephone.



**CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED**  
CORPORATE OFFICE : "CHOLA CREST", C54 & 55, Super B-4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, India

Branch Office : 3rd Floor Sreemaa Construction Building, Naya Chowk Madhupatna, Cuttack, Odisha, Pin - 753 010.

**DEMAND NOTICE**

**DEMAND NOTICE ISSUED UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002**

You, the under mentioned Borrower / Mortgagor is hereby informed that the Company has initiated proceedings against you under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and that the Notice under 13(2) of the Act sent to you by Registered Post Ack. Due for Borrower/s has been returned undelivered. Hence, you are hereby called upon to take notice and pay the outstanding loan amount mentioned against the said account with Interest accruing there from within 60 days from the date of this publication, failing which the Company will proceed against you by exercising its right under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the Act by enforcing the below mentioned security to realize its dues with interests and cost. It is needles to mention that this notice is addressed to you without prejudice to any other remedy available to the Company.

<p><b>Loan A/c. No. ML01XB00000086604</b> <b>Name and Address of Borrower / Co-Borrower :</b> 1. <b>Kalcity Abhimanyu Dora (Applicant)</b>, S/o. Indugu Rama Chandra Rao, Chudialanji, Samantiapalli, Gopinathpur, Ganjam, Odisha, Pin - 761004 2. <b>Indugu Rama Chandra Rao (Co-Applciant)</b> S/o. Indugu Hari Krishna, Chudialanji, Gopinathpur, Ganjam, Odisha - 761004 3. <b>Indugu Bijayalaxmi (Co-Applciant)</b>, W/o. Indugu Rama Chandra Rao, Chudialanji, Samantiapalli, Gopinathpur, Ganjam, Odisha - 761004 4. <b>Tarini Bangles (Co-Applciant)</b>, Palur Junction Chhak, Humma, Ganjam, Pin - 761027</p>	<p>All that part and parcel of the property Bearing Khata No. 519/766, Plot No. 1831 / 3270, Area Acre 0.032 Decimal, Mouza - Chudialanji, Tahasil - Patrapur, P. S. - Jarada, District - Ganjam, Pin-761004, Odisha</p>	<p><b>Loan Amount : Rs. 20,00,000.00</b> (Rupees Twenty Lakh only) <b>Date of Demand Notice : 12.02.2026</b> <b>NPA Date : 03.02.2026</b> <b>Outstanding Amount : Rs. 21,08,660.00</b> (Rupees Twenty One Lakh Eight Thousand Six Hundred Sixty only) as on 11/02/2026</p>
<p><b>Loan A/c. No. ML01FGH00000099331</b> <b>Name and Address of Borrower / Co-Borrower :</b> 1. <b>Ramesh Kumar Tripathy (Applicant)</b>, S/o. Hrusikesh Tripathy Arda, P.O. - Ranisarda, P.S. - Tarbha, District - Sonepur, Pin - 767020 2. <b>Tapaswini Tripathy (Co-Applciant)</b>, W/o. Hrusikesh Tripathy Arda, P.O. - Ranisarda, P.S. - Tarbha, District - Sonepur, Pin - 767020 3. <b>Haripriya Tripathy (Co-Applciant)</b>, W/o. Ramesh Kumar Tripathy Arda, P.O. - Ranisarda, P.S. - Tarbha, District - Sonepur, Pin - 767020 4. <b>Aditya Market Complex (Co-Applciant)</b>, Plot No. 1553, Khata No. 106, Unnamed Road, Ranisarda, Arda, Sonepur, Pin - 767020</p>	<p>All that part and parcel of the Property Bearing Khata No.106, Plot No.1553, Area Acre 0.1550 Decimal, Plot No. 2079, Area Acre 0.2600 Decimal, Total Area Acre 0.4150 Decimal, Mouza - Arda, Tahasil - Tarbha, Thana - Tarbha, District -Subarnapur.</p>	<p><b>Loan Amount : Rs. 50,00,000.00</b> (Rupees Fifty Lakh only) <b>Date of Demand Notice : 11.02.2026</b> <b>NPA Date : 03.02.2026</b> <b>Outstanding Amount : Rs. 52,31,186.00</b> (Rupees Fifty Two Lakh Thirty One Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Six only) as on 11/02/2026</p>
<p><b>Loan A/c. No. HE01CUK00000089418</b> <b>Name and Address of Borrower / Co-Borrower :</b> 1. <b>Aurobindo Das (Applicant)</b>, S/o. Gobinda Chandra Das, Pippala Madhab, Batlio, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, Pin - 754138. 2. <b>Surendra Kumar Das (Co-Applciant)</b>, S/o. Gobinda Chandra Das Pippala Madhab, Batlio, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, Pin - 754138. 3. <b>Kanak Lata Das (Co-Applciant)</b>, W/o. Aurobindo Das Pippala Madhab, Batlio, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, Pin - 754138. 4. <b>Maa Sarala Dress House (Co-Applciant)</b>, Khata No. 136, Plot No. 411, Near Panchamukhi Hanuman Temple, Cuttack Paradeep Road, Batlio, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, Pin - 754160 5. <b>M/s. Gorekhanath Saree and Jeans (Co-Applciant)</b>, Plot No. 1952/2303, Room No. 11, Talapada, Kujang, Station Road, Jagatsinghpur, Odisha, Pin - 754140</p>	<p>All that part and parcel of the Property Bearing Khata No. 236/53, Plot No. 411/723, Area - Acre 0.475 Decimal, Mouza - Batlio, Tahasil - Tirtol, Jagatsinghpur - 754138, Odisha.</p>	<p><b>Loan Amount : Rs. 33,00,000.00</b> (Rupees Thirty Three Lakh only) <b>Date of Demand Notice : 11.02.2026</b> <b>NPA Date : 03.02.2026</b> <b>Outstanding Amount : Rs. 34,07,471.00</b> (Rupees Thirty Four Lakh Seven Thousand Four Hundred Seventy One only) as on 11/02/2026</p>

Date : 01.03.2026  
Place : Bhubaneswar (Odisha)

Authorised Officer  
Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited

# leisure



## BALE: DON'T WANT TO SEE MY HEROES

Christian Bale revealed that his fans will face "terrible disappointment" if they meet him because he is at his best in his work. The Oscar winning-actor also talked about how he doesn't want to see his heroes in real life.

## JONATHAN TO RETURN TO SILVER SCREEN

Hollywood actor Jonathan Majors is set to make his movie comeback with a new action film. The *Ant-Man and the Wasp: Quantumania*' star was dropped from several projects after being found guilty of assaulting his former girlfriend Grace Jabbari in 2023.



### FORTUNE FORECAST



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**ARIES**  
Today you will feel mushy and forlorn. Ganesha says you will make special efforts to strengthen your relationships. You look upon commitment as a security for the future. As a result, you will develop strong, long-term bondings.

**TAURUS**  
You will be fondly thinking about your close friends, particularly about the opposite. It may suddenly dawn upon you that you are in love, says Ganesha. If per chance there is a romantic encounter, go ahead and dive fearlessly in the pool of love. It is near certain that the wedding bells will be ringing for you sooner than you think.

**GEMINI**  
You will spend your day fulfilling the demands made upon you by your family members and colleagues. You will need to devote time to matters at home. Pay attention to the needs of your relatives for they will be helpful to you in the near future, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Watch out for winds of change and ac accordingly. Ganesha warns you of drowning in a strong current. Your task will be easier if you adjust to circumstances. Fun and entertainment are today's password. In the social sector business, you will have success. This is the right time to enhance social prestige.

**LEO**  
Financial gains in shares and stocks are indicated. If you are an investor, your investments will yield substantial profits. Long-standing debts are also likely to be cleared, and pending dues will be settled. Expenses for the purposes of entertainment are a possibility, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
You won't bother others much today, and in return, people will show more empathy toward you. You may find yourself being quite firm in your responsibilities and strong in your convictions. At home, you'll be more expressive and share a warmer, more affectionate connection with your loved ones.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says you will give more importance to your family and there may be concerns about the health of a family member. There may be news from abroad regarding the health of a close family member, which may disturb you today. Do maintain your mental balance today and remember that this too shall pass.

**SCORPIO**  
You are all set to paint the town red as you feel romance and love creeping into your life slowly. You may bump into 'someone special' today and see love blooming for you. There are also chances of marriage proposals and meeting prospective candidates, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You are all set to groom your skills as a professional. Talking about work, determination and dedication are likely to rule you today. Putting your heart and soul, your work speaks volumes about your efforts. Appreciation, though slow in pace, is on its way to encourage you.

**CAPRICORN**  
You'll be popular today at your workplace. Your honesty and efforts will be recognised, which will be fulfilling for you. But, tomorrow will be a different day and times may not be favourable for you. It is, therefore, necessary for you to understand the importance of today and utilise it to the maximum, advises Ganesha.

**AQUARIUS**  
You know how to examine the nuts and bolts of every assignment or project, and it consumes your resources to a great extent. But, like a stitch in time saves nine, your meticulous planning minimises the chances of a loss or a failure, feels Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You will communicate with your friends or relatives living abroad today. There is a chance that these communications could translate directly into substantial gain for you. You will find yourself in the mood for socializing. You will likely invite friends over to dinner at your place in the evening, says Ganesha.

## TEJASSWI TURNS OBSESSION INTO ART

**Mumbai:** Tejasswi Prakash has, over the years, built a strong on-screen identity with roles that balance emotion and strength. From fiction dramas to reality formats, she has remained a familiar and bankable face, known for her expressive presence and ability to carry intense story arcs. With a loyal audience base and consistent visibility, her move to digital had been anticipated for some time. *Psycho Saiyaan* marks that shift, her official OTT debut signalling a new phase in her career where she steps into darker, more layered storytelling.

Launched on Amazon MX Player on the 25th, *Psycho Saiyaan* places her at the centre of a psychological dark romance. The series revolves around love that gradually blurs into obsession, exploring emotional dependency, possessiveness and fragile relationship dynamics. Unlike conventional romantic dramas, this story leans heavily on tension and atmosphere. It unfolds slowly, allowing emotional shifts and psychological conflict to shape the narrative rather than relying on loud confrontations.

Within this framework, Tejasswi turns obsession into something textured rather than theatrical. She avoids playing it as sudden instability or exaggerated drama. Instead, she allows the emotion to evolve naturally through measured reactions, controlled expressions and quiet intensity. The progression from affection to fixation feels gradual and believable. That restraint becomes the core strength of her portrayal.

AGENCIES

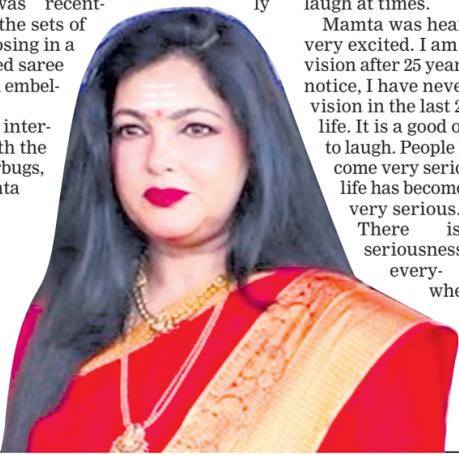


## Mamta's first TV appearance in 25 years

**Mumbai:** Popular 90s actress Mamta Kulkarni is all set to make her first television appearance in 25 years with the latest episode of the cooking reality show, *Laughter Chef's Unlimited Entertainment Season 3*.

She was recently spotted on the sets of the show posing in a stunning red saree with golden embellishments.

While interacting with the shutterbugs, Mamta



revealed that she is extremely excited for her first television appearance in more than two decades.

She added that life has gotten extremely serious, hence it is good to laugh at times.

Mamta was heard saying, "I am very excited. I am coming on television after 25 years. In fact, if you notice, I have never been on television in the last 25 years of my life. It is a good opportunity to laugh. People have become very serious; life has become very serious. There is seriousness everywhere.

So what could be better than this - you laugh while cooking." IANS

## 'Viewers now ready for women-led narratives'

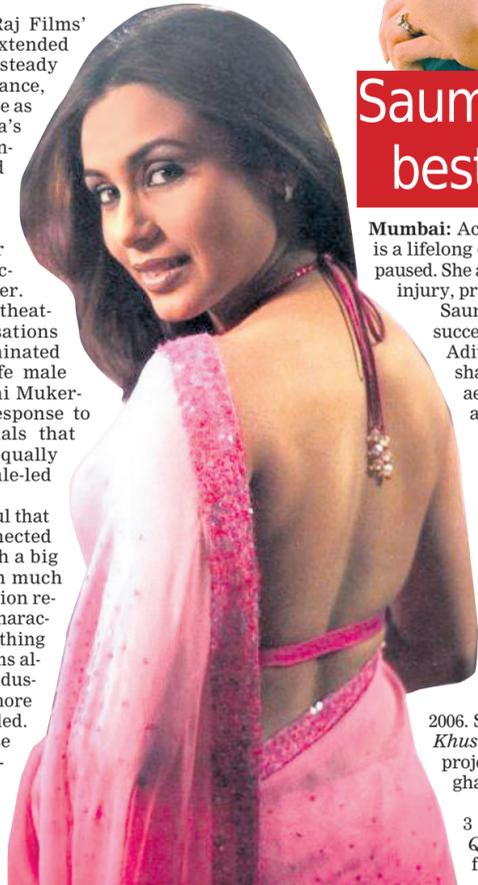
**Mumbai:** Yash Raj Films' *Mardaani 3* has extended the franchise's steady box office performance, reaffirming its place as one of Hindi cinema's most durable women-led series. The third instalment builds on the momentum of its predecessors, adding another commercial success to the banner.

At a time when theatrical conversations are often dominated by larger-than-life male protagonists, Rani Mukerji believes the response to *Mardaani 3* signals that audiences are equally receptive to female-led narratives.

"I'm deeply grateful that *Mardaani 3* has connected with audiences in such a big way," Rani said. "When much of the box office conversation revolves around 'alpha male' characters, this success proves something important — that female-led films also have an audience. I hope the industry recognises this so that we see more such stories being made," she added.

With *Mardaani 3*, the franchise continues its consistent track record, marking another successful chapter in a series that has sustained audience interest for over a decade.

AGENCIES



## Saumya on world's best investment

**Mumbai:** Actress Saumya Tandon believes fitness is a lifelong commitment and not something to be pursued. She asserted to never stop, even with a knee injury, pregnancy, or sciatica.

Saumya, who is currently basking in the success of her latest release *Dhurandhar* by Aditya Dhar, took to Instagram, where she shared a string of images of herself doing aerial yoga, planks, TRX workout, pilates and yoga.

Reflecting on her fitness journey over the years, Saumya highlighted how yoga, Pilates and weight training have remained constant in her routine.

She wrote: "Over the years.... Yoga, Pilates, Weight training. Never stop. Even with knee injury, pregnancy, sciatica whatever situation you are thrown into, just be at it. Your body is the best investment in the world. Women lift weights."

Saumya took up modelling assignments early in her career and was the Femina Cover Girl First Runner Up in 2006. She also appeared in the Afghan serial *Khushi* in 2008 as part of the international project, where she played the lead of an Afghan woman doctor.

She has hosted *Dance India Dance* for 3 seasons. She co-hosted the *Bournvita Quiz Contest*, along with Derek O'Brien for three seasons. IANS

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

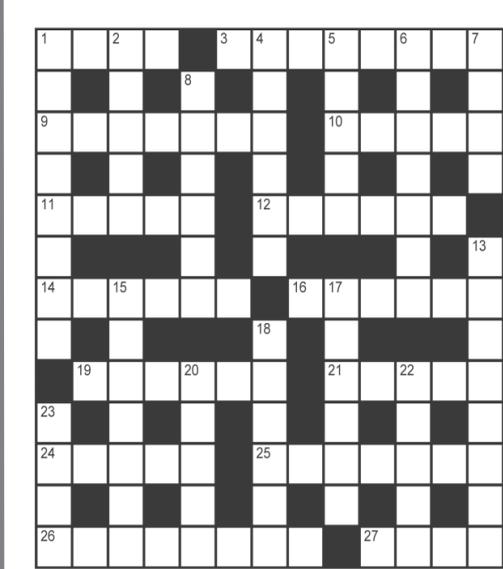


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

### CROSSWORD



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#### Across

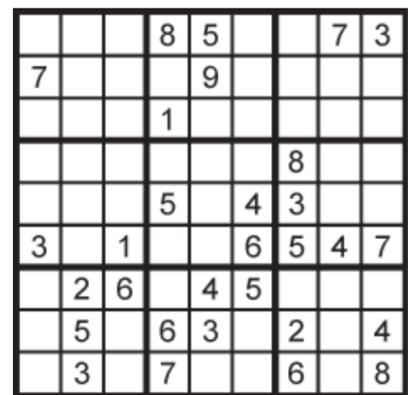
- 1 Hunter's target
- 3 Place to buy a crumpet
- 9 They're found on vessels
- 10 Haven
- 11 Cow catcher
- 12 Lowlife
- 14 Collar
- 16 Echo
- 19 Hang around

#### Down

- 1 Silverbacks
- 2 King with a golden touch
- 4 \_\_\_-Lorraine
- 5 Eat away
- 6 Aggressive
- 7 Nuisance
- 8 Stations
- 13 Wasps and bees, e.g.
- 15 Hen house figure
- 17 Heir's concern
- 18 Passionate
- 20 Business
- 22 Poverty-stricken
- 23 Hurry

### SUDOKU

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

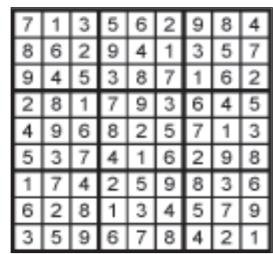


### SOLUTIONS

#### CROSSWORD



#### SUDOKU



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



It (India) is like a game-changer. It's an infinite market in a sense  
**SUDEEP JAIN** | MD FOR SOUTH WEST ASIA, IHG

## JEWELLERY MARKET PROJECTED TO REACH \$130-150BN BY 2030

The domestic jewellery market, currently valued at approximately \$85-90 billion, is projected to expand to \$130-150 billion by 2030, driven by wedding demand, premiumisation, organised retail expansion, and rising consumer confidence, it was announced Saturday



### of the day quote

Given the growth of the industry, I would say that in five years' time, we should have five times the number of hotels that we have today, because that's what the market would warrant



**MARK S HOPLAMAZIAN** | PRESIDENT AND CEO, HYATT HOTELS

India is more than a growth market. It is a strategic hub for future-ready industrial development. Our sole aim is to help customers scale faster, operate more reliably and transition sustainably



**JOAKIM LANDHOLM** | SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL COMMERCIAL & OPERATIONS, SKF GROUP

The future of higher education is borderless. By partnering with UBC, we are creating an academic continuum that begins in India and extends to the global stage - empowering our students to learn locally and compete internationally



**INDU SHAHANI** | CHANCELLOR AND FOUNDING PRESIDENT, ATLAS SKILLTECH UNIVERSITY

### SHORT TAKES

#### PE companies exit Vishal Mega Mart

**Mumbai:** Samayat Services LLP, a special-purpose vehicle representing Kedaara Capital and Partners Group, offloaded 65.25 crore shares, equating to a 13.96% stake in Vishal Mega Mart, for ₹7,635.55 crore. This strategic reduction of their holding from 54.09% to 40.13% indicates a significant profit-taking maneuver, despite the company's recent IPO aimed at raising capital. The shares were sold in the price range of ₹117-₹117.03. Concurrently, institutional investors such as the Government of Singapore (acquiring 2.72%), HDFC Mutual Fund (2.01%), and the Monetary Authority of Singapore (1.57%) collectively bought over 29.42 crore shares, representing a 6.3% stake, for approximately ₹3,443.17 crore. The block deal price was reportedly at a discount to the previous closing price, further contributing to market sentiment. The market responded with a sharp decline, as Vishal Mega Mart's shares closed down 7.59% at ₹117.85 on the NSE. This large-scale divestment by its primary backers, occurring subsequent to its December 2024 IPO, raises questions about the PE firms' conviction on immediate upside potential.

#### Wind power project: GAIL invests ₹1,736cr

**New Delhi:** State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd will invest ₹1,736.25 crore in setting up a wind power project in Maharashtra that will help expand its renewable energy portfolio, as it targets net zero carbon emissions by 2035. In a regulatory filing, GAIL said its board at its meeting on Friday approved the investment in setting up 178.2 megawatt wind power capacity. The project, to be completed in 24 months from the award of the contract, will add to the existing portfolio of 117.95 MW. Besides, the firm also has 27 MW of solar energy projects spread across Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Its wind power projects are in Gujarat (19.2 MW), Karnataka (38.1 MW) and Tamil Nadu (60.65 MW). The project to generate electricity from wind is part of a broader effort to boost renewable capacity and meet net-zero carbon emission targets by 2035.

# US-Iran tensions to shape world markets

A prolonged conflict disrupting oil supplies would likely strengthen the US dollar, except against the yen and Swiss franc

REUTERS

**London/Abu Dhabi, Feb 28:** The United States and Israel launched strikes on Iran Saturday, targeting its leadership and plunging the Middle East into a new conflict that President Donald Trump said would end a security threat and give Iranians a chance to topple their rulers.

The strikes put nearby oil-producing Gulf Arab countries on edge as fears of escalation grew, and Tehran responded by launching missiles towards Israel.

**OIL SPIKE**  
Oil is the main barometer of Middle East tension.

Iran is a major producer and lies opposite the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula across the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 20% of global oil supply passes. Conflict could limit oil entering the global market and push up prices.

Brent crude traded Friday around \$73 a barrel, already up by a fifth this year.

Some oil majors and top trading houses suspended crude oil and fuel shipments via the Strait of Hormuz because of the attacks, four trading sources said Saturday.

William Jackson, chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, said that even if the conflict was contained, Brent might rise to



about \$80, which was the peak during the 12-day war in Iran last June.

A prolonged conflict affecting supply could cause oil prices to jump to around \$100, potentially adding 0.6-0.7 percentage points to global inflation, he said in a note.

**WILD SWINGS, EVERYWHERE**

The conflict is likely to exacerbate volatility across global markets, which have already swung wildly this year owing to Trump's tariffs and a sharp

tech selloff.

The VIX volatility index has risen by a third this year, and implied US bond volatility is up 15%.

Currency markets are unlikely to be immune, analysts say.

The dollar index fell by around 1% during the June war, CBA notes. But that fall was short-lived and unwound after three or four days.

"In current circumstances, the size of the fall will depend on how large and how long-last-

ing the conflict is expected to be," CBA analysts said in a note a week ago.

Israel's shekel will almost certainly be another mover - Iran quickly retaliated against Israel on Saturday.

It dropped 5% at the start of the June war and also reacted after Israel struck Iran's Damascus consulate in April 2024 and when Iran launched missiles at Israel that October.

All episodes were short-lived and followed by quick shekel rebounds. However, JPMorgan said it could be different this time if the conflict and a rise in market risk premia proved more persistent.

"This would especially be the case if confrontation with Iran also triggers more intensive operations against Iran's proxies," the Wall Street bank said.

**SAFE-HAVENS DO THEIR THING**

The Swiss franc, widely regarded as a safe haven in times of turmoil, is expected to face further upward pressure, creating a headache for the Swiss National Bank. It is up 3% this year against the US dollar.

Investors could also make another dash for gold, which has had a record run and is up 22% so far in 2026, and into silver, which has also been on a roll.

The conflict could also add to demand for US Treasuries

whose yields have been falling in the past few weeks.

The outlier has been bitcoin, no longer seen as a haven. It fell 2% Saturday and has shed more than a quarter of its value in two months.

**MIDDLE EAST MARKETS WATCH**  
Trading in bourses in the Middle East Sunday, including Saudi Arabia and Qatar, will provide an initial indicator of investor sentiment. While these markets are highly correlated to oil prices, an escalating conflict could ripple through the economies.

"I suspect markets will be down if these hostilities continue through the day," said Ryan Lemand, chief executive officer and co-founder of Neo- vision Wealth Management. Depending on the scale of the conflict, Gulf equities could drop by 3-5%, he said.

Saudi Arabia's benchmark stock index dropped 1.3% in five days through Thursday, its second consecutive week of declines. Dubai's main market, which reopens Monday, fell in the last two weeks.

**AIRLINE & DEFENCE STOCKS**

Global airlines cancelled flights across the Middle East Saturday, and their stocks could be under pressure if the conflict spreads and forces more airspace closures.

European weapons makers, up 10% this year, could see more demand.

## AOUBRA launches members' directory

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 28:** The members' directory of All Odisha Union Bank Retirees' Association (AOUBRA) was formally inaugurated at a ceremony held at Budha Mandir here Saturday.

The event was graced by All India Union Bank Officers' Federation chairman Priya Ranjan Kumar and the federation's general secretary Upendra Kumar. Speaking on the occasion, the dignitaries highlighted the importance of unity, continued engagement, and welfare of retirees in strengthening the larger organisational fraternity.

Union Bank of India, Bhu-

baneswar Zonal Head Hare Krishna Das, Bhubaneswar regional head Niranjan Barik and Berhampur regional head Sangita Kujur were present at the inaugural function. The senior most member of the retirees' association Ratnakar Singh also graced the occasion.

The publication of the directory is expected to serve as a valuable reference for communication, coordination and social bonding among nearly 250 retiree members in the state.

AOUBRA general secretary Saroj Mohanty expressed his sincere gratitude to the distinguished guests and all members for making the programme a grand success.



## India, EU lock in WTO guardrails, digital trade rules in trade deal

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** The European Union and India plan to grant each other Most Favoured Nation status after their trade deal takes effect, preventing either from offering better tariff terms to other partners for five years, a draft of the text showed.

India and the European Union struck a long-delayed deal last month aiming to slash tariffs on most goods and boost two-way trade amid growing global trade tensions elsewhere.

The deal, likely to be effective in a year after legislative ratification, is expected to double EU exports to India by 2032 by eliminating or reducing tariffs on 96.6% of traded goods by value, and will lead to savings of 4 billion euros (\$4.7 billion) in duties for European companies, the EU has said.

India and the EU have said agriculture-related items like soya, beef, sugar, rice and dairy have been left out of the purview of the trade deal.

Both sides have agreed to lock in commitments not to impose new import or export restrictions beyond World Trade Organization rules and to deepen cooperation on dig-



ital trade under a proposed free-trade agreement, a draft text released by India's trade ministry showed.

To ease trade flows, New Delhi and Brussels will align food safety and plant health measures with WTO standards and streamline certification and audit procedures.

The text also envisages enhanced customs cooperation and faster clearance of goods, with commitments becoming binding after ratification.

The two sides will begin exchanging annual import data one year after the pact takes effect to monitor implementation and the use of tariff preferences. They also agreed to ensure non-discriminatory and accessible appeal procedures

for customs decisions affecting imports, exports or goods in transit.

On digital trade, India and the EU committed to curbing unjustified barriers and promoting an open and secure online environment.

The draft recognises privacy as a fundamental right while preserving both sides' authority over personal data protection and cross-border transfer rules.

It also promotes paperless trade and legal recognition of electronic contracts, signatures and authentication.

Separately, the EU will mobilise finance and investment to support India's efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions under the proposed pact, the draft showed.

## India seeks to cut power sector coal imports by 30% this year

The South Asian country still relies on coal for three-fourths of its electricity generation, even as it ramps up renewable energy at a record pace toward its 2070 net-zero goal

REUTERS

**New Delhi, Feb 28:** India, the world's second-largest importer of thermal coal, wants to cut those imports for power plants by at least 30%, asking them to test increased blending with domestic coal, government and industry officials familiar with the plan said.

India's power plants used nearly 50 million tons of imported coal in 2025 from countries like Indonesia, South Africa and Russia. The government aims to cut this by at least 15 million tons this year, said two government officials and one industry source.

New Delhi wants to reduce reliance on imports for the country's nearly 17 gigawatts of power plants built to run on imported coal as government-backed Coal India

**INDIA AIMS TO CUT THERMAL COAL IMPORTS BY AT LEAST 15 MILLION TONS IN 2026**

**DOMESTIC COAL TO REPLACE 20-30% OF IMPORTS AT POWER PLANTS**

**COAL INDIA OPENS EXPORTS TO BANGLADESH, BHUTAN, SRI LANKA TO REDUCE STOCKPILES**

(COAL.NS), opens new tab and private miners have boosted domestic coal production.

Authorities aim to replace at least 20% of imported coal with domestic supply at most plants, with some able to go up to 30%, government and power company sources said.

The seven people Reuters spoke to did not want to be named as they were not authorised to talk to the media. India's coal and power minis-



try did not respond to Reuters emails seeking comments.

The government has long sought to cut coal imports for the power sector, but those efforts have failed as power plants have been unable to

burn lower-quality local coal.

An executive with a power plant in western Gujarat state said power plants won't be able to use as much domestic coal as the government wants without totally recalibrating their boil-

**The share of imported thermal coal is expected to gradually shift from the power sector to non-power industries such as cement and sponge iron**

**VASUDEV PAMNANI** | DIRECTOR, ENERGY NATURAL RESOURCES

ers, which would be very costly and require state subsidies.

However, the government has assured power producers that domestic coal supplies will be of high quality, one of the people involved in the testing said.

Coal India has been struggling with inventories of around 90 million tons as of December 31, after producing a record 781.1 million tons in the fiscal year to March 2025. That made up nearly 80% of India's total coal output last

## Air passenger traffic grows 4.36% in Jan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, Feb 28:** India's domestic air passenger traffic grew 4.36 per cent year-on-year to 152.49 lakh in January 2026 over the corresponding month of last year, according to DGCA data.

The domestic carriers, including four major ones, IndiGo, Air India Group, SpiceJet and Akasa Air, together had flown a total of 146.11 lakh passengers in January 2025 on local routes, data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) late Friday evening showed.

Gurugram-headquartered IndiGo, which faced massive operational disruptions on account of stricter norms for pilots' rest and duty period in December and lost about 4 per cent market share in the previous month, wrested it back with 63.6 per cent market share, having flown 97.04 lakh passengers during the reporting month.

On the contrary, Air India Group lost nearly three per cent market share at 26.5 per cent (40.34-lakh passengers) sequentially in the previous month, according to data.

The overall cancellation rate of scheduled domestic airlines for the month of January 2026 was seen 1.44 per cent while IndiGo delivered the best On-time performance at 70.9 per cent from six key metro airports, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Bangalore, during the month under review, as per DGCA data.

## DISPUTE OVER AI SAFETY

### Trump orders halt to Anthropic use

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Washington, Feb 28:** President Donald Trump said Friday that he was ordering all federal agencies to stop using Anthropic's technology following the company's unusually public dispute with the Pentagon over artificial intelligence safety.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth also said he was designating Anthropic as a supply chain risk, a move that could prevent US military vendors from working with the company.

Hegseth's remarks, delivered in a social media post, came shortly after the Pentagon's deadline for Anthropic to allow unrestricted military use of its AI technology or face consequences - and nearly 24 hours after CEO Dario Amodei said his company "cannot in good conscience accede" to the Defence Department's demands.

Trump's comments came just over an hour before the Pentagon's deadline for Anthropic to allow unrestricted military use of its AI technology or face consequences - and nearly 24 hours after CEO Dario Amodei said his company "cannot in good conscience accede" to the Defence Department's demands.

These 200-year-old tea leaves could help scientists protect one of the world's most consumed beverages from the toll of climate change. To pare stockpiles, Coal India has opened up exports to Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka.

India's thermal coal imports, second only to China, fell 6.2% in 2025, the steepest drop since 2021, as power demand declined in milder weather.

Despite plans to raise coal-fired capacity by 97 GW to 307 GW by 2034-2035, India's thermal coal imports are expected to slow gradually as newer coal plants are likely to come up in areas closer to domestic sources, said Rajiv Ramnarayan, chief executive of Singapore-based coal trader Equentia Natural Resources.

FROZEN GROUNDS, RISING GAME

US-IRAN TENSIONS

# Ranji history: J&K's watershed moment

## Sindhu stranded in Dubai as flights remain suspended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, Feb 28: Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu was Saturday left stranded at Dubai airport en route to the prestigious All England Open badminton tournament, after flight operations were suspended owing to escalation of tensions in the Middle East.

The tournament is scheduled to start from next Tuesday.

Sindhu took to Instagram and posted a video showing a crowded airport with a caption: "All flights suspended until further notice."

Later, the Indian superstar shuttler said she was safe but stuck with her team. She added that the speed at which the tensions have escalated is "terrifying". "It's hard to process what's unfolding right now. Hearing the interceptions overhead and seeing how quickly everything has escalated is honestly terrifying," Sindhu wrote on X.

"So many disturbing videos are coming to light, and this is sadly the reality of what is happening. Dubai is a city I deeply love, a place that has always felt safe and full of life, which makes this moment even harder to comprehend.

"To everyone who has been messaging and checking in, thank you, it truly means a lot. I am safe right now, stuck here with my team, and we are doing okay as the situation around the war with Iran continues to evolve," she added.

Sindhu said that airports are chaotic with many families "stranded and waiting".

"Airports are chaotic, with many families stranded and waiting, all of us just hoping we get past this soon. I'm sure the authorities are doing everything in their power, and like everyone here, we're holding on to patience and hope," she wrote.

"Moments like these remind you how fragile normal life really is. Praying for safety and peace for everyone affected."

The US and Israel launched a major offensive on Iran Saturday, with American President Donald Trump calling on the Iranian public to overthrow the Islamic leadership that has ruled the nation since 1979.

The military strikes have led to a closure of air space in the Gulf region and caused disruption to several flights, including Emirates and Air India.



Jammu and Kashmir won the title on the basis of their massive first-innings lead of 291 runs against Karnataka in the summit showdown

J&K Chief Minister announced a cash reward of Rs 2 crore and government job opportunities for players and support staff

Mayank Agarwal fought a lone battle with a superb 160, but lacked support from the rest of the batting lineup.

Jammu and Kashmir's bowling was led by Auqib Nabi Dar, who claimed a sensational five-wicket haul (5/54), his seventh of the tournament.

Sunil Kumar and Yudhvir Singh Charak chipped in with two wickets each to keep Karnataka firmly under pressure.

With a commanding lead, Jammu and Kashmir tightened their grip in the second innings, reaching 342/4 in 113 overs.

Qamran Iqbal starred with an unbeaten 160, while Sahil Lotra completed a fine match with an unbroken 101, effectively shutting the door on any Karnataka comeback.

The final ended in a draw, but Jammu and Kashmir's decisive first-innings lead sealed a historic victory and the most prestigious title in Indian domestic cricket.

Youth were seen dancing in Jammu as elders joined them distributing sweets. It was a celebration cutting across region, religion and language.

Every face wore a festive smile and drums started beating at different parts of Jammu city.

**Brief scores:**  
Jammu & Kashmir 584 all out & 342/4 dec (Qamran Iqbal 160\*, Sahil Lotra 101\*; Prasidh Krishna 2-42) beat Karnataka 293 all out (Mayank Agarwal 160, Kruthik Krishna 36; Auqib Nabi Dar 5-54) with first-innings lead

The Kashmir willows have been a part of many champions' kits. To see Jammu & Kashmir's journey from being an enabler of champions, to becoming champions themselves is beautiful

SACHIN TENDULKAR | CRICKET LEGEND

That's what matters. What a day for Jammu & Kashmir... They have played terrific cricket throughout the season and played like a unit. Many congratulations and many more trophies to come, great to see cricket growing in Jammu Kashmir region

HARBHAJAN SINGH | FORMER PLAYER

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Feb 28: The victory of Jammu and Kashmir cricket team Saturday over rivals Karnataka in the Ranji Trophy finals is not just a win well deserved, it is the promise of glory and hope for the youth of the Union Territory, whose talent in sports is getting countrywide acknowledgment now.

Throughout the contest, Jammu & Kashmir displayed remarkable discipline, composure and belief, maintaining control from the opening session of Day 1 until the final declaration. Playing in their maiden Ranji Trophy final, Jammu & Kashmir showed no signs of nerves against one of India's most successful domestic teams. Instead, they dictated terms, executed their plans flawlessly and rose to the occasion with maturity beyond their experience.

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister's Advisor Nasir Aslam Wani and NC MLA, Tanvir Sadiq had reached Karnataka's Hubballi Friday to witness history as the Jammu and Kashmir team was about to write it Saturday. They personally cheered the victory of the team.

The victory marks Jammu and Kashmir's first Ranji Trophy crown in 67 years.

Widespread celebrations broke across the Union Territory when the news came.

Opting to bat first after winning the toss, Jammu and Kashmir posted a formidable total of 584 runs in 173.1 overs, built on a strong collective batting effort.

Shubham Pundir anchored the innings with a composed 121 off 247 balls, while Yawer Hassan (88) and skipper Paras Dogra (70) providing solid support.

The middle order kept the momentum alive through Ab-

dul Samad (61) and wicketkeeper Kanhaiya Wadhawan (70), while Sahil Lotra added crucial runs with a well-crafted 72.

For Karnataka, Prasidh Krishna stood out with a five-wicket haul, though the attack struggled overall.

In reply, Karnataka were bowled out for 293 runs in 93.3 overs, conceding a massive first-innings deficit of 291 runs.

Congratulations to the Jammu and Kashmir team for their first ever Ranji Trophy win! This historic triumph reflects remarkable grit, discipline and passion of the team. It is a proud moment for the people of Jammu and Kashmir and it highlights the growing sporting passion and talent there

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

They've done it. Well done J&K

OMAR ABDULLAH | CM, J&K

Congratulations to the Jammu & Kashmir team in India for scripting a remarkable story of grit and perseverance.

JAY SHAH | ICC CHAIRMAN

This serves as a reminder once again for cricketers from the rest of the country, that if they stand together and play united with a Ranji trophy title as a goal, they or at least their team mates can go on to play for the country. Well done to J&K, it's a massive achievement

R ASHWIN | FORMER PLAYER

# OFC welcome Chennaiyin FC at home

RISHABH PAREKH, OP

Bhubaneswar, Feb 28: In the build-up to the Chennaiyin FC clash Sunday, Odisha FC's head coach TG Purushothaman and skipper Amrinder Singh addressed the media Saturday reflecting on recent performances, emphasising defensive organisation and the strategy aimed at securing three points.

After battling to a gritty stalemate in their opener against Inter Kashi, Purushothaman lauded his side's organisation and commitment. "The players stuck to the structure and gave everything for the team," he noted.

Ahead of the next fixture, the coach said past results won't define what's to come. His focus is on "space management"—creating openings while restricting the opposition. Despite limited preparation time, he's confident in the team's hunger to win and insists weather or



timing won't be excuses. The final squad decision will follow the last training session.

Captain and goalkeeper Amrinder Singh highlighted the value of constant communication within a defensive unit that blends experienced figures such as Carlos Delgado with emerging young talents.

"When it comes to my po-

sition, I can see the game completely. I try to stay calm in the goal because everyone looks at my face. If they see me under pressure, they lose confidence," Amrinder shared. He expressed immense pride in the team's ability to secure a clean sheet in the opening game after only three or four days of collective training.

When asked about facing

a side managed by a former coach familiar with the squad, Amrinder played down the significance. "It's football; today you play with them, tomorrow against them. We must focus on ourselves and stick to our coach's plan," he said.

A brace from Farukh Choudhary powered Chennaiyin to a memorable win in the corresponding fixture last season. The Marina Machans have recorded two wins, one defeat, and two draws against the Juggernauts across the last five meetings, with that triumph in Kalinga marking the first away victory for any visiting side in 569 days.

The trip to Odisha will be Chennaiyin's third consecutive away-day assignment at the start of the ISL 2026 season. The Machans will be back on the road for their fourth and final away fixture of this stretch, taking on rivals Kerala Blasters in the Southern Derby March 7.

## PRAGUE MASTERS

# Gukesh shocked; Aravindh-Parham tied

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Prague, Feb 28: World Champion D Gukesh suffered a shock defeat to Jorden van Foreest of Holland, while Aravindh Chithambaram played out a draw with Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran in the third round of the Masters section of Prague International chess festival here.

Still looking for his first victory in the tournament, Gukesh never really found his footing against van Foreest. He soon came under heavy pressure and had to part with a pawn. The technicalities remained



but Foreest could possibly do no-wrong in this round.

The trade of Queens led to a pawn-less rook and minor piece endgame for Gukesh wherein the Dutchman cleaned up the king side and his pawns did the

remaining. The game lasted 48 moves. Foreest regained the joint lead and is the only player in the event with all three decisive games. With two points in his kitty, Foreest shares the lead with Uzbek duo of Nodirbek Yakubboev and Nodirbek Abdusattorov along with local favourite David Navara.

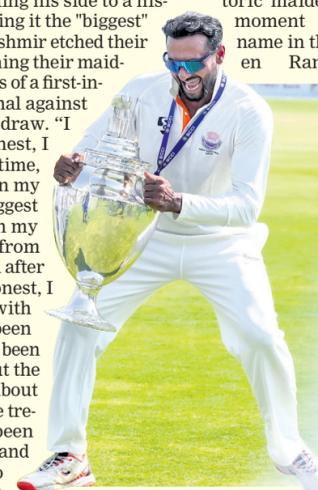
With six rounds still remaining in the 10-players 9-rounds tournament, Gukesh shares the seventh spot with top seed Vincent Keymer of Germany, Hans Moke Niemann of United States and Maghsoodloo with all having one point from their three games.

## Eves seek redemption against dominant Aus

Hobart: Outclassed in the first two ODIs, a struggling India will need to address their batting frailties to salvage some pride when they face a dominant Australia in the third and final women's ODI here Sunday. World champions India have failed to post competitive totals in both matches, allowing Australia to cruise to victory with little resistance. India were bowled out for 214 in the first ODI and managed a below-par 251 for nine in the second, totals that Australia chased down comfortably to maintain their record of winning all bilateral ODI series against India. Harmanpreet Kaur and her team will need a markedly improved batting display to prevent Australia from completing another whitewash, similar to the one in late 2024.

## Biggest moment of my life: Dogra

Jammu and Kashmir captain Paras Dogra Saturday struggled for words after guiding his side to a historic maiden Ranji Trophy title, calling it the "biggest moment of his life. Jammu and Kashmir etched their history books by clinching their maiden Ranji Trophy title on the basis of a first-innings lead, after the final against Karnataka ended in a draw. "I can't explain to be honest, I have no words. At this time, it is the biggest thing in my life. This will be the biggest gratitude I will have in my life before I go away from this world," Dogra said after the triumph. "To be honest, I have been lucky to be with JKCA, the guys have been phenomenal, they have been excellent, it is not about the (playing) eleven, it is (about the) 14-15 guys, they are tremendous, they have been putting their hands up and they have been keen to win the matches. From the beginning, they were 100 per cent sure that we were going to win this Ranji Trophy."



## 'Baramulla Express' biggest weapon

From the dusty playfields of Sheeri village in Baramulla to the pinnacle of domestic cricket, Auqib Nabi's journey is a testament to unyielding resolve. Refusing to let circumstances dictate his future, the pacer, now known as the 'Baramulla Express', honed his skills through relentless dedication and rose through the ranks to deliver the ultimate glory to his native state Jammu and Kashmir. To say that the 29-year-old has played a vital role in Jammu and Kashmir's maiden Ranji Trophy title triumph would be an understatement. Nabi emerged as the stand-out performer of the domestic season with 60 wickets, earning widespread praise from legends like Sourav Ganguly, who backed him for a nasserly average of less per wicket. He put show in the knock of the Ranji Trophy claimed 26 wickets matches, including in the quarterfinal Madhya Pradesh a nine-for against Bengal in the semis. In the final too, he picked up a five-for in Karnataka's first innings, bagging the key wickets of K L Rahul and Karun Nair. Nabi has been a consistent performer over the past few years as he was the second leading wicket-taker in the 2024-25 season, bagging 44 scalps at an excellent average of just under 14.



## T20 WORLD CUP

# India battle WI in do-or-die clash

Batting boom lifts India but bowling questions linger ahead of virtual quarters against West Indies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, Feb 28: Their batting has finally burst into life but cracks remain in India's bowling armour as they take on an explosive West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal of the T20 World Cup, here Sunday.

West Indies' defeat to South Africa and India's emphatic win over Zimbabwe have turned this Group 1 Super Eights clash into a do-or-die contest, making it a high-stakes battle at the Eden Gardens.

The winner will get a place in the second semifinal against England March 5 in Mumbai.

India's batting revival against Zimbabwe was just perfect and long-awaited. In a rejigged line-up, with Sanju Samson returning to the top, all the top six contributed in unison.

Making a comeback, Sanju scored only 24, but he deserves credit for lifting the tempo early and giving India a flying start. That aggressive approach settled the nerves of Abhishek Sharma, whose previous best in an uncharacteristically lean tournament had been 15 following a hat-trick of ducks.

The star opener responded in style with a half-century, while Tilak Varma flourished in his new No.6 role batting with renewed intent in his 16-ball 44 not out. India ticked all the boxes with the bat, posting 256/4 – the highest total of this



T20 World Cup – but that does not mean they arrive at Eden Gardens without concerns.

While left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh was India's pick with a triple strike against Zimbabwe and Jasprit Bumrah and Hardik Pandya have been clinical, it is spin ace Varun Chakravarthy who has looked a shadow of his past.

His growing ineffectiveness hurt India badly against South Africa, where he conceded 47 runs in four overs as David Miller and the talented Dewald Brevis went all out with a pre-determined attack in a total of 187/7, before India were bowled out for 111.

It remains to be seen whether the team management continues to back Chakravarthy or gives him a breather by bringing in left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who has played just one match so far (against Pakistan).

Gambhir's fascination for bowlers who can bat is well known, but Dube's military-medium pace on a fast and juicy Eden track could backfire against a powerful West Indies line-up.

With a bit of grass likely on the Eden surface, there should be some assistance for the pace trio of Bumrah, Arshdeep and Pandya.

The West Indies have been the team to beat from day one of the tournament.

## Pak knocked out; NZ in semifinals

Pallekelle: Pakistan were Saturday knocked out of the T20 World Cup despite winning against Sri Lanka by five runs in their Super Eights match here, with New Zealand sneaking into the semifinals on the basis of better net run rate. Invited to bat, Pakistan made a formidable 212 for 8 with Sahibzada Farhan (100) hitting a stunning century and his opening partner Fakhar Zaman scoring 84. Pakistan needed to restrict Sri Lanka to 147 or less to surpass New Zealand's net run rate and reach the semifinals from Group 2 of the Super Eights. But they failed to do so as co-hosts Sri Lanka, who were already out of reckoning for a semifinal spot, ended at 207 for 6. Pakistan and New Zealand ended on three points each in the Super Eights stage but the Kiwis qualified for the semifinals as the second-placed team from the group on the basis of better NRR.

**TODAY'S CLASHES**

Zimbabwe vs South Africa  
Time- 3:00 pm

India vs West Indies  
Time- 7:00 pm