JHARKHAND'S OWN ENGLISH DAILY

# THE AVENUE MAIL

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SHIMRON HETMYER BLASTS FASTEST FIFTY BY A WEST INDIES BATTER IN T20 WC-PAGE-11

## In Brief

### India urges citizens to leave Iran

**New Delhi, Feb 23 :** In an advisory issued on Monday, the Indian Embassy in Tehran asked Indian nationals currently in Iran to leave the country by available means of transport, including commercial flights."All Indian nationals in Iran are requested to also have their travel and immigration documents, including passports and IDs, readily available with them. They are requested to contact the Indian Embassy for any assistance in this regard," it added.

### Mukul Roy passes away



**Kolkata, Feb 23 :** Former Railway Minister and once Trinamool Congress' second in command, Mukul Roy, dies of heart attack at 71.

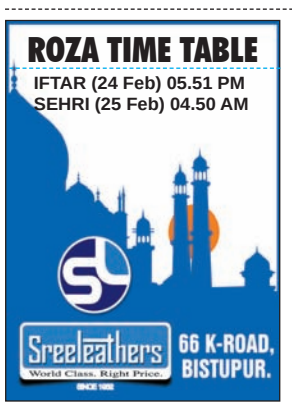
Roy was admitted at a private hospital in Kolkata and breathed his last around 1.30 am."He was undergoing treatment at a private hospital. It was around 1.30 am last night he had a massive heart attack which he could not survive in spite of the efforts by doctors," his son Subhrangshu Roy said.

### India Inc. eyes 9.1% pay hike

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Corporate India is projected to offer an average salary hike of 9.1 per cent in 2026, according to EY India's Future of Pay report. Global Capability Centres are expected to lead with 10.4 per cent increments. Financial services, e-commerce and pharma sectors may also see strong growth. Attrition declined to 16.4 per cent in 2025. The report highlights a shift towards skills-based pay, especially for AI and digital talent.

### Amazon opens second largest Asia office in B'luru

**Bengaluru, Feb 23 (IANS):** Amazon on Monday inaugurated its second largest Asia office in Bengaluru, a 12-storey campus spread across 1.1 million square feet. The facility will house over 7,000 employees across e-commerce, technology, payments and operations. The company said the new campus reflects its continued investment in India, where it has invested over $40 billion. The project also focuses on collaboration, employee wellbeing and sustainable infrastructure.




# Seraikela tops, Ranchi trails in Municipal polls

## 61.24% overall turnout across 48 urban bodies

Mail News Service



**Ranchi, Feb 23:** Voter apathy marked the urban local body elections across Jharkhand on Monday, with the state capital registering the lowest turnout among major municipal corporations.

According to the State Election Commission, polling concluded at 5 PM with an overall voter turnout of 61.24 percent across all 48 urban local bodies in the state.

The most striking figure came from the Ranchi Municipal Corporation, which recorded a mere 43.28 percent turnout - the lowest among the nine municipal corporation areas.

In contrast, the Seraikela Nagar Panchayat emerged as the highest performer, with an impressive 75.35 percent of voters exercising their franchise.

Among other municipal corporations, turnout figures stood at 49.95 percent in Hazaribagh Municipal Corporation, 57.41 percent in Medininagar Municipal Corporation, 48 percent in Dhanbad Municipal Corporation, 60 percent in Giridih Municipal Corporation, 52.92 percent in Deoghar Municipal Corporation, 49.76 percent in Chas Municipal Corporation, 54.96 percent in Adityapur Municipal Corporation, and 50.70 percent in Mango Municipal Corporation.

**VIP Booth Sees Poor Response**

Low enthusiasm was particularly evident at some of Ranchi's prominent polling centres. The ATI Building, considered one of the city's most high-profile polling stations due to the presence of voters from top administrative and gubernatorial ranks, recorded shockingly low participation. At Booth No. 01, only 132 out of 996 registered voters cast their ballots. Similarly, Booth No. 02 saw just 141 votes polled out of 755 registered voters - keeping turnout below 20 percent at the venue.

Election officials stationed at the centre admitted that the low participation was concerning, especially given the stature of the electorate listed there.

**Voter List Errors Add to Chaos**

Several voters across urban areas reported difficulties due to discrepancies in the voter list. Many were seen moving from one polling station to another in search of their names.

In some cases, members of the same family were assigned to different wards and polling booths, creating logistical challenges and discouraging participation.

The confusion over polling station locations, coupled with administrative lapses in voter list management, appeared to dampen public enthusiasm. Additionally, a section of high-profile and urban voters reportedly left the city over the extended weekend, taking advantage of consecutive holidays.

A considerable number of registered voters are also currently lemployed in other cities or abroad, though their names remain on local electoral rolls.

Despite a moderate overall turnout statewide, the figures from Ranchi once again highlight a pattern of civic disengagement in the state's urban centres - raising fresh concerns over voter participation in city governance and grassroots democracy. (W-pm)

### Centre examining rising airfares at 'highest level', SC told

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Central government on Monday informed the Supreme Court that the issue of volatile airfares and add-on fees charged by private airlines during festive seasons and holidays is being examined at the highest level.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta was hearing a public interest litigation (PIL) challenging the "opaque, exploitative, and algorithm-driven" pricing practices in India's civil aviation sector, as well as the reduction in complimentary check-in baggage limits for passengers.

Appearing for the Union government, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Anil Kaushik submitted that consultations are underway at the highest levels of the government to address the concerns raised in the petition.

"The Solicitor General has also called a meeting. We have taken the matter to the highest level. We are in discussion with the highest authority. Four weeks' time may be granted, and we will come up with a counter," the Centre's law officer said.

Taking note of the submission, the apex court granted four weeks' time to the Centre to file its response and listed the matter for further consideration on March 23.

## CM Hemant Soren, Governor cast votes in Ranchi

**Ranchi, Feb 23::** Prominent leaders, including Chief Minister Hemant Soren and Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar, exercised their franchise during the ongoing municipal elections in Ranchi, calling on citizens to participate enthusiastically in the democratic process.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren, accompanied by his wife and Gandey MLA Kalpana Soren, cast his vote at Sant Kuldeep School polling station. Their arrival drew large crowds, with many people eager to greet them and take photographs, particularly with Kalpana Soren. Despite the attention,



the Chief Minister and his wife stood in queue like other voters before casting their ballots.

After voting, Hemant Soren displayed his inked finger and appealed to residents-especially youth and



women-to turn out in large numbers.

Meanwhile, Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar cast his vote at the ATI building in Ranchi, describing the civic polls as a "festival of democracy." Addressing the media, he urged all eligible voters to participate without fail, emphasizing that while the choice of candidate rests with individuals, voting in local body elections is a shared civic duty.

Highlighting the importance of grassroots governance, the Governor called on citizens to elect representatives dedicated to the development and welfare of their localities and the state, and encouraged robust participation to strengthen democratic institutions at the local level.

## India releases first anti-terror policy PRAHAAR

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Monday unveiled India's inaugural National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy, titled 'PRAHAAR', marking a major milestone in the country's long-standing efforts to combat terrorism in all its forms. The Ministry of Home Affairs has introduced the nation's first comprehensive counter-terrorism policy, titled 'PRAHAAR', establishing a structured national framework to address evolving and complex security threats, including cross-border terrorism, drone-based attacks, cyber-enabled threats, and organised terror networks.The document underscores India's decades-long experience and leadership in combating terrorism, firmly rejecting any attempt to link terrorism with any particular religion, ethnicity, nationality, or civilisation.



It reiterates the government's unwavering zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism and violence, while emphasising support for victims and rejecting any justification for acts of terror under any circumstances.

Highlighting regional instability, the existence of ungoverned spaces, and instances of state-sponsored terrorism, the strategy adopts a multi-layered approach focused on prevention, swift and proportionate response, enhanced inter-agency coordination, and strict adherence to human rights and the rule of law.The eight-page policy document, which has been made publicly available on the MHA website, formalises a unified and institutionalised approach that has guided India's counter-terror efforts over the years amid evolving threats.India's position remains unequivocal that terrorism, in any form or manifestation, cannot be justified under any pretext, and the country does not associate terrorism with any religion, ethnicity, nationality, or civilisation.The policy is rooted in a commitment to safeguarding citizens, upholding human rights, and ensuring accountability through established legal and judicial processes under the rule of law.The term 'PRAHAAR', meaning "strike", represents seven core pillars of India's counter-terrorism framework: prevention of terrorist attacks, swift and proportionate response, capacity-building across security and intelligence agencies, ensuring human rights-compliant operations, addressing conditions conducive to radicalisation, strengthening international cooperation, and promoting societal resilience and recovery, according to the document.

### WhatsApp agrees to follow CCI order

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Messaging platform WhatsApp on Monday informed the Supreme Court that it will comply with the directions issued by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) requiring the platform to provide users greater control over whether their data is shared with other Meta companies. A special bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M. Pancholi permitted WhatsApp and its parent company Meta Platforms to withdraw their interim applications against the CCI penalty after the companies undertook to implement the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) order, which extended CCI's privacy and consent safeguards to advertising-related data sharing.

### Swami ready to face arrest

**Varanasi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati on Monday said he is ready to face arrest and will fully cooperate with any probe in connection with the POCSO case, even as he criticised the Uttar Pradesh government. Addressing reporters during media interaction here, the seer said that if an investigation is underway, he has a greater interest than the authorities in ensuring that the matter of the alleged wrongdoing is resolved swiftly.

"If any investigation is being conducted, we will cooperate. The police and the state may have an interest in resolving a case, but we have even more interest in ensuring that this wrongdoing is addressed quickly," he said.

### 17 die in Nepal bus tragedy

**Kathmandu, Feb 23 (IANS)** At least 17 people died after a bus travelling from western Pokhara to the capital Kathmandu plunged into the Trishuli River in the central district of Dhading early Monday, a senior official at the District Administration Office, Dhading, said. "We have sent 17 people who appear to have died on the spot for medical confirmation," Chief District Officer of Dhading, Bijaya Raj Subedi, told IANS. "We have also sent 27 others for treatment at different local hospitals and Kathmandu-based hospitals."The bus plunged about 300 metres below the road to the riverbank at around 1:30 am on Monday in the Bhaisigauda area of Benighat Rorang Rural Municipality. "The cause of the accident has not yet been identified, as the bus was travelling in its own lane," Subedi said.

## Gangster Vikram Sharma murder solved in Dehradun; 2 arrested, 6 at large

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The Uttarakhand Police and Special Task Force have achieved a significant breakthrough in the investigation of the high-profile murder of Jamshedpur-based gangster Vikram Sharma. In a coordinated joint operation, law enforcement agencies successfully apprehended two primary suspects involved in the conspiracy, though six other individuals remain at large and are currently being pursued across multiple state borders.

During a press briefing held on Monday, police officials detailed the timeline of the brutal assassination that took place on February 13. The victim was targeted by unidentified gunmen while he was at the Silver City Mall located in the Dalanwala area. Immediately following the shooting, forensic teams were deployed to the scene to collect critical evidence, while investigators began a massive sweep of the region's technical data.

The subsequent investigation revealed that Vikram Sharma was a notorious figure in the Jharkhand criminal underworld, with a long history of involvement in cases ranging from murder and extortion to other



heinous crimes. By meticulously analyzing CCTV footage and mobile surveillance data, the police tracked the movements of the assailants who had arrived at the mall on a motorcycle. Following the execution of the crime, the attackers fled to the Sahastradhara area where they switched vehicles to mislead the police before heading toward Haridwar.

The trail eventually led investigators from Uttarakhand to Greater Noida and deep into Jharkhand. The recovered motorcycle used in the crime provided the final link needed to identify the group. Under interrogation, the arrested suspects, identified as Akshat Thakur, also known as Sanjeev Kumar from Jugsalai, and Rajkumar from Bagbera, revealed that the murder was the culmination of a long-standing criminal rivalry. The plot to eliminate Sharma had been carefully orchestrated over several months as part of a larger plan to establish dominance in the Jamshedpur region.

The police have now formed specialized teams to track down the remaining six fugitives, identified as Ankit Verma, Ashutosh Singh, Vishal Singh, Akash Kumar Prasad, Yashraj, and Jitendra Kumar Sahu. To aid in their capture, a reward of twenty-five thousand rupees has been officially declared for each of the wanted individuals. The authorities have signaled that they are working closely with Jharkhand police to dismantle the network that supported these individuals during their time in hiding.

# Chakulia leads with 72.9 % in East Singhbhum

## Turnout in Mango 50.8%, Jugsalai 59.6%











**Mail News Service**

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The municipal elections 2026 in East Singhbhum district concluded with a mixed voter response, as final turnout figures revealed moderate participation in key urban bodies, with Chakulia Nagar Panchayat emerging as the frontrunner.

According to the final update released by the district administration, Chakulia Nagar Panchayat recorded the highest voter turnout at 72.9 per cent, reflecting strong public engagement in the electoral process. The impressive polling percentage indicates heightened civic awareness among voters in smaller urban centres.

Jugsalai Municipal Council registered a turnout of 59.6 per cent, marking a fairly active participation by voters. While the figure suggests a reasonable response, it still highlights the need for greater mobilisation in urban local body elections.

In contrast, Mango Municipal Corporation recorded a comparatively lower turnout of 50.8 per cent, pointing towards voter apathy in one of the district's largest urban areas. Despite being a densely populated region, nearly half of the eligible voters did not exercise their franchise, raising concerns over urban voter engagement.




Deputy Commissioner, Karn Satyarthi said that polling across all three urban local bodies was conducted peacefully under tight security arrangements, with election officials ensuring smooth and transparent voting procedures. Adequate deployment of security personnel and administrative vigilance helped maintain law and order throughout the day.

Election authorities had undertaken awareness drives prior to polling to encourage voter participation, but the turnout figures suggest that more sustained efforts may be required, especially in larger urban centres, to strengthen democratic participation at the grassroots level.The municipal elections in Seraikela - Kharsawan district concluded peacefully with a contrasting voter turnout pattern across urban local bodies, as smaller towns recorded enthusiastic participation while larger urban centres witnessed relatively subdued polling.

According to official figures released by the district administration, Seraikela Nagar Panchayat emerged as the top performer with an impressive voter turnout of 74.86 per cent, setting a benchmark for civic participation in the district. Long queues of voters, including women and elderly citizens, were witnessed at polling booths throughout the day, reflecting strong public engagement driven by local development concerns and civic issues. In contrast, the larger and more industrialised urban centres recorded significantly lower turnout, highlighting the persistent issue of urban voter apathy. Adityapur Municipal Corporation registered a turnout of 56.06 per cent, while Kapali Municipal Council recorded 57.38 per cent polling. Despite better infrastructure and accessibility, a considerable section of voters in these areas chose to stay away from the electoral process. Observers believe that factors such as urban indifference, busy lifestyles and limited engagement with local governance often contribute to lower participation in municipal elections in bigger towns.

Polling across all three civic bodies was conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner under tight security arrangements. The district administration ensured adequate deployment of security personnel, and senior officials, including the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, monitored the process by visiting various polling stations. (W-pb)

## Uproar over bogus voting in Jugsalai: Rinku Singh protests, voting halted for one hour

**Mail News Service**

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Chaos erupted at Booth No. 177 located at St. Anthony's School in Jugsalai during the Jamshedpur Municipal Elections today. Following allegations of bogus voting, the situation escalated to the point where polling had to be suspended for one hour.

**Allegations of Fraudulent Voting and Physical Altercations :** According to reports, candidate Rinku Singh protested against the alleged bogus voting and staged a sit-in (dharna) at the booth along with her supporters. During the commotion, reports emerged of supporters Rahul and Shishir entering the booth and engaging in physical altercations.



It is further alleged that during the heat of the moment, some individuals' voter ID cards and Aadhaar cards were snatched, and attempts were made to seize mobile phones.

**Police Detain Supporter Following Clash :** The dispute intensified as a clash broke out between police personnel and the supporter, Rahul. Consequently, the police detained Rahul by locking him in a room at the venue.

Upon receiving news of the incident, senior officials rushed to the spot to pacify the agitated crowd. After an hour-long disruption, the polling process was eventually resumed.

**Voter Turnout: Chakulia vs. Jugsalai :** Despite the controversies, voters continued to visit the polling stations. Data suggests that voters in Chakulia showed significantly more enthusiasm compared to those in Jugsalai.

By 2:00 PM, Chakulia's Ward No. 4 recorded the highest turnout at 62.50%. In contrast, various wards in Jugsalai saw a much lower turnout, ranging between 30% and 37%.

**Women Block Officials' Convoy in Protest:** A high-tension situation developed near the Dharamshala polling station in Jugsalai's Chowk Bazar when Rinku Singh and her supporters blocked the convoy of the Circle Officer (CO) and Block Development Officer (BDO).

Alleging large-scale bogus voting, a large number of women sat on the road in protest, trapping the officials' vehicles. Protesters claimed that irregularities were being overlooked in the voting process. Heavy security forces remain deployed at the scene as officials attempt to negotiate with the protesters.

**Demands to Cancel Polling at St. John and Dharamshala Booths :** Tensions remain high as protesters and candidates demand the immediate cancellation of polling at the St. John and Dharamshala booths due to the persistent allegations of fraud. While heavy police presence is maintained, demonstrators refuse to end their sit-in until action is taken.

## Sandhya Singh thanks voters

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Voting for the Mango Municipal Corporation elections concluded peacefully and smoothly, reflecting enthusiastic public participation. NDA-supported mayoral candidate Sandhya Singh expressed heartfelt gratitude to voters for taking part in what she described as a festival of democracy. She said that the conscious citizens of Mango strengthened democratic values by casting their votes in large numbers. Thanking the electorate for the trust and support, Sandhya Singh added that their confidence motivated her to work with greater dedication and responsibility for the comprehensive development of Mango. (w/gsd)



## Rinku Singh demands re-polling in Jugsalai

**Mail News Service**

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Alleging large-scale irregularities, booth capturing and bogus voting in the Jugsalai Municipal Council elections, chairperson candidate Rinku Singh has demanded cancellation of polling at several booths and sought a re-poll under strict security cover.

Addressing a press conference at her election office in Jugsalai's Chowk Bazar after the conclusion of voting on Monday, Singh claimed that organised attempts were made to influence the electoral process in multiple wards.

She submitted a written complaint to the District Magistrate-cum-District Election Officer, urging immediate intervention and action.

Singh levelled allegations against rival candidate Naushin Khan, stating that her supporters, allegedly acting at the behest of her husband Hidayat Khan, engaged in booth capturing, intimidation, and large-scale bogus voting. She further alleged that Khan, who holds ministerial status as Chairman of the Jharkhand State Minority Commission, visited several polling stations with security personnel and supporters, thereby attempting to influence voters. According to Singh, disturbances were reported from booths across Wards 01, 02, 05, 06, 07, 09, 10, 11 and 13. She claimed that as early as 8 am, attempts were made to capture booths, authorised polling agents were assaulted and forced out, and bogus votes were cast in large numbers. At one polling station located in St John's School, two of her polling agents were allegedly assaulted and confined inside a room. She stated that although senior district officials visited some of the affected booths around 3 pm and temporarily restored order, her polling agents were again driven out shortly after the officials left.



Singh also alleged that unlawful gatherings within 200 metres of polling stations were used to exert pressure on voters.

Calling the incidents a violation of Sections 58 and 58A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, relating to booth capturing and adjournment or countermanding of polls, Singh said the fairness of voting at the identified booths now stands compromised. She urged the State Election Commission to order a magistrate-level inquiry, examine CCTV and webcasting footage, deploy additional armed or central forces, and conduct re-polling where malpractice is established.

She also demanded registration of FIRs against those found guilty under relevant provisions of the IPC and election laws. Copies of her complaint have also been emailed to the State Election Commission in Ranchi and the Election Commission of India in New Delhi. BJP district president Sanjeev Sinha, who was present at the press conference, echoed the demand for re-polling under paramilitary or CRPF supervision, stating that prior requests for stronger security arrangements were not heeded. ( W-pm)


**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I GEETA** Das,W/O Ghasia Das, aged 72 years, residing at C/228 B-Block Navrang Mohalla, Sonari, Jamshedpur East Singhbhum, Pin-831011, Jharkhand, have changed my name to Geeta for all purposes. Henceforth, I shall be known as Geeta. Both names refer to one and the same person.

**AFFIDAVIT**

I, **MAHENDRA LODHI**, Son of Sukh Sagar Lodhi, by Faith- Hindú, by Nationality- Indian, Present & Permanent Resident of Golpahari, Near Jain Mandir, P.O- Tatanagar, P.S-Parsudih, Town- Jamshedpur, District-East Singhbhum, State- Jharkhand do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows:-

1) That I am the Indian Citizen by birth.

2) That my Aadhar Card No is 4210 6353 2567.

3) That my actual and correct name is **"MAHENDRA LODHI"** but it has been wrongly mentioned as Mehand Lodhi in my Aadhar Card vide Aadhar Card No 4210 6353 2567.

4) That my actual and correct name **"MAHENDRA LODHI"** is also mentioned in my Birth Certificate vide Registration No-B-2023: 20-02144-000005, along with all the other relevant documents of mine.

5) That **"MAHENDRA LODHI"** and Mehand Lodhi is the one and same person.

6) That I am Swearing this Affidavit for correction of my name as **"MAHENDRA LODHI"** in place of Mehand Lodhi in my Aadhar Card vide Aadhar Card No 4210 6353 2567.

7) That all the Statement made above are true to the best of my knowledge, belief and information and I sign on this Affidavit on this the 04th day of September 2025 at Jamshedpur.

Date : 04-09-2025 Advocate

**S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER**

Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer (TRD), Chakradharpur acting for & on behalf of The President of India invites e-Tender as mentioned below. The Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Sl. No., Tender Notice No. & Name of the work** are as follows : **1. CKP-D-639-BNDM-CTR.** Elect (TRD-OHE) works in connection with Through Sleeper Renewal (Primary) TSR(P), Complete Track Renewal Secondary CTR(S), Through Rail Renewal Primary TRR(P), Through Rail Renewal Secondary TRR(S), Complete Track Renewal Primary CTR (P) in different sections under the ADEE/TRD/BNDM jurisdiction in Chakradharpur Division. **Tender Value :** ₹ 23,28,968.40. **EMD :** ₹ 46,600/-. **2. CKP-D-639-BOND-DPS.** Elect (TRD-OHE) works in connection with Through sleeper Renewal (Primary) TSR(P), Complete Track Renewal Secondary CTR(S), Through Rail Renewal Primary TRR(P), Through Rail Renewal Secondary TRR(S), Complete Track Renewal Primary CTR (P) in different sections under the ADEE/TRD/DPS jurisdiction in Chakradharpur Division. **Tender Value :** ₹ 69,92,412.65. **EMD :** ₹ 1,39,900/-. **3. CKP-D-683-BOND-CTR-TTR.** Elect (TRD-OHE) works in connection with TTR(P), TRR(P), CTR(S), TSR(P), TRR(S), CTR(P) in different sections in Chakradharpur Division. **Tender Value :** ₹ 1,55,30,533.64,. **EMD :** ₹ 2,27,700/-. **4. CKP-D-800-BAL-LEAN.** Balance work for improvment of leaning mast locations over Chakradharpur Division. **Tender Value :** ₹ 51,58,267.25/-. **EMD :** ₹ 1,03,200/-. **Completion Period:** 12 months for Sl. No. 1 to 3 each, 18 months for Sl. No. 4. **Place of opening of e-tender :** Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD/South Eastern Railway. **Date & Time of closing of tender:** 15.00 hrs. of 18.03.2026 for each. **Date & Time of opening tender:** 15:30 hrs. of 18.03.2026 for each. E-tender can be viewed at website **http://www.ireps.gov.in** The tenderer/ bidder must have Class-III digital signature certificate & must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidders can participate on e-tendering. All relevant paper must be uploaded at the time of participating in e-tendering. **(PR-1224)**


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# Ballot boxes kept under tight security








Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23 :** Following the successful and peaceful conclusion of polling across all three urban local bodies, polling teams began depositing the sealed ballot boxes at the designated Receiving Centre located at the Golmuri-cum-Jugsalai Block premises. The entire exercise was being carried out under stringent security arrangements to ensure the safe and secure handling of election materials.

At the time of filing this report, the process of receiving and depositing the ballot boxes was still underway. Officials deployed at the centre were systematically verifying and documenting each submission as per the prescribed election protocols. The entire operation was being conducted in a well-coordinated and orderly manner under the close supervision of senior administrative and security officials, ensuring full compliance with established guidelines and maintaining transparency and integrity throughout the process. ( W-pm)

# Steady turnout marks peaceful civic polls in Chaibasa, Chakradharpur








Mail News Service

**Chaibasa, Feb 23 :** Voting for the Municipal elections in Chaibasa and Chakradharpur concluded on a largely peaceful note on Monday, with an enthusiastic voter turnout recorded in both urban local bodies. Polling was conducted at 38 booths in Chaibasa and 49 in Chakradharpur.

By 5 pm, Chaibasa registered a voter turnout of 61.05 per cent, while Chakradharpur recorded 57.95 per cent.

With several voters still in queues after the scheduled closing time, officials expressed hope that the final turnout would touch nearly 65 per cent.

Polling began at 7 am, and long queues were visible at several booths even before voting commenced. In the first two hours, Chaibasa recorded 10.68 per cent polling, while Chakradharpur registered 9.44 per cent. By 11 am, the turnout rose to 21.30 per cent in Chaibasa and 15.11 per cent in Chakradharpur. The pace picked up steadily through the afternoon, reaching 34.59 per cent in Chaibasa and 33.05 per cent in Chakradharpur by 1 pm.

By 3 pm, the figures climbed to 48.61 per cent and 46.87 per cent respectively, before crossing the 60 per cent mark in Chaibasa by evening.

Barring minor verbal altercations at a few locations, polling remained largely smooth and orderly.

District Election Officer Chandan Kumar and Superintendent of Police Amit Renu personally inspected several polling stations along with sub-divisional officers to oversee arrangements.

The SP appealed to voters to cast their ballots fearlessly, assuring that adequate security forces had been deployed across all booths.

After the completion of polling, ballot boxes were transported to the strong room set up at the Women's College in Chaibasa, designated for both municipal areas.

The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police visited the receiving centre to review arrangements and issue necessary instructions to officials on duty. The Deputy Commissioner confirmed that voting concluded peacefully in both towns. However, as polling continued at certain booths beyond 5 pm due to queues, the final voter turnout figures are expected to be announced after compilation of the remaining data. (W-pm)

## Ranchi records lowest voter turnout in ULB polls

Mail News Service

Ranchi, Feb 23: Ranchi recorded the lowest voter turnout in Jharkhand's urban local body elections, with only 43.28 percent of eligible voters casting their ballots, according to State Election Commissioner Alka Tiwari. As of 5 p.m., a total of 61.84 percent voter turnout was reported across the state's 48 urban local bodies. Commissioner Tiwari noted that these figures, received from district officials, may vary slightly. The final voter turnout will be confirmed after all reports from election officials at every level are compiled, expected by tomorrow. Ranchi's low participation highlights a need for increased voter engagement in the city compared to other urban areas in Jharkhand, where turnout has been comparatively higher. (W-pm)



Union Minister of State for Defence Sanjay Seth cast his vote during Ranchi Municipal Corporation (RMC) Election in Ranchion Monday.



BJP Mayor Candidate Roshni Khalkho shows inked mark finger after casting her vote during Ranchi Municipal Corporation RMC Election in Ranchi on Monday.





Nuns from Roman Catholic Church show Voter ID Cards stand in queue to cast their vote during Ranchi Municipal Corporation Election 2026 in Ranchi on Monday.

## Voter turnout crosses 21% in early hours across wards

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The voter turnout report at 11 a.m. indicated a steady participation across multiple wards, with an overall turnout of 21.10 per cent recorded out of a total electorate of 2,53,711 voters. According to the ward-wise data, 53,592 votes had been cast by mid-morning, reflecting a gradual rise in polling activity.

In the Mango area, turnout remained moderate across 36 wards, largely ranging between 15 and 24 per cent. Ward 18 recorded one of the highest turnouts at 24.60 per cent, followed by Ward 28 at 24.20 per cent and Ward 7 at 23.30 per cent. On the lower side, Ward 13 saw a turnout of 14.80 per cent, while several wards hovered around the 17–20 per cent range, indicating steady but cautious voter participation.

Jugsalai recorded comparatively higher polling percentages in several wards. Ward 11 registered the highest turnout at 36.30 per cent, followed by Ward 10 at 34.30 per cent and Ward 6 at 32.60 per cent. A number of wards in the area reported turnout above 30 per cent, reflecting strong voter engagement during the early hours. However, a few wards such as Ward 19 and Ward 17 remained below 20 per cent.

Chakulia emerged as the leading area in terms of voter turnout, with several wards reporting significantly higher participation. Ward 1 recorded the highest turnout at 41.50 per cent, followed by Ward 4 at 38.40 per cent and Ward 12 at 37.80 per cent. Most wards in Chakulia maintained turnout levels above 30 per cent, indicating enthusiastic voter response.

Overall, the data suggests a mixed trend across regions, with Chakulia leading in voter participation, followed by Jugsalai, while Mango reported relatively moderate turnout levels. Election officials expressed confidence that voter turnout would increase further as polling progresses through the day. (W-pb)

## Cong leader suspended over alleged anti-party activities

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The East Singhbhum District Congress Committee has taken strict disciplinary action against party leader Abhijeet Singh, suspending him from the Indian National Congress and barring him from holding party membership for life over alleged anti-party activities. In a press statement issued by District Congress Committee president Pervinder Singh, the action was taken after serious allegations surfaced regarding Abhijeet Singh's role in activities considered detrimental to the party's interests. The statement noted that during the Jugsalai Municipal Council chairman election, Congress-supported candidate Indu Devi reportedly announced support for a BJP-backed candidate, a development viewed as a matter of grave concern by the party. The district leadership stated that Abhijeet Singh's role in the incident was found to be directly or indirectly suspicious. The party termed the matter as a case of indiscipline and gross irregularity, and further described it as a serious betrayal of the Congress party. Taking a firm stance, the committee has not only suspended Abhijeet Singh but has also decided to impose a lifetime ban on his association with the party. The leadership emphasised that maintaining organisational discipline is of utmost importance and any deviation from party principles would invite strict action.

## Bride casts vote before 'bidai', calls voting her first duty

Mail News Service



**Seraikela, Feb 23:** In a stirring example of civic responsibility, a newlywed bride chose the ballot over tradition, casting her vote before leaving for her matrimonial home during the ongoing Seraikela Nagar Panchayat-2026 elections.

Kumkum Mukhi, a resident of Norodih Basti under the Seraikela Nagar Panchayat area, arrived at the polling booth located in Indratandi dressed in her wedding attire, accompanied by her grandmother.

Her marriage had been solemnised late Sunday night, and despite the customary post-wedding rituals and an overnight vigil, the young bride expressed her firm desire to exercise her franchise before departing for her in-laws' home on Monday morning.

Respecting her commitment to democratic values, her family escorted her to the polling station in her bridal ensemble. The sight of a bride standing in queue among voters created a poignant and inspiring moment for fellow electors and polling officials alike.

Daughter of Madan Mukhi and Kamalabati Mukhi, Kumkum described voting as not only her constitutional right but also her foremost duty.

"Voting is our right and our first responsibility. First comes voting, and then the courtyard of my in-laws," she said, underlining the spirit of participatory democracy.

Her gesture stood out amid the peaceful and orderly polling process, sending a powerful message on voter awareness and the importance of prioritising civic duty, even on life's most significant personal occasions. (W-pm)

# Seraikela leads early, Adityapur and Kapali gain momentum later







Mail News Service

**Seraikela, Feb 23:** A vibrant display of democratic spirit marked the polling day for the Urban Local Body Elections-2026, with voters turning out in significant numbers across the region.

The highest early momentum was recorded in Seraikela, where long queues were visible at polling booths since morning.

By 1:00 pm, Seraikela Nagar Panchayat had registered an impressive 47.57 percent voter turnout. In comparison, turnout figures in Adityapur Municipal Corporation and Kapali Municipal Council were relatively lower at 34.82 percent and 35.59 percent respectively.

However, the pace picked up notably after 3:00 pm. Seraikela's turnout rose to 63.07 percent, while Adityapur and Kapali also witnessed a steady surge, reaching 46.84 percent and 48.22 percent respectively.

The growing participation reflected increasing voter enthusiasm as the day progressed.

By 5:00 pm, Seraikela maintained its lead with a substantial 74.86 percent turnout.

Adityapur recorded 56.06 percent, while Kapali stood at 57.38 percent. Officials stated that the final figures are awaited, as voters who were in queue at the time of closing will be allowed to cast their ballots.

Overall, the polling day witnessed a progressive rise in voter turnout, underscoring strong civic participation and reaffirming public faith in the democratic process ( W-pm)

### Trend throughout the day highlighted steady rise in polling

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9:00 am | Seraikela - 13.68% | Adityapur - 9.35% | Kapali - 8.99% |
| 11:00 am | Seraikela - 31.30% | Adityapur - 21.80% | Kapali - 22.13% |
| 1:00 pm | Seraikela - 47.57% | Adityapur - 34.82% | Kapali - 35.59% |
| 3:00 pm | Seraikela - 63.07% | Adityapur - 46.84% | Kapali - 48.22% |
| 5:00 pm | Seraikela - 74.86% | Adityapur - 56.06% | Kapali - 57.38% |

# ALAC strengthens Ho language movement with nationwide strategy

Mail News Service



**Rairangpur, Feb 23:** The annual general meeting of the All-Language Action Committee (ALAC) and the review session of the Ho language movement were held on Sunday, February 22, 2026, at Ho Samaj Sanskriti Bhavan, Banshahi, Karanjia, Mayurbhanj district. Chaired by National President Ramrai Munduya, the meeting took historic decisions to intensify efforts for constitutional recognition of the Ho language across India.

The assembly resolved to press both Central and State governments for the inclusion of Ho in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and its recognition as Odisha's second official language. Discussions reviewed recent advocacy initiatives, including the two-day "Delhi Chalo 5.0" protest at Jantar Mantar, where delegations met President Droupadi Murmu, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

The meeting also highlighted the Bhubaneswar public demonstration on December 12, 2025, and ongoing lobbying for official recognition.

Representatives from Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Assam emphasized promoting Ho literature, drama, and translation works, while urging youth engagement in education, research, and social development.

Social and cultural organizations united to preserve the language and cultural identity. A memorandum was submitted to the Director of SC, ST, and OBC affairs requesting amendments in official records to include Ho, Munda, Kol, and Kolho communities.

The session concluded with a unanimous resolution to continue the movement until the Ho language receives constitutional recognition, with a warning of intensified nationwide advocacy if demands are unmet.

## ICL to hold key meeting in Dhanbad on migrant workers' rights

Mail News Service

**Jhargram, Feb 23:** The Central Working Committee of the Indian Confederation of Labour (ICL) will convene an important meeting on March 15 in Dhanbad to deliberate on safeguarding the rights, dignity, and protection of migrant workers. Trade union representatives from multiple states are expected to participate.

The meeting comes amid rising concerns over the safety, social security, and fair wages of migrant labourers in West Bengal and other parts of the country. ICL leaders said the session will focus on building a coordinated national movement to press both State and Central governments for concrete policy measures.

The Junglemahal Swaraj Morcha (JSM) will also attend, represented by its Central President Ashoke Mahata, who serves as ICL's Deputy General Secretary. ICL National President Anirban Bhattacharjee described migrant workers' issues as a growing national concern, while Secretary General Avtar Singh emphasized discussions on social security, fair wages, and accountability to protect millions of unorganized workers across India.

## 115th birth anniversary of Late Nokhe Mishra observed



**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The 115th birth anniversary of the late Nokhe Mishra was commemorated today at his residence in Khasmahal. Around 200 people from Naya Gaon and surrounding communities gathered to pay tribute to his life and legacy.

Attendees recalled Nokhe Mishra's contributions and pledged to uphold his ideals and vision. Representatives from various community groups shared their thoughts and expressed respect for his enduring influence. The event was organized with the support of Nokhe Mishra's family and local community members. Participants also extended their condolences to the family while celebrating the remarkable life and contributions of the late leader.

## Trinamool Mahila Cong announces 46-member district committee

**Jhargram, Feb 23:** Ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, the All India Trinamool Congress has strengthened its district-level organization by announcing a new 46-member committee of the Trinamool Mahila Congress in Jhargram. The committee was unveiled at a press conference at the party's district office by District President Dulal Murmu. Constituted under state leadership directives, the new panel retains several experienced leaders in key positions, including Vice Presidents and General Secretaries. Prominent members include Sanchita Ghosh, Shubhra Mahato, Rani Soren, Kabita Ghosh, and Kunami Hansda. State Minister Birbaha Hansda and Jhargram Zilla Parishad President Chinmoyee Marandi have been named special invitees. Reappointed District President said women workers remain firmly committed to party supremo Mamata Banerjee and will work actively to ensure her return as Chief Minister for a fourth consecutive term.

# Five couples wed at mass marriage ceremony in Kharagpur

Mail News Service

**Kharagpur, Feb 23** : In a heartwarming display of social commitment, five underprivileged couples were united in matrimony at a mass wedding ceremony held at Swadhin Club in Malancha.

The event was jointly organized by Kharagpur Swalp Prochesta and Tribeni Yuva Janakalyan Organization as part of their continued efforts to support financially disadvantaged families.

The ceremony, conducted in a simple yet emotionally charged atmosphere, featured traditional Vedic rituals performed in the presence of guests, local residents, and well-wishers.

To help the newlyweds begin their married life with stability, the organizers provided essential household items such as beds, almirahs, dressing tables, bicycles, pillows, and mattresses. They also assured continued guidance and follow-up support for the couples.

This marked the fifth edition of the initiative in Kharagpur. Organizers stated that over the past 18 years, thousands of mass weddings have been conducted across various districts of West Bengal.

Secretary Sanatan Das noted that the movement began in the Junglemahal region to prevent trafficking and has since grown into a broader humanitarian mission promoting dignity and social security.



## Fifth day of Bhagwat Katha: Divine pastimes of Lord Krishna narrated

Mail News Service



**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** On the fifth day of the Bhagwat Katha at Golmuri Maninder Tower, Acharya Pandit Suresh Chandra Shastri Ji Maharaj narrated the divine and loving pastimes of Krishna, including Bal Leela, Makhan Chori, Venu Geet and Govardhan Leela. He described how young Krishna's playful acts in Mother Yashoda's courtyard reflected innocence and divine charm.

The Makhan Chori episode symbolized not theft but the acceptance of the Gopis' pure love and devotion, with butter representing the devotion hidden in the heart. Through Venu Geet, Krishna captivated devotees with the melody of his flute.

Narrating Govardhan Leela, the Acharya explained how Krishna lifted the Govardhan mountain to protect the people of Braj from Indra's wrath, promoting nature worship and humbling pride.

On Tuesday, the sixth day, the discourse will cover Maharas Leela, Krishna's journey to Mathura, the slaying of Kansa, Uddhav-Gopi dialogue and Rukmini's marriage. The eight-day event has been organized by the Goyal family of Golmuri. (w/gsd)

## Father dies in tragic road accident



**Seraikela, Feb 23:** In a tragic incident, a 58-year-old man lost his life in a road accident on the Hata-Chaibasa main road under Rajnagar police station in the early hours of Monday. The deceased, identified as Anand Mahato, a resident of Bonkati Tola in Rajnagar block, was on his way to drop his son at Tatanagar Railway Station when their scooter collided with a truck parked on the roadside near Ritika Dhaba. The accident occurred around 4 a.m.

Both father and son were rushed to Tata Main Hospital with the help of local residents, where doctors declared Anand Mahato dead. His son, Mohit, who was travelling to Ooty for work, fainted after the incident and is currently stated to be stable. Police have initiated an investigation into the matter. Preliminary findings suggest that poor lighting or loss of balance may have led to the accident. The incident has left the family in deep mourning.

# Mangalam City residents form new executive committee



Mail News Service

**Seraikela, Feb 23:** A general body meeting of the Shri Balaji Mangalam City Residents Maintenance Self-Supporting Co-operative Society Limited was held at Mangalam City in Adityapur, where a new executive committee was unanimously constituted. Rajneesh Kumar was elected president of the society, while Pradeep Kumar Gupta, Chandrashekhar and Rajiv Ranjan Mishra were chosen as vice-presidents. Neelanshu Pathak was appointed secretary, with Sanjay Jain, Kamlesh Kumar Pandey and Manoj Agarwal as joint secretaries. Pradeep Kumar Srivastava was named treasurer, while K.K. Patnaik and Deepak Saxeria were appointed assistant treasurers.

Several women members were also nominated to the executive body, reflecting inclusive participation in the society's governance.

During the meeting, members emphasised transparency, collective responsibility and unity, clarifying that no representative would function on a tower-based basis. It was resolved that all decisions would be taken in the larger interest of residents, ensuring fairness and participatory governance.

# Young couple found hanging from tree in Gumla

**Gumla , Feb 23 (IANS)** The bodies of a young man and a teenage girl were found hanging from a tree in Suruhu village under the Kamdara police station area of Jharkhand's Gumla district on Monday, officials said. Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Gumla Sadar Hospital for a post-mortem examination.

Prima facie, the case is suspected to be a suicide linked to a love affair. The deceased have been identified as Ramesh Cheek Baraik, 20, a resident of Akara Gabri Toli in Suruhu village, and Soni Kumari, 16, a resident of Podhotoli. According to villagers, the bodies were spotted hanging from a tree near a pond. Police were informed about the incident. A large number of local residents also gathered at the spot. Family members said Soni Kumari had left home on the morning of February 21, stating that she was going to appear for a practical examination related to her matriculation. Baraik had also left around the same time. When the two did not return by late evening,



their families began searching for them but failed to locate them for two days. The bodies were recovered from the tree near the village on Monday. It has also come to be known that Baraik had reportedly uploaded a video on Instagram before taking the extreme step.

In the video, he claimed that the two were in a relationship but their families were not accepting it, which led him to take the decision.

Police are verifying the authenticity of the video and the circumstances surrounding it.Kamdara Police Station in charge Mukesh Kumar Suman said that a bag and a water bottle were recovered from the spot. Police have conducted a 'panchnama' and initiated legal proceedings. The matter is being investigated from all angles.

## UGC lists Ranchi-based Daksh University as fake; no campus found

**Ranchi, Feb 23:** The inclusion of a Ranchi-based institution in the University Grants Commission's latest list of 32 "fake universities" has raised concerns about regulatory oversight and student safety in Jharkhand's higher education landscape. In a public notice, the University Grants Commission declared that the so-called Daksh University (Vocational and Life Skills Education), reportedly located at Bhaskar Path, New Pundag, Masibari, Ranchi 834007, is not recognised under the UGC Act. The Commission clarified that degrees issued by such unrecognised institutions would not be valid for government or private employment or for higher studies. A ground-level verification at the address mentioned in the list found no functioning university.

Local residents denied the existence of any such campus or academic activity in the area. Although an online search reveals a website in the name of the institution, it provides limited administrative details, no verifiable statutory approvals and lacks transparency regarding governance or contact information.

The contrast between its digital presence and physical absence highlights a growing concern over online-only entities that mimic legitimate universities. The episode raises questions about regulatory vigilance. If the institution had been operating, even nominally, through advertisements or online admissions, how long had it remained undetected? It remains unclear whether any students enrolled or paid fees. State authorities are yet to indicate whether a formal inquiry has been initiated to trace those behind the alleged entity.

Educationists have called for swift action. Dr AtalPandey, former Syndicate member of Ranchi University, said no university by this name exists in Jharkhand's approved records and that any attempt to mislead students under the guise of higher education warrants immediate legal intervention. Representatives of the State University Association warned that fake universities often lure aspirants with promises of quick degrees, flexible online courses and low fees.

# TSF hosts U-17 cricket tournament

**Gamharia, Feb 23:** The Tata Steel Foundation (TSF) organized a one-day Under-17 cricket tournament at the Dugdha Kali Temple grounds, featuring teams from multiple district villages.

The Dugdha team emerged victorious, defeating Jagannathpur, the runner-up.

Chief guest Bablu Pradhan, District Secretary of the Jharkhand Yuva Morcha, presented awards to the teams. Sahil Pradhan of Dugdha, who scored 58 runs, was named Best Batsman, while Himanshu of



Jagannathpur, who took five wickets, received the Best Bowler award. Fourteen players from each team were also honoured with T-shirts and trophies. Tata Steel CSR Head Satyanarayan Nanda and other officials including Mukesh Kumar, Sudama Pradhan, Amarnath Pradhan and Prakash Pradhan attended the event. (w/gsd)

## IMD forecasts rain in south-east Jharkhand today

**Ranchi, Feb 23:** The IMD forecast light to moderate rain in some parts of Jharkhand on Tuesday, an official said. The weather office said light to moderate rain accompanied by gusty winds of 30-40 kmph and thunderstorms is likely in south-eastern districts, including Bokaro, Ramgarh, Ranchi, Saraikela-Kharsawan, West Singhbhum and East Singhbhum.

Meanwhile, minimum temperatures across the state are likely to rise by two degrees Celsius over the next 24 hours, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a bulletin. Gumla was the coldest place in the state on Monday at 12 degrees Celsius, the IMD said.

Ranchi recorded a minimum temperature of 14 degrees Celsius, it added.

## Gamharia: Truck-trailer collision disrupts traffic



**Gamharia, Feb 23:** Early Monday morning, a head-on collision occurred between a truck and a trailer near Raghunathpur Kali Temple under Kandra police station. The trailer's container fell onto the road, while the truck veered off and struck the railing.

The truck driver fled the scene, leaving behind a vehicle loaded with empty cylinders. The accident caused traffic congestion on both sides of the road. Kandra police quickly arrived, cleared the vehicles and restored traffic flow. Authorities are investigating the incident and searching for the absconding driver. (w/gsd)

# Sarhul celebrated in Pinderbera

Mail News Service



**Gamharia, Feb 23:** The Sarhul Festival was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Pinderbera village, drawing large participation from villagers. The festivities were led by Nayake Baba Sunil Mardi, Nayake Ayo Kanchan Mardi, Majhi Baba Somay Mardi and Majhi Ayo Sanjoti Mardi.

Speaking at the event held at Jahergarh's ancient Sarna Dharam, Sangram Mardi emphasized that Sarhul was a vital part of tribal culture, connecting people to nature and honouring ancestors.

The festival symbolized the cycle of life and taught the importance of preserving nature while promoting unity and brotherhood within the community.

Youth from the village performed traditional dances and music, while villagers offered flowers, fruits and other ritual items to deities including Marang Buru, Jaher Ayo, Lite Gusai, More Ko Turiko and Varsha Sarpanthap (the rain god). Organizers including Sangram Mardi, Sunil Mardi, Kanchan Mardi, Somay Mardi and Sanjoti Mardi played a key role in making the event successful. (w/gsd)

# Veer Shaheed Dusa-Jugal jayanti celebrated at Potka

Mail News Service

**Potka, Feb 23:** The birth anniversary celebration of Veer Shaheed Dusa-Jugal was observed with deep reverence and vibrant enthusiasm at Sarse village under Rasunchopa Panchayat in Potka block on Sunday. The programme commenced with floral tributes offered at the statues of the revered martyrs, as villagers paid homage and remembered their supreme sacrifice.



MLA Sanjib Sardar graced the occasion as the chief guest and participated in the ceremonial garlanding. Addressing the gathering, he underscored the importance of commemorating the legacy of martyrs, stating that such events not only honour their sacrifice but also instill a sense of pride and identity within the community. He urged the youth to draw inspiration from the martyrs and actively contribute towards the development of society and the region.

The celebration resonated with cultural vibrancy as villagers organised a series of cultural and sports competitions.

Events such as musical chairs, an Adivasi fashion show, and ball pass competitions witnessed enthusiastic participation from children, youth, and women alike. The festivities transformed the village into a lively arena of unity and celebration, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of the community.

Prominent among those present were Himanshu Sardar, Abhijeet Sardar, Lakhirram Sardar, Indrajeet Sardar and Shiv Sardar, along with a large number of villagers who gathered to mark the occasion with pride and collective spirit. ( W-pm)

# UCIL's cleanliness drive gains momentum

**Jadugoda, Feb 23:** The ongoing cleanliness campaign by Uranium Corporation of India Limited (UCIL), running from February 16 to 28, gained significant momentum on Monday. Led by UCIL officer Tapodhir Bhattacharya, the drive involved spraying bleaching powder at key locations, including the Gura River area (Barrage, UCIL), painting and repairs at Muktidham, and cleaning of Sidhu Kanhu Chowk. Social organizations also actively participated, ensuring dustbins along the Jadugoda main road were thoroughly cleaned.



UCIL officer Bhattacharya announced that a painting competition will soon be organized to raise cleanliness awareness among children from Chatikocha and other areas, with rewards for participants. Village leaders and community representatives-including Jugal Kumar Singh, Rohit Singh, Surdhu Manjhi, Basant Topno, Mrs. Saraswati Murmu, and members of UCIL CSR team-played key roles in the success of the campaign.

The initiative has received widespread attention and is continuing to engage the community.

# Shri Shyam devotees to offer Nishan at Khatu Dham



**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Members of Shri Shyam Jagran Manch left for Khatu Shyam Ji Temple (Khatu Dham) on Monday in three groups to seek blessings of Shri Shyam Prabhu.

On Tuesday, the seventh day of Phalguna, the devotees will perform flag worship at Parasram Puriya Dharamshala before proceeding to the temple to offer the handmade Nishan (flags) at the Lord's feet. Among those undertaking the pilgrimage included Bajrang Lal Agarwal, Vimal Ringasia, Ashok Agarwal, Pramod Agarwal, Chandan Agarwal, Amit Sinha, Amit Modi, Gopal Ringasia, Kamal Agarwal, Kavita, Babita, Rekha, Sunita, and other devotees. Members traditionally prepared small flags with their own hands as a mark of devotion.

During the Nishan Yatra, devotees sang hymns and witnessed the divine palanquin of Laddu Gopal.

Special prayers were offered for peace, prosperity and harmony across the nation and the world. (w/gsd)

# Filariasis eradication campaign launched in Dharmadih village

**Jadugoda, Feb 23:** A filariasis eradication drive was launched in under the jurisdiction of the Jadugoda Community Health Center, Kenda Deeh (Musavani). As part of the campaign, village health workers Rita Beldar and Kiran Devi went door-to-door to administer filariasis medication to residents.



Villagers were also educated about preventive measures, the importance of hygiene, and the need to take the medication regularly. Dr. Sundar Lal Mardi, in-charge of the Community Health Center, urged all eligible individuals to take the medicine without fear and actively cooperate in the campaign. <

He emphasized that widespread participation is essential to make the area filariasis-free, marking a critical step toward improving public health in the region.

# ICAI Jamshedpur announces new office bearers for 2026-27

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The Jamshedpur Branch of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), functioning under the Central India Regional Council (CIRC), has elected its new office bearers for the 2026-27 term. CA Anand Kumar Agarwal has been appointed President, while CA Rishi Arora will serve as Vice President.



The other elected members include CA Chetan Agarwal as Secretary, CA Yogesh Sharma as Treasurer, CA Mukund Kedia as CICASA Chairman, and CA Kaushlendra Das as Immediate Past President. In his inaugural message, President CA Anand Kumar Agarwal emphasized his commitment to enhancing the professional growth of members and students.

He highlighted transparency, teamwork and innovation as key pillars of his leadership.

The newly formed team has pledged to focus on overall branch development, organizing high-quality seminars and workshops and strengthening social responsibility initiatives.

Members have been urged to actively participate and guide the branch to ensure a productive and successful term ahead. (w/gsd)

# Bachpan Play School director honoured with Rabindranath Tagore National Award

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Director of Bachpan Play School, Matinul Haque Ansari, has been honoured with the Rabindranath Tagore National Award at a grand ceremony held at Ramada Hotel in Ranchi. The event witnessed the participation of over 200 leading educators from Ranchi and across Jharkhand.

The award recognized excellence in educational leadership and was presented to Ansari for his innovative approach and dedication to nurturing young learners with essential life skills.

The conference also featured insightful sessions on modern teaching methodologies, institutional excellence and updates to the National Education Policy, emphasizing collaborative growth in the education sector.

Expressing gratitude, Ansari dedicated the award to his team, students and the community for their continued support in promoting holistic development and academic excellence. (w/gsd)

# BJYM submits memorandum over drinking water crisis



Mail News Service

**Manoharpur, Feb 23, 2026:** With summer intensifying, several panchayats in Manoharpur block, including parts of the Saranda region, are facing a severe drinking water crisis. A delegation of the Bharatiya Janata Party Yuva Morcha,(BJYM) led by Block President Ajay Prajapati and General Secretary Hemant Sandil, submitted a memorandum to the Block Development Officer demanding urgent action.

The delegation called for the immediate operationalization of water towers constructed in panchayats such as Manoharpur East and West, Chotanagara, Chidiya, Baranga, Dhipa, Lailor, Gangda, Makaranda, Kolpotka, Raikera, Raidih, Digha, and Dimbuli, along with repairs to defunct supply schemes.

They alleged that despite infrastructure readiness, villagers are not benefiting from the "Tap Water to Every Home" initiative.

Leaders warned of a mass agitation if swift measures are not taken. Several senior BJP members were present during the submission of the memorandum.

# Workshop on first-aid and golden hour response

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The Bharat Human Volunteers Development Association (BHVDA) has been conducting its 12th batch of Master Motivator Workshops at the Jamshedpur Blood Centre every Sunday over six months.



The workshop covers blood donation awareness, blood components and emergency response training.

On February 22, the Pratik Sangharsh Foundation (Team PSF) conducted a day-long session featuring live demonstrations on first aid, CPR, drowning rescue, burns, fractures, stretcher drills, ambulance loading and emergency transport during the critical 'golden hour.'

The training aimed to ensure injured persons were quickly transported to the nearest health facility, in line with Government of India guidelines.

Participants appreciated the session, especially Director Arijit Sarkar's engaging teaching style.

Female trainees participated enthusiastically. Correct responses during interactive sessions were rewarded to encourage learning. Among those present were BHVDA Founder Sunil Mukherjee, General Secretary Kamal Kumar Ghosh, Kumares Hazra, Mohammad Danish, and Uttam Kumar Gorai. (w/gsd)

# Anjali Kumari honoured at KPS Kadma Gratitude Day

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Kerala Public School, Kadma organized a Gratitude Day programme for the outgoing students of Std V (Batch 2025-26) on Monday.

The programme began with a motivating speech by the Headmistress, who encouraged students to prepare themselves academically, mentally, physically and emotionally for the challenges ahead. An oath-taking ceremony was conducted, where students pledged to uphold values such as integrity, loyalty, commitment, care and concern for others.



The Principal and Headmistress advised the students to be responsible, compassionate and empathetic while serving society.

The school choir presented melodious songs celebrating joy and togetherness.

The School Director delivered an inspiring message, urging students to face middle school with confidence and curiosity.

Students of Class V shared their experiences and expressed gratitude for their teachers, friendships and learning journey. Shanta Ma'am motivated them to step forward with confidence, while Manorama Ma'am recited a shloka from the Bhagavad Gita and highlighted the importance of values and inner strength. The School President also shared heartfelt words of appreciation.

Around 188 students received gratitude cards. A selfie corner was set up to capture memories. Nilesh Paul (5D) and VidyaKumari (5C) were named Best Head Boy and Girl, while Anjali Kumari (5C) received the Best Councilor and Best School President awards.

# Booth shift confuses voters at RVS Academy

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** A confusing situation was reported at the RVS Academy polling centre in Dimna during the Mango Municipal Corporation Elections 2026 on Monday, as many voters returned without casting their votes due to a sudden change in booth allocation.



Several local residents, who had been voting at the same school for years, were surprised to find that their names were missing from the voter list at the centre. Officials informed them that their booths had been shifted to other locations without prior notice. An elderly couple expressed their disappointment, saying they had arrived early in the morning to avoid the rush but were told their booth had been changed. "At this age, it is difficult for us to move around searching for another centre," they said. Dozens of voters reportedly left the centre without voting. Many alleged that their voter slips either did not arrive on time or did not clearly mention the new booth details. Voters also complained about the absence of a proper help desk to guide them to their reassigned polling stations.

# Massive participation marks Taraweeh completion at Khanqah Israria

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The annual Taraweeh prayers at Khanqah Israria, located near Karim City College on Kapali Road, concluded with great devotion during the holy month of Ramadan. The Khanqah has been organizing Taraweeh prayers for nearly 32 years.



In the absence of its founder, Mohammad Ejaz, who is currently on Umrah, the arrangements were overseen by Mohammad Jameel, Mohammad Saleh Pappu, Mohammad Imran, Mohammad Jahangir and Nurul Haq. This year, the prayers were led by Hafiz Mohammad Minhajul Arfin, an Executive Engineer with the Bihar Electricity Department in Patna, who took leave to fulfil this spiritual responsibility. He was assisted by Hafiz Abdullah and Hafiz Mohammad Masoom. Nearly two thousand devotees from Telco, Sakchi, Mango, Jawaharnagar, Baganshahi, Alibag, and Azadnagar attended the prayers.

After completion of the Holy Quran recitation, special prayers were offered for national safety, peace, harmony and the well-being of the Ummah. Social worker Mukhtar Alam Khan appreciated the Khanqah management and Azadnagar Police for maintaining smooth arrangements. (w/gsd)

# Reflection Holi Mega Carnival on Feb 28

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur:** A grand and colorfulHoli celebration is set to take place in the city with the Reflection Holi Mega Carnival 2026 scheduled for February 28 at Bodhi Maidan, Sakchi. The event is being organized by Asha Singh and Arif Ashraf under the banner of Reflection Network Events.



Popular Bhojpuri film stars Queen Shalini and KhushiTiwari will attend the carnival, creating excitement among residents. The event will also feature DJs Selina, Akash, and Akul from Kolkata, who will keep the festive spirit alive with energetic music.

Several attractions have been planned, including a rain dance, organic colors, a food zone, a selfie zone, and fun games. Organizers have also arranged an in-house DJ to ensure non-stop entertainment throughout the day.

Organizer Asha Singh said the aim is to provide a safe, family-friendly, and memorable Holi celebration where people of all age groups can enjoy without worry.

Information about the event was shared by Asha Singh along with Arif Ashraf, Satyajit Singh, Basant Das, ShivaniOjha, and AkankshaVerma.

## India and the Pax Silica Alliance: Strategic opportunity with strategic costs

India's decision to join the Pax Silica Alliance marks a significant step toward securing its technological and industrial future. The US-led coalition, focused on artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure and critical minerals, offers India an opportunity to align its long-term ambitions with a broader network of trusted partners. By becoming part of this emerging ecosystem, India aims to strengthen domestic initiatives such as the India Semiconductor Mission, the IndiaAI program, and the National Critical Minerals Mission.

At present, India does not possess substantial capacity to mine or process critical minerals at scale. However, its importance to the alliance lies less in existing capabilities and more in its immense potential.

As one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, India represents a powerful center of demand and consumption. Its large domestic market could help make alternative supply chains-particularly those independent of China-commercially viable. In addition, India's deep engineering talent pool and growing manufacturing base position it as a valuable partner in diversifying global technology supply chains.

Participation in the alliance also provides India with a platform to shape global technical and safety standards in AI and critical technologies. By contributing to the development of democratic governance frameworks for emerging technologies, India can enhance the credibility and inclusiveness of these standards.

This could ensure that the rules of the future digital economy are not shaped solely by a handful of advanced economies but reflect broader global interests.

Yet, the strategic benefits come with equally significant challenges. Closer alignment with a US-led bloc may invite economic retaliation from China, potentially in the form of trade disputes, delayed market access, or disruptions in supplies of key inputs such as critical minerals and active pharmaceutical ingredients. Given India's existing trade dependencies, such risks cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, the alliance's emphasis on building a "trusted ecosystem" may impose stricter export controls and tighter technology-transfer regulations. These requirements could conflict with India's long-standing policy of strategic autonomy and its preference for "issue-based coordination," a concept articulated by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar. Domestically, there may also be concerns if alliance-driven standards appear to influence India's AI regulatory framework in ways perceived as externally imposed.

Smaller Indian firms, particularly those seeking integration into global value chains, could face higher compliance costs and complex security audit processes. Without adequate support mechanisms, these barriers may limit broader participation in the alliance's supply chains.

Ultimately, the success of the Pax Silica partnership will depend on whether its members translate strategic intent into concrete action. Building resilient supply chains-from mining and refining minerals to chip fabrication and AI deployment-within trusted networks is a demanding task.

If effectively implemented, however, the alliance could provide India not only with enhanced technological security but also with a strong foundation for sustained economic growth, while contributing to a more stable and diversified global technology ecosystem.

*From the Editorial Desk*

# PM Modi drives India's rise as global power



India has evolved into an ambitious global player under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, supported by the world's largest population - young, technologically savvy and predominantly middle class - giving it a strong advantage for the future, a report said on Saturday.

According to an opinion piece in Singapore's leading multinational news channel Channel News Asia (CNA), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) identified India as the fastest-growing major economy in recent years, achieving real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 6.4 per cent. With its nominal GDP exceeding US$4 trillion, India is expected to surpass Japan and Germany by 2030 and could emerge as the world's largest economy in another decade.

To advance this objective, PM Modi introduced the Act East Policy in 2014 to establish India as a major influence in the Indo-Pacific, a vision requiring strong engagement with Southeast Asia.

"Chemistry between leaders matters a lot in bilateral relations. So it helps that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was friends with Anwar Ibrahim before the latter became the Malaysian Prime Minister. Modi had promised his 'dear friend' that he would go to Malaysia after missing the star-studded ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur in October 2025. And he made it his first foreign visit in 2026," political analyst James Chai stated in CNA.

"Anwar made sure Modi felt welcome by preparing a ceremonial welcome and send-off complete with guard of honour with the First Battalion from the Royal Malay Regiment, students waving Indian flags and cultural performances. It also helped that both leaders shared their love for the Tamil language and actor MG Ramachandran. At home, Anwar always talked of his love for Indian culture and literature, including how much the Sanskrit epics Mahabharata and Ramayana influenced him during his time in prison," he added.

According to the commentary, Malaysia is home to nearly 3 million Indians, making it the third-largest Indian overseas community. The robust people-to-people linkages through tourism, education and cultural exchanges contributed to bilateral trade reaching nearly US$18.6 billion in 2025.

"Malaysia certainly has value to offer. In recent years, India was the largest market for Malaysian palm oil exports, a crucial item that affects the cost of food. At the same time, India's recent semiconductor mission could benefit from Malaysia's partnership as it had a 50-year head start in backend manufacturing with the support of multinationals, the pioneering companies that established operations in the early 1970s (locally known as the 'Eight Samurai')," Chai mentioned

"That is why these were the standout items in the memorandums of understanding signed, besides reaffirming their comprehensive strategic partnership since 2024, that also covers defence, education, trade and culture," he wrote.

# When surrenders signal the end of the 'red dream'

**Bhaavna Arora**



For decades, the Left-Wing Extremism took refuge in India's dense forests, alienated tribal populations, ideological fervour, and looked like an insurgency that seemed impossible to contain. The so-called "Red Corridor" stretched across central India, and the Maoist narrative projected itself as a revolutionary movement speaking for the dispossessed. But by 2025, that narrative has taken a decisive hit.

While security forces have conducted several successful operations, the more significant development has been the growing wave of surrenders. Across Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Jharkhand, Maoist cadres - including senior commanders - have walked out of the forests. They have laid down weapons, revealed routes, named leaders, and accepted rehabilitation. This steady trickle, turning into a stream, represents a fundamental shift in the conflict.

Insurgencies rarely end through gun battles alone. They collapse when the ideology that sustains them begins to erode. For years, Maoism in India claimed to be a movement of justice for the marginalised. But the reality inside the organisation told a different story.

Senior leaders often operated from relative safety, while young tribal recruits were pushed to the frontlines. Villages paid the price as violence escalated, yet the movement failed to deliver any meaningful political outcome or territorial gains.

By 2025, even hardened cadres began to realise that the promised revolution was not coming. Survival, not ideology, became their primary concern. What had once been presented as a historic struggle began to look like an endless cycle of violence without purpose. As government outreach increased and development slowly entered remote regions, the contrast between Maoist promises and lived realities became starker. One of the earliest indicators of this shift came on January 29, 2025, when Kalmu Mangdu, Deputy Commander of Section 1 Company of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA), surrendered in Sukma along with team commander Sameer alias Sukka and cadre Madavi Budhri. They were not peripheral recruits but active fighters. Their decision reflected a breakdown of internal trust, fear of being treated as expendable, and a growing sense that survival odds had collapsed.

On March 3, 2025, the surrender of Dinesh Modium, a Divisional Committee member, in Bijapur further exposed the cracks. His exit weakened the so-called "martyrdom narrative" that had long sustained morale among cadres. It signalled that even mid-level leadership no longer believed in the movement's future and that ideological commitment was giving way to practical considerations.

Perhaps the most symbolic blow came on October 14, 2025, when Mallojula Venugopal Rao - known by several aliases including Bhupathi, Sonu and Abhay - surrendered in Gadchiroli along with around 60 cadres. A senior Politburo member, spokesperson and ideologue of the CPI (Maoist), he was not merely a commander but a central political voice of the organisation. His wife, Tarakka, also a Maoist leader, had surrendered earlier. His exit marked the end of an era and dealt a severe psychological blow to the organisation's remaining leadership.

Two months later, on December 10, 2025, Kiran Hidma Kowasi, alias Bhima, a Divisional Committee Member who had joined the movement in the 1990s, surrendered in Gadchiroli. He represented the old guard - the veterans who had seen the insurgency at its peak. His decision indicated that even the most committed leaders no longer believed in any revival. When veterans begin to leave, the message travels faster than any propaganda.

Just days later, on December 12, another armed cadre known as Medium Bhima surrendered in Sukma. Though not a top commander, his surrender was significant because he was an active, weapon-bearing fighter. It showed that the thinning was happening not just among ideological leaders but also among hardened foot soldiers who had once formed the backbone of the insurgency.

On December 13, two Area Committee Members - Roshan alias Mara Vedja and Subhash alias Pojja Rava - surrendered in Gondia, Maharashtra. This effectively sealed the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh corridor, once a lifeline for the Maoist movement and logistics. What used to be a strategic route had become a trap, with increased surveillance, better coordination among security forces, and shrinking support bases.

The steady stream of surrenders across Bastar, Sukma, Gadchiroli and parts of Jharkhand is not incidental. It reflects the systematic weakening of the CPI (Maoist) as a fighting force, as an organisation, and most importantly, as an idea. The once-feared Red Corridor has fragmented into disconnected pockets, cut off from supplies, communication, recruitment and safe movement.

When armed movements reach a stage where surrender appears safer than survival, their collapse becomes inevitable. The developments of 2025 suggest that India's long battle against Maoist insurgency may finally be entering its closing chapter - not merely through the barrel of a gun, but through the quiet erosion of a once-potent revolutionary myth.

The real challenge now lies in ensuring that the vacuum left behind is filled not by another ideology of violence, but by governance, development, and lasting trust among the communities.

***(The writer is a best-selling author known for her research and writings on India's defence forces)***

# From solidarity to strategy: India-Africa ties enter new phase



As global power structures undergo structural realignment, the India-Africa engagement is increasingly positioned not merely as historical solidarity, but as a forward-looking partnership shaping a more equitable and multipolar global order, according to delegates at a conference held by the Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) here on Monday.

In the keynote address at the event, the Ministry of External Affairs's Secretary (Economic Relations), Sudhakar Dalela, said: "The turbulent times we are living in, accompanied by disruption of supply chains, ask for south-south cooperation in energy transition and climate action."

Further underscoring Africa's centrality in India's economic diplomacy and South-South cooperation framework, his address encompassed the increasing Indian diplomatic footprint in Africa, and specified that India-Africa solidarity is characterised by India's principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family)".

The day-long conference with the theme: "India-Africa Partnership in a Changing Global Order" was organised by the CRF in collaboration with the USANAS Foundation, Udaipur. It brought together ambassadors, senior diplomats, policymakers, scholars, and strategic analysts to deliberate on the evolving contours of India-Africa engagement amid a rapidly transforming global landscape.

Panellists emphasised that the India-Africa partnership needs to expand into newer areas like digitisation, critical minerals and climate action, while strengthening the partnership in aspects such as trade, people-to-people linkages and security challenges.

Welcoming the delegates, CRF President Shishir Priyadarshi, and USANAS Foundation Founder & CEO, Dr Abhinav Pandya, emphasised that India-Africa must strengthen its relationship, especially in trade. The current fragmentation within the global order is marred by trade unpredictability that will hurt the growth in India-Africa partnership. They stressed the historical aspects of India-Africa partnership and emphasised the need for robust global institutions and security structures with an aim of South-South cooperation.

During the discussions, panellists highlighted that the strengthening of India-Africa partnership in trade, technology and transnational connectivity creates various opportunities and challenges. As India and Africa have already surpassed $100 billion in trade in 2024-25, with both sides targeting $200 billion by 2030, it was emphasised that India should engage with Africa more cohesively in order to further enhance the trade.

High Commissioner of South Africa to India and former G20 and BRICS Sherpa Anil Sooklal highlighted three key aspects of technological cooperation, which include sharing innovations in the agriculture sector towards food security and assistance in capacity building and skill development, to be considered in the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS). While exploring the transformative potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), he underlined that India needs to have a concrete blueprint in terms of engagement with the larger Africa.

While discussing the evolution of India-Africa industrial cooperation, it was pointed out that India's role in Africa's industrialisation is significant as India offers a combination of finance, know-how, and skills.

Ambassador Anil Wadhawa highlighted that the India-Africa cooperation in technology, ports, and infrastructure is not just about building assets, rather it is about co-architecting futures in a changing global order. There was also a need for co-sharing India's experience of digitisation, he added.

The conference also explored ways to strengthen and navigate the India-Africa partnership within the contemporary global landscape.

Ambassador of Burkina Faso to India, Dr Desire Boniface Some, Ambassador of Burkina Faso to India stated that with President Donald Trump coming to power in the US, there is an emergence of a new structure in the world order. Within the emerging global order, it is essential to focus on how India-Africa cooperation can deliver mutually beneficial, win-win outcomes.

The deliberations also ventured into the possibilities of how the India-Africa partnership can be strengthened within the great power engagement in Africa. The speakers acknowledged that the inclusion of the African Union into G20 was a big success in the India-Africa partnership, while addressing the strategic convergence, especially under the dynamic global order.

# Too early to comment on US tariff changes, commerce ministry reviewing situation: FM Sitharaman

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said it is too early to assess the impact of the recent tariff changes announced by the United States, adding that the Commerce Ministry is currently reviewing the situation.

FM Sitharaman's remarks came after fresh trade tensions emerged following a decision by the US Supreme Court against sweeping import tariffs imposed earlier by the administration of Donald Trump.



Subsequently, President Trump announced a 10 per cent tariff on imports from all countries, including India, starting February 24 for a period of 150 days. A day later, he said the tariffs would be increased to 15 per cent.

When asked about the likely impact of these tariff changes on the Indian economy, FM Sitharaman said it was "a bit too soon" to comment.

"The Commerce Ministry is examining the situation, and a delegation will decide on the timing of further trade negotiations. It's a bit too early for me to comment," FM Sitharaman told reporters.

The Finance Minister said India remains committed to signing trade agreements with various countries to expand global market access.

"India has already signed trade pacts with countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, as well as blocs like the EU and the UK," she stated.

"India wants to continue engaging with global markets and ensure its economy benefits from international trade," FM Sitharaman added.

Speaking after the customary post-Budget meeting with the Central Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India, the Finance Minister also addressed concerns over rising gold prices.

FM Sitharaman explained that the recent spike in gold prices is largely due to increased buying by central banks across the world.

"Most countries today, particularly their central banks, are buying gold and silver and storing them," she said.

## IDFC Bank fraud: No systemic risk here, we're watching developments, says RBI Governor

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday said there is no systemic risk to the banking system and stressed that the Central Bank does not comment on individual banks or regulated entities, as IDFC First Bank revealed the Rs 590-crore fraud at its Chandigarh branch.

Addressing a joint press conference after a meeting of the RBI's central board of directors in the national capital, RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said the regulator is closely monitoring the situation but there is no broader threat to financial stability.

Responding to a question by IANS on reports related to a Rs 590-crore fraud at IDFC First Bank, Malhotra said the central bank remains vigilant.

"We do not comment on any individual bank or regulated entity. We are watching the developments, and there is no systemic kind of issue over here," he said.

The briefing was held after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman met the RBI board.



The governor said India's banking system is on strong footing, supported by comfortable capital and liquidity levels.

Banks currently have a capital adequacy ratio of around 17 per cent, which he described as robust.

He added that even if no fresh capital is infused over the next five years, banks would still be able to meet their capital requirements adequately.

## Royal Stag BoomBox kicks off fourth edition in Kolkata



**Durgapur, Feb 23 :** Celebrating its philosophy of 'Living It Large', Seagram's Royal Stag has kickstarted the much-awaited fourth edition of Royal Stag BoomBox with a spectacular opening night in Kolkata at Aquatica Ground on February 21. Building on the phenomenal success of previous editions, this year's Royal Stag BoomBox raises the bar by seamlessly blending the best of music and gaming entertainment into one immersive experience. The electrifying evening drew thousands of fans who came together to witness performances by some of India's most celebrated artists. The expansive Aquatica Ground in Kolkata transformed into a multisensory playground, featuring vibrant installations, immersive art displays, curated food experiences, and interactive zones-going far beyond just music. The evening began with an electric face-off between gaming sensation Payal Dhare & a fan who battled through the gaming rounds at the event, clinched the win, and earned the chance to play alongside her. This was followed by a dynamic opening set by DJ Sahil Gulati, who instantly set the tone with his irresistible beats. The momentum intensified as rap powerhouse Dino James stormed the stage, firing up the crowd with his signature high-energy performance. Keeping the adrenaline soaring, the legendary rock band - Fossils followed with a thunderous set, showcasing their iconic rock sound and commanding stage presence.

## Psycho Saiyaan will stream for free on Amazon MX Player




**Mumbai, Feb 23:** Amazon MX Player, India's leading free, premium, ad-supported video streaming service, today unveiled the official trailer of its upcoming romance thriller Psycho Saiyaan, and it's anything but your usual love story. What begins like a sweeping, filmy romance slowly reveals its darker heartbeat, where love edges into obsession and passion starts to suffocate. Headlined by Ravi Kishan, Tejasswi Prakash, and Anud Singh Dhaka, the series also features Srishti Shrivastava, Surbhi Chandna, Vaarun Bhagat, Ashwini Kalsekar, and Yashpal Sharma in pivotal roles.The trailer introduces Kartik, a shayari-loving young man from Ujjain who believes he has finally found the girl destined to complete his world, Charu. For him, love is not casual, it's epic, absolute, and worth any risk. But intensity has consequences. As Kartik's feelings deepen, so does his need to hold on. He follows her across cities, pushes back against authority, and challenges anyone who stands in his way. What he calls love begins to look dangerously close to possession. Psycho Saiyaan will stream for free exclusively on Amazon MX Player from 25th February. The series will be available across the MX Player app, Amazon shopping app, Prime Video, Fire TV, and Airtel Xstream.

## 'Make in India' helps create lakhs of jobs, women biggest beneficiaries: Ashwini Vaishnaw

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Women have been the biggest beneficiaries under the 'Make in India' initiative which created lakhs of direct and indirect jobs, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Monday.

IT Minister said that 'Make in India' initiative has created jobs and provided skilling at an unprecedented scale.



The Apple ecosystem alone has created at least 250,000 direct jobs, with 70 per cent beneficiaries being women. Moreover, the ecosystem has generated at least 7,50,000 indirect jobs.

"India is preparing a skilled workforce for the next phase of electronics manufacturing - Robotics, Drones, EVs, Smart Cars, Precision components, Advanced tooling, and Smart glasses," said Vaishnaw in an X post.

Meanwhile, the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme has succeeded in attracting investments of over Rs 2.16 lakh crore in the manufacturing sector and created more than 14.39 lakh direct and indirect jobs as on December 31, 2025.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, cumulative sales of manufacturing units set up under the scheme exceeded Rs 20.41 lakh crore, while total exports crossed Rs 8.3 lakh crore.

The government has disbursed as much as Rs 28,748 crore as production-linked incentives under the scheme, the statement said.

## Bharti Airtel to invest Rs 20,000 crore to expand digital lending biz via NBFC arm

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Bharti Airtel on Monday announced plans to invest Rs 20,000 crore over the next few years to expand its digital lending business through its Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) subsidiary, Airtel Money Limited. The telecom major said the fresh capital infusion will help strengthen its presence in India's fast-growing financial services sector and narrow the country's credit gap. Of the total Rs 20,000 crore investment, Airtel will contribute 70 per cent, while the remaining 30 per cent will be brought in by the promoter group through Bharti Enterprises Limited.Gopal Vittal, Executive Vice Chairman of Bharti Airtel, said the success of the company's lending platform demonstrates its ability to combine technology, data and customer trust at scale."Our NBFC expansion strengthens this foundation and reflects our ambition to build a differentiated, future-ready digital lending business - one that stands for trust, innovation, and financial inclusion," Vittal mentioned.

Airtel Money Limited recently received its NBFC licence from the Reserve Bank of India on February 13, 2026.The company said the move marks a strategic expansion aimed at deepening financial inclusion and offering simple, secure and innovative digital financial services to customers across India.

## India-France 'amending protocol' to boost investment, economic cooperation

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** India and France have signed an amending protocol to boost investment and strengthen economic cooperation, which aligns tax treaty with international standards, it was announced on Monday.

The amending protocol provides full taxing rights in respect of capital gains arising from sale of shares of a company, to the jurisdiction where such company is a resident.

It also deletes the so-called Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN) Clause from the Protocol to the India-France Double Taxation Avoidance Convention (DTAC), thereby bringing to rest all issues relating to it, according to a Finance Ministry statement.

The protocol also modifies the taxation of income from dividends by replacing a single rate of 10 per cent of tax with a split rate of 5 per cent for those holding at least 10 per cent of capital and 15 per cent of tax for all other cases.



"It also modifies the definition of 'Fees for Technical Services' by aligning it with the definition in India US Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, and expands the scope of 'Permanent Establishment' by adding Service PE," the ministry said.

During the recent visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India, both the nations signed a protocol amending the India-France DTAC.

The Protocol also updates the provisions on Exchange of Information and introduces a new Article on Assistance in Collection of Taxes, as per international standards, said the ministry.

This would enable and facilitate seamless exchange of information and strengthen mutual tax cooperation between India and France.

The Protocol also incorporates within the DTAC, the applicable provisions of BEPS Multilateral Instrument (MLI), that had already become applicable consequent to the signing and ratification of MLI by India and France.

"The Amending Protocol will provide greater tax certainty to the taxpayers and boost flow of investment, technology and personnel between India and France, and thereby strengthen the economic relationship between the two countries," said the ministry.

## Sensex, Nifty end higher as PSU banks, healthcare stocks lead gains

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Indian stock markets extended their gains for the second straight session on Monday, supported by buying in PSU banks and healthcare stocks.

Positive global cues also boosted investor sentiment after the US Supreme Court ruled against the reciprocal tariffs announced by US President Donald Trump.

The benchmark Nifty ended 0.55 per cent higher, gaining 141.75 points to close at 25,713. The Sensex rose 0.58 per cent, or 479.95 points, to settle at 83,294.66.

Commenting on Nifty technical outlook, experts said that on the levels front, immediate resistance is seen at 25,800, followed by 25,900



where significant OI build-up is visible.

"On the downside, 25,500 continues to act as crucial immediate support," an analyst stated.

Among Sensex stocks, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone led the gains with a rise of 2.82 per cent. Other major gainers included Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, Power Grid Corporation of India, Axis Bank and HDFC Bank.

On the losing side, technology stocks remained under pressure. Infosys, Tech Mahindra and HCL Technologies were among the top laggards. Other losers included Trent, Bajaj Finserv and ITC Limited.

However, the broader markets showed a mixed trend. The Nifty MidCap index declined 0.43 per cent, while the NSE SmallCap index managed to close 0.29 per cent higher.

Among sectoral indices, the Nifty PSU Bank index was one of the top performers, ending 1.36 per cent higher.

## Gurugram surpasses Mumbai in ultra-luxury sales in 2025

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** India's luxury housing market has found a new leader in 2025, with Gurugram emerging as the country's fastest-growing ultra-premium residential hub, a report said on Monday.



The city recorded a massive Rs 24,120 crore worth of transactions in homes priced at Rs 10 crore and above during calendar year 2025, according to the latest High-End Luxury Housing Report released by India Sotheby's International Realty and CRE Matrix.

The numbers mark a watershed moment for Gurugram's property market. Around 1,494 homes priced at Rs 10 crore and above were sold in 2025 -- the highest ever recorded in a single year in the city.

The total sales value has jumped nearly six times in just two years, rising from Rs 4,004 crore in 2023 to over Rs 24,000 crore in 2025. In terms of value, Gurugram has now outpaced Mumbai in luxury home sales in the Rs 10 crore-plus category, as per the report.

The report showed that the ultra-luxury segment accounted for 24 per cent of the city's total residential market in value terms in 2025.

The average ticket size of homes sold in this segment stood at around Rs 16 crore -- reflecting strong demand from high-net-worth individuals and ultra-HNIs.

The average home size was about 5,000 square feet, the report stated.

Homes in the 4,000 to 6,000 square feet category dominated sales in value terms, while properties larger than 8,000 square feet contributed nearly 22 per cent of the total transaction value.

According to Tina Talwar, Area Director at India Sotheby's International Realty, this growth is no longer limited to traditional premium addresses.

"Emerging micro-markets such as Dwarka Expressway, Golf Course Road and Golf Course Extension Road are driving the next phase of expansion," Talwar added.

Abhishek Kiran Gupta, Co-founder and CEO of CRE Matrix, said the nearly tenfold rise in luxury home sales over the past two years reflects sustained buyer confidence and strong capital inflows.

## Govt earns Rs 4,405 crore revenue from scrap sale from 2021 till Jan 2026

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The government on Monday said that total revenue earned from scrap sale in Swachhata campaign from the year 2021 till January 2026 stands at Rs 4,405.28 crore. While Rs 200.21 crore revenue was earned form scrap disposal during December 2025-January 2026, 81,322 lakh files were weeded out in Swachhata campaign in 5,188 offices during January, according to the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).

The 27th edition of 'Secretariat Reforms' provides an extensive



analysis of the ongoing initiatives aimed at transforming governance and administration. According to the report, cleanliness drives were conducted successfully at 5,188 sites nationwide in January. Approximately 4.34 lakh sq ft of office space has been freed, with top contributors being the Ministry of Coal (1,88,687 sq ft) and Ministry of Heavy Industries (62,129 sq ft), etc.

Last month, Rs 115.85 crore in revenue generated from scrap disposal, with significant contributions from Ministries such as Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Heavy Industry and Ministry of Coal.

## iPhone becomes India's top single export item worth $23 billion last year

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Apple's iPhone became the most valuable export item from India in 2025 with around $23 billion worth of devices shipped from domestic factories in the country, mostly to the United States, according to industry data.

This surge in Apple exports was driven by production incentives such as the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and diversification from Chinese suppliers, said industry players.

Smartphones were India's top export category for the first time, surpassing automotive diesel fuel, with a total $30.13 billion worth of exports in the January-December period. Apple accounted for 76 per cent of total smartphone exports. Apple's five year PLI window is scheduled to end in March 2026.

Apple's manufacturing footprint in the country includes five iPhone assembly plants - three operated by Tata Group



entities and two by Foxconn - supported by a supply chain of around 45 companies, including many MSMEs supplying components for domestic and global operations.

India became the world's second-largest mobile phone producer, with more than 99 per cent of phones sold domestically now Made in India moves up the manufacturing value chain.

# Prez Murmu unveils bust of C Rajagopalachari statue in Rashtrapati Bhavan

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** President Droupadi Murmu graced the 'Rajaji Utsav' at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre on Monday and unveiled the bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, India's first and only Indian Governor-General, at Rashtrapati Bhavan.



In a post on X, the President stated, "The bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, situated at the Grand Open Staircase near Ashok Mandap, replaces the bust of Edwin Lutyens. This initiative is part of series of steps being taken towards shedding the vestiges colonial mindset and embracing, with pride, the richness of India's culture, heritage, timeless traditions and honouring those who served Bharat Mata with their extraordinary contributions."

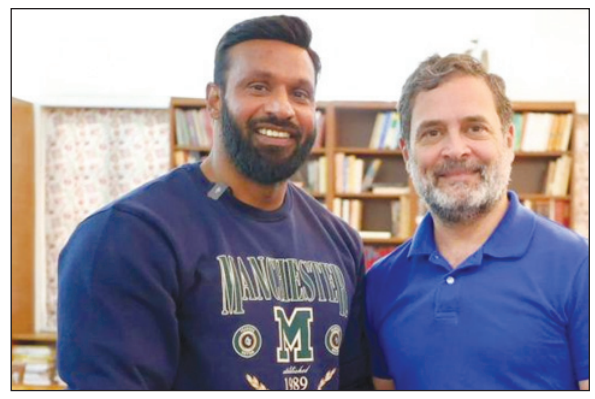
The President highlighted that the move symbolises a broader national effort to move beyond colonial-era legacies and recognise eminent Indian leaders who played pivotal roles in shaping the country's history. Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, was a prominent freedom fighter, statesman, and scholar who served as the last Governor-General of India from 1948 to 1950.

Among the dignitaries present on the occasion were Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan, Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Chemicals and Fertilisers Jagat Prakash Nadda, Minister of External Affairs Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of Education Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Culture and Tourism Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Dr L. Murugan, and family members of Rajaji.

Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan's official X handle also shared a post: "Vice President Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan attended the 'Rajaji Utsav' at Rashtrapati Bhavan today, where the Hon'ble President of India, Smt.

Droupadi Murmu, unveiled the bust of Shri C. Rajagopalachari, replacing that of Edwin Lutyens, marking another significant milestone in our journey of breaking away from the colonial legacy."

# Will take gym membership: Rahul meets 'Mohammad' Deepak who took on Bajrang Dal



**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS):** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday met a gym owner from Uttarakhand who shot into the limelight as "Mohammad Deepak" for taking on Bajrang Dal activists allegedly harassing a Muslim shopkeeper, and expressed support by telling him that he would come to Kotdwar to take membership in the gym.

Congress leader Vaibhav Walia, the gym owner Deepak Kumar and his friend Vijay Rawat, along with several others, were present at the meeting, which took place at the 10, Janpanth residence of Congress Parliamentary Party chief Sonia Gandhi.

Deepak also met Sonia Gandhi.

"Every human being is equal. This is Indianness, this is 'mohabbat ki dukaan'. Meeting with brother Mohammad Deepak from Uttarakhand - This same flame of unity and courage should burn in every Indian youth," Rahul Gandhi, who also spoke with Deepak's wife over the phone, said in a Facebook post.

After the meeting, Kumar told reporters, "Rahul ji invited me. He introduced me to Sonia ji and also spoke with my wife over the phone. He told me that you have done a good job and I will come to Kotdwar and take a membership at your gym."Congress leader Vaibhav Walia, who had walked with Rahul Gandhi during his Bharat Jodo Yatra, said, "Mohammad Deepak has carried forward the message that Rahul Gandhi gave through the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' -- which is of opening 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' across the country.

"We are grateful to Rahul ji for honouring a young man from Uttarakhand who stood up for humanity and love. We hope that love will prevail and hatred will lose in Uttarakhand and the entire country," Walia said.

# Cong has sought more seats than 2021: Girish Chodankar after Venugopal-Stalin meet on alliance talks

**Chennai, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Congress has formally sought a higher number of Assembly seats than it was allotted in 2021, AICC Tamil Nadu incharge Girish Chodankar said on Monday after senior party leader K.C. Venugopal met Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President M.K. Stalin in Chennai.



Describing the discussions as preliminary but significant, Chodankar confirmed that seat-sharing arrangements, including allocation of a Rajya Sabha seat, constituency-sharing for the upcoming Assembly elections, and coordination for local body polls, were part of the talks between Venugopal and the Chief Minister."The Congress has demanded more seats than what we received in the previous Assembly election," Chodankar told reporters, underlining the party's intention to strengthen its position within the DMK-led alliance. In the 2021 Assembly elections, the Congress contested 25 seats as part of the alliance.

Earlier in the day, Chodankar, along with Tamil Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) President K. Selvaperunthagai, met DMK Deputy General Secretary and Lok Sabha MP Kanimozhi Karunanidhi at her residence. He characterised that meeting as a "courtesy call," adding that structured negotiations between the alliance partners would take place separately through designated committees.

Responding to questions about whether power-sharing arrangements were discussed, Chodankar said that constituency-sharing remains the immediate priority.

"First, we need to conclude seat-sharing discussions. Other aspects can follow," he noted, indicating that detailed negotiations are yet to begin.

The meeting between Venugopal and Stalin comes amid heightened political activity in Tamil Nadu, with parties preparing early for the next Assembly elections and other upcoming polls.

# Concealed crucial information : CCPA slaps Rs 15 lakh fine on Vajirao & Reddy Institute for misleading UPSC 2023 result ads

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has imposed a penalty of Rs 15 lakh on Vajirao & Reddy Institute for publishing misleading advertisements related to the UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2023 results, ruling that the coaching institute deliberately concealed crucial information regarding the courses actually taken by successful candidates.

In an order passed on February 20, the CCPA, headed by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare and Commissioner Anupam Mishra, found that the institute's promotional claims - including "Over 645 selections out of 1,016 vacancies in UPSC CSE 2023", "6 in Top 10 AIR", "35 in Top 50 AIR", and "64 in Top 100 AIR" - created a false impression among aspirants about the nature of services offered.

It observed that the advertisements prominently displayed the names and photographs of successful candidates while simultaneously promoting multiple long-term classroom programmes. However, an investigation conducted by the Director General, Investigation, revealed substantial discrepancies between the claims made in advertisements and the institute's actual enrolment records.

According to the probe report, out of the 645 candidates claimed by the institute as successful selections, as many as 431 candidates were not enrolled in any programme offered by Vajirao & Reddy Institute.




It added that only a limited number of candidates had enrolled in interview-related programmes, while a large majority had either availed minimal services or had no verifiable association with the institute.

"The omission of material details regarding the nature of services availed by the featured candidates constitutes misleading advertising," the CCPA said, adding that the use of names and photographs of candidates who never availed the institute's services amounted to an unfair trade practice under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

It further recorded that despite repeated directions, the institute failed to furnish essential documentary evidence such as consent forms, enrolment records, fee receipts or course details to substantiate its claims.

In its defence, Vajirao & Reddy Institute argued that all candidates featured in the advertisements had availed some form of service and that details such as course duration or fee structure were irrelevant to determining student association.The institute also contended that aspirants typically make further enquiries before taking admission and therefore could not be said to have been misled.

# PMAY-Urban 2.0: 2.88 lakh additional houses approved, total sanctions reach 13.61 lakh

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The government on Monday said a total of 2.88 lakh additional houses have been sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban 2.0 (PMAY-U 2.0).

With the latest approval of 2,87,618 houses, the total number of sanctioned houses under the PMAY-U 2.0 scheme is now over 13.61 lakh, according to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Among the 2.88 lakh sanctioned houses, more than 1.60 lakh have been allotted to women, including widows, separated or unmarried females.

Eight dwelling units are sanctioned for Transgenders. Further, 22,581 houses have been allotted to senior citizens. While 35,525 houses have been sanctioned for SC beneficiaries, 9,773 are for ST beneficiaries, and 82,190 are for OBC beneficiaries. This reflects the government's continued commitment to ensuring access to dignified and affordable housing for urban families belonging to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS), Low Income Group (LIG), and Middle-Income Group (MIG), as was conveyed at the sixth meeting of the Central Sanctioning and Monitoring Committee (CSMC) here. According to the ministry, the newly-sanctioned houses have been approved in 16 States/UTs -- Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

These have been sanctioned under different verticals of PMAY-U 2.0, such as Beneficiary Led Construction (BLC) - 1.66 lakh houses, Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP) - 1.09 lakh houses, and Affordable Rental Housing (ARH) - 12,846 houses. Of the 13.61 lakh sanctioned houses under PMAY-U 2.0, 96 per cent are in the name of the female head of the household or in joint ownership in the BLC and ISS verticals, reflecting the scheme's focus on empowering women.

# Centre defends reduction of NEET-PG qualifying percentiles

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has told the Supreme Court that the decision to reduce the qualifying percentile for NEET-PG 2025-26 was taken after detailed deliberations by expert bodies in view of a large number of vacant postgraduate medical seats and in the interest of optimal utilisation of national healthcare infrastructure.




An affidavit filed by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) stated that the challenge to the January 13 notification issued by the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences (NBEMS) -- which reduced the qualifying cut-off percentiles for postgraduate medical admissions to abnormally low, zero, and even negative levels after the declaration of results and completion of two rounds of counselling -- was misconceived, as it pertained to an academic and policy determination taken within the statutory framework of the National Medical Commission (NMC) Act, 2019.

"It is respectfully submitted that the challenge pertains to an academic and policy determination taken by competent statutory authorities under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, in public interest and within the domain of expert regulation," the affidavit said.

Referring to the scope of judicial review, the Centre contended that the writ petition is "not maintainable" as it questions a policy decision taken by expert bodies keeping in view seat availability and healthcare requirements in India.

The affidavit clarified that NEET-PG is not meant to certify minimum clinical competence, which "stands established by the MBBS qualification itself", but to generate an inter se merit list for allocation of limited postgraduate seats.

"The NEET PG scores are a function of relative performance and examination design, which cannot be construed as determinative of clinical incompetence," it stated. Placing data on record, the Centre informed the apex court that for the academic session 2025-26, approximately 70,000 seats were available, with 31,742 seats under the All-India Quota (AIQ).

# 7 terrorists killed in J&K's Kishtwar, says Army

**Jammu, Feb 23 (IANS)** The Army said on Monday that in the relentless 326-day-long high altitude joint operation in the Chatroo area of Jammu and Kashmir's Kishtwar district, seven dreaded terrorists have been killed. Nagrota-headquartered White Knight Corps of the Army said on X that the operation was carried out in challenging conditions in the high-altitude areas of the union territory. In the post titled "Elimination of Terrorists", the Army wrote, "Relentless and painstaking high-altitude joint operations were conducted over 326 days in the Kishtwar region. Forces tracked terrorists in challenging conditions of cold, wet and freezing weather across daunting terrain, leading to multiple contacts." "Troops of #White Knight Corps, @JmuKmrPolice and #CRPF based on a well-knit intelligence grid established by civil and military intelligence agencies, have finally eliminated all seven dreaded terrorists in Chatroo, Kishtwar," the post read.

# Quality must be India's growth mantra to achieve 'Viksit Bharat 2047': Piyush Goyal

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Monday said that quality must become the core focus of India's manufacturing and export ecosystem if the country wants to achieve its long-term economic goals.



Addressing the first National Quality Conclave virtually, organised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in partnership with the Quality Council of India (QCI), Goyal stressed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of "zero defect, zero effect" should guide India's growth journey during the Amrit Kaal and help realise the dream of Viksit Bharat 2047.

"India cannot grow by remaining only a consumer nation. The country must establish itself as a global producer of high-quality goods and services, and that Brand India should stand for reliability, trust and excellence," he added.

"India's ambitious target of reaching $2 trillion in exports -- including $1 trillion each in merchandise and services over the next six to seven years -- can only be achieved if Indian products meet the highest global standards," the minister said.

"India has signed nine free trade agreements in the past three to three-and-a-half years with 38 developed countries, covering nearly two-thirds of global GDP and trade," Goyal highlighted. "These agreements open new opportunities in sectors such as textiles, leather, footwear and pharmaceuticals, but Indian companies must consistently deliver top-quality products to fully benefit from these markets," he explained.

# Israel to share Iron Dome technology with India: Consul General Yaniv Revach

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Israel plans to expand its bilateral defence agreement with India to share its technology and manufacture military hardware in India, as well as extend the cooperation to the latest Iron Dome and other defence systems, Israeli Consul General to Midwest India Yaniv Revach said on Monday.



In an exclusive interview with IANS ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, Revach said, "Prime Minister Netanyahu specifically said that one of the aspects of this visit is defence cooperation, and we try to promote and to upgrade the defence cooperation with India, definitely."

"First of all, we have an ongoing defence cooperation, very unique and strong between the two states, because of the mutual challenges that we're both facing. Now, during this specific visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we plan to expand this agreement to focus on specific topics, for example, manufacturing here in India, defence cooperation, and also cooperation regarding the Iron Dome and other defence systems in Israel that we can actually share the technology with our partners here in India," Revach explained.

He further stated that to tackle the radical axis, Israel is keen to establish a different axis with India, the states of the Abraham Accords, some African nations, and countries in the Middle East, including Cyprus and Greece.

"And I think it's very important that Prime Minister Modi will visit Israel this week try to promote this initiative," he added.

# PM Modi reaches out to Bengal voters via open letter, promises state's economic revival

**Kolkata, Feb 23 (IANS)** The West Bengal unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has commenced the mass distribution of an open letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, penned in Bengali and Hindi, among voters as part of its campaigning ahead of the high-stakes Assembly elections scheduled for later this year.

In the letter, the Prime Minister accuses the Mamata Banerjee-led government and the ruling Trinamool Congress of attempting to deprive people of benefits from centrally sponsored schemes. He also claims that, despite obstacles from the state administration, many residents have still gained from these programmes.

"Just a few months, the electoral fate of West Bengal will be decided. A structured decision on your part will decide the fate of the future generation in the state. The people of West Bengal are victims of deprivation. My heart is equally pained by that. Hence, from the core of my heart, I want to make a promise today. The promise is to rebuild a developed and prosperous West Bengal," the letter states in its opening passage.

In subsequent paragraphs, the Prime Minister lists welfare and development schemes introduced since 2014 by the National Democratic Alliance government led by him, asserting that these initiatives have benefited people across sectors in the state despite what he describes as non-cooperation from the state government.



"In the post-Independence era, West Bengal was the heart of India's economy. But today my heart bleeds because of the sick and worn-out condition of the state's economy. West Bengal had continued to suffer for the last six decades because of the continuous misrule and encouragement of appeasement politics. On the one hand, the educated youths are forced to get settled elsewhere because of the lack of employment opportunities. On the other hand, the women of the state are in constant fear over the lack of safety against loss of dignity," Modi wrote.

He also invokes the legacy of figures such as Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose, stating that the state which once produced such icons is now facing challenges including alleged illegal infiltration, concerns over women's safety, and economic decline.

"But how long will you tolerate such things? A change is inevitable now. The livelihood of the people in other states has improved manifold now. Several people in those states have been elevated above the poverty level. The people of West Bengal deserve the same development. So let us get united to rebuild a developed West Bengal," the PM says in the letter.

# Mexico kills drug kingpin El Mencho, violence erupts

**Washington, Feb 23 (IANS)** Mexican security forces have killed Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera Cervantes, one of the country's most powerful drug kingpins, triggering violent reprisals across several states and prompting fresh advisories for US citizens.

US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau said he had been informed that Mexican forces had killed "El Mencho," describing him as "one of the bloodiest and most ruthless drug kingpins."

"This is a great development for Mexico, the US, Latin America, and the world. The good guys are stronger than the bad guys," Landau wrote on X.

In a separate post, Landau said he was watching "the scenes of violence from Mexico with great sadness and concern." He added: "It's not surprising that the bad guys are responding with terror. But we must never lose our nerve!"

The US State Department also circulated emergency contact numbers for American citizens. It shared 1-888-407-4747 for callers from the US and Canada, and +1 202-501-4444 for those calling from overseas, including Mexico.

According to reporting in The Wall Street Journal, Mexico's military killed Oseguera in an operation that marked one of the most significant blows yet to organised crime. The newspaper said the killing escalated the government's war against cartels and sparked a violent gang response.



The Washington Post reported that the cartel leader's death "set off a wave of violence in areas controlled by the Jalisco New Generation Cartel," including burning cars and road blockages in Guadalajara and other cities.

Fox News said Oseguera, known as "El Mencho," was killed in a military operation in Jalisco and that US authorities had provided complementary intelligence supporting the operation.

CNN reported that violence erupted in several states after the raid, with suspected cartel members torching buses and businesses and clashing with security forces.

The New York Post described Puerto Vallarta as being "under siege" after the army killed the cartel leader, as gunmen blocked highways and set vehicles ablaze.

Oseguera was the head of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, known as CJNG. US authorities had previously offered a reward of up to $15 million for information leading to his arrest. He had been indicted in the United States on drug trafficking charges and was long seen as a central figure in fentanyl and methamphetamine flows into the US.

# Trump weighs strike as Iran allies hold back

**Washington, Feb 23 (IANS)** US President Donald Trump is weighing military options against Iran as diplomacy enters what officials describe as a last-ditch phase, even as Tehran's closest partners - China and Russia - appear reluctant to offer direct military backing in any conflict with the United States.

According to a report in The Wall Street Journal, Iran has sought for years to build closer military ties with Beijing and Moscow. But its powerful friends are "proving reluctant to step forward" as the regime faces what the paper described as the "most acute US threat to its survival in decades."Russia and Iran conducted small-scale naval drills in the Gulf of Oman this past week. An exercise involving Chinese ships is also planned in the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian state media reported. Yet analysts told the Journal that Beijing and Moscow have shown little willingness to provide direct military assistance if Trump orders an attack on Iran."They're not going to sacrifice their own interests for the Iranian regime," Danny Citrinowicz, a former Israeli military intelligence official, was quoted as saying. "They are hoping the regime will not be toppled, but they are definitely not going to counter the US militarily."At the same time, The New York Times reported that Trump has told advisers that if diplomacy or any initial targeted U.S. attack does not lead Iran to give up its nuclear programme, he would consider a much larger assault intended to drive the country's leaders from power.

Negotiators from Washington and Tehran are scheduled to meet in Geneva for talks aimed at avoiding military conflict. But Trump has been weighing options for US action if negotiations fail.

Targets under consideration range from the headquarters of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to nuclear and ballistic missile facilities, the Times reported.Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, insisted in a television interview that the country was not ready to give up what he called its "right" to make nuclear fuel under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

# Guyana Vice-President lauds India's rapid progress in digital governance

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Vice-President C P Radhakrishnan held a meeting with his Guyanese counterpart Bharrat Jagdeo in New Delhi on Monday, discussing ways to further strengthen bilateral ties across various sectors.

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the voice of the Global South at international forums, including the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

"Vice-President of Guyana, H.E. Dr. Bharrat Jagdeo, called on the Vice-President of India, Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan, at Uprashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi today. The two leaders discussed ways to further strengthen India-Guyana ties across diverse sectors. Dr. Jagdeo appreciated the decisive leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and India's rapid progress in digital governance and financial inclusion through UPI, and both sides discussed the possibility of extending similar models to Guyana. The



Guyanese delegation also expressed interest in India's e-Migrate platform and the ITEC programme," the Vice President's Office posted on X after the meeting.

"The Vice-Presidents reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the voice of the Global South at international platforms, including the UNSC and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. Both leaders also shared their mutual passion for cricket and acknowledged Guyana's contribution to the game," it added.

# China: Doubts rise over military's effectiveness after large-scale removal of top brass

**Abuja, Feb 23 (IANS)** As Chinese President Xi Jinping aims for an unprecedented fourth term as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), analysts suggest he may be uncertain of his complete control over the armed forces. Without a clear succession plan, concerns persist about other aspirants positioning themselves to step into Xi's role, with potential threats emerging from the senior Generals in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), a report said on Monday.

"Eyebrows were raised on January 20 last when General Zhang Youxia and General Liu Zhenli, two of the top officers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, failed to attend a high-level seminar on the study of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Under the regimented political system in



China, such an absence was bound to lead to intense speculation. Lo and behold, within four days, the Defence Ministry of China confirmed that the two officers were under investigation on the charges of corruption and violation of the discipline of the CCP," Uganda-based media outlet 'PML Daily' detailed.

According to the report, these were no ordinary Generals - especially General Zhang, who, as the First Vice President of the Central Military Commission (CMC), was China's highest-ranking military officer, second only to President Xi, the Chairman of the CMC.

"General Zhang was also the sole representative of the military in the politburo of the CCP, the highest decision-making body of China. Besides, General Zhang is a member of the red aristocracy and a childhood friend of President Xi; both of their fathers having served in the same army formations, sharing close family ties. General Liu too was a CMC member, responsible for joint combat, unit movement and intelligence. The two Generals are among the few officers in the PLA with combat experience from the era of China-Vietnam war," it mentioned.

Under President Xi, the report said that at least 110 senior-most officers of the PLA have been dismissed, prosecuted and even imprisoned.

It added that now if the charges of corruption levelled against these officers are valid, serious questions arise about the quality of the armament procured by the PLA and overall combat readiness of the Chinese military.

# 12 TN fishers held by Lankan Navy; trawler seized ahead of Katchatheevu festival

**Chennai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Tensions escalated along the Palk Strait after the Sri Lankan Navy arrested 12 fishermen from Pamban on Monday and seized their mechanised trawler on charges of alleged poaching in Sri Lankan waters.

According to officials from the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Department, the arrested fishermen had set out to sea on Sunday in a mechanised boat owned by David, a resident of Pamban near Rameswaram.

The vessel was reportedly intercepted by the Sri Lankan Navy while fishing in waters between Katchatheevu and Mannar.

The fishermen were expected to return to shore by



noon on Monday but failed to do so, raising concern among their families.

Following their detention, the fishermen were taken to the naval port at Talaimannar for further enquiry, officials said.

Fishermen associations in Rameswaram strongly condemned the arrests and appealed to the Centre to intervene immediately, stating that repeated detentions were threatening their livelihood and creating uncertainty among coastal communities.

Fishermen leader Jesu Raja expressed shock over the development, noting that just last week 22 Indian fishermen were arrested and four trawlers impounded by Sri Lankan authorities.

"With only a few days left for the annual festival at St. Antony's Church in Katchatheevu, such actions have caused distress and disharmony among fisherfolk on both sides," he said.

Sri Lankan authorities had recently extended invitations to Indian pilgrims to attend the two-day Katchatheevu festival.

However, Raja said the continuing arrests have left many fishermen uncertain about participating in the celebrations. He pointed out that similar detentions had occurred last year in the run-up to the festival.

# Pakistan: Three security personnel killed, several injured following quadcopter attack

**Islamabad, Feb 23 (IANS)** At least three Federal Constabulary (FC) men were killed when an ambulance carrying injured personnel came under attack in the Badrakhail area of Karak in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, local media reported citing regional police authorities.

The personnel were injured in a quadcopter attack on an FC post in the Dargah Shaheedan area this morning and were being transported to a hospital for treatment when the attack took place, the District Police Officer (DPO) told Pakistan's leading Geo News network.The report mentioned that at least five FC men were injured in the quadcopter attack, while two rescue personnel were also wounded in the ambulance attack.

"Following the attack, police launched a search and clearance operation in the area to apprehend the assailants. Investigations into the incident are under way," Geo News reported. On Sunday, Afghanistan's Ministry of National Defence accused the



Pakistani military regime of carrying out deadly airstrikes in various residential areas of the Nangarhar and Paktika provinces, resulting in the death of several civilians.

"Pakistan's military regime had once again conducted airstrikes in several civilian areas of Nangarhar and Paktika provinces -- including a religious school and several residential houses -- resulting in dozens of innocent civilians, among them women and children, being killed and injured," Pajhwok news reported quoting an official statement in which the Afghan defence ministry called the attacks a clear violation of Afghanistan's sovereignty and a crime.

# Canadian PM Mark Carney to visit India this week, hold talks with PM Modi

**Ottawa, Feb 23 (IANS)** Expanding Canada-India relationship will be in focus as Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney visits India later this week during which he will first travel to Mumbai and then visit New Delhi, where he is scheduled to hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The leaders will focus on elevating and expanding the Canada-India relationship, with ambitious new partnerships in trade, energy, technology and artificial intelligence (AI), talent and culture, and defence. He will meet with business leaders to identify investment opportunities in Canada and create new partnerships between businesses in both nations," a statement released by Canadian Prime Minister's Office stated on Monday.

After concluding his engagements in India, Carney will travel to Australia and then head to Japan. His visit to India, Australia and Japan is scheduled from February 26 to March 7. "Through these visits to three of Canada's strongest Indo-Pacific partners, the Prime



Minister will deepen regional ties that are critical to our security and prosperity," Carney's office stated.

"In a more uncertain world, Canada is focused on what we can control. We are diversifying our trade and attracting massive new investment to create new opportunities for our workers and businesses. We are forging new partnerships abroad to create greater certainty, security and prosperity at home," it added.

The Canadian PMO highlighted that India is the world's fastest-growing major economy and a powerhouse in global commerce and technology. India was Canada's seventh-largest goods and services trading partner in 2024, with two-way trade reaching $30.8 billion.

PM Modi met Carney on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Johannesburg last November, where he noted that India has set a target of 50 billion USD by 2030 for bilateral trade between the two countries.

Prime Minister Modi mentioned that India and Canada have great potential in strengthening trade and investment linkages.

"We have set a target of 50 billion USD by 2030 for our bilateral trade. Canadian Pension Funds are also showing keen interest in Indian companies," he posted on X after the meeting.

# FBI 'dedicating all necessary resources' to probe fatal shooting at Mar-a-Lago

**Washington, Feb 23 (IANS)** A 21-year-old North Carolina man carrying a shotgun and a fuel can was shot and killed by US Secret Service agents after breaching the security perimeter of President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, according to US media reports.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said that it is "dedicating all necessary resources" to the probe.

The man was identified as Austin Tucker Martin of Cameron, North Carolina.

According to Fox News, the incident occurred around 1.30 a.m. when the suspect made an "unauthorised entry" through the north gate of the Palm Beach resort as another vehicle was exiting.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Ric Bradshaw told reporters the suspect was carrying what appeared to be a shotgun and a gas can.

# Balochistan on edge as water crisis deepens

**Quetta, Feb 23 (IANS)** A major water crisis unfolding in Pakistan's Balochistan along with a demographic explosion threatens to overwhelm the fragile ecology of the province, a report has highlighted. "Every morning in Quetta, before the sun clears the jagged peaks of the Sulaiman Mountains, a ritual of anxiety begins. It starts with the hollow, metallic clink of a dry tap. For thousands of households, this sound is the starting gun for a daily race for survival. With it echo the neighbourhoods with one question: 'Will water come today?'" a report in Pakistan's Express Tribune magazine stated."In the sprawling neighbourhoods of the provincial capital, families ration every drop, calculating whether a litre of water should be used for cooking a meal or washing a child's face. What was once a seasonal inconvenience has hardened into a defining feature of life in Balochistan. This quiet crisis is unfolding alongside a demographic explosion that threatens to overwhelm the province's fragile ecology," it added.According to Population Management and Communication Team (PMCT) Director Abdul Sattar Shahwani, population of Balochistan has increased to 14.89 million, up from 12.34 million in 2017, showcasing an average annual growth rate of 3.2 per cent. Official projections suggest that Balochistan will have population of 18.57 million people by 2030 and the figure could be over 35 million by 2050.

# ISI's Bangladesh blueprint exposed: Lashkar module planned Delhi, Bengal strikes ahead of polls

**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** The busting of a Lashkar-e-Tayiba linked module which was planning on carrying out strikes in Delhi and adjoining cities has thrown up several details about how the ISI is planning on carrying out future operations in the country.

The module that was busted following the arrest of 8 people from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal was being handled from multiple locations. The module was being handled in a manner in which the Pakistan link would not crop up.

Investigating Officers say that like the Faridabad module, this one, too, had a Jammu and Kashmir link to it.

Shabbir Ahmed Lone, a resident of Ganderbal in Kashmir was sent to Bangladesh by the ISI to handle this module. The ISI was cultivating Lone since 2019, the year he was released from jail. Lone was arrested in 2007 after AK-47s and grenades were found on him. He was released from jail in 2019, following which he was immediately dispatched to Bangladesh.

In the Faridabad module it was found that an Imam was handling the members of the outfit. He was being given instructions from a Jaish-e-Mohammad handler based out of



Afghanistan, the probe had found.

An Intelligence Bureau official said that the module had conducted several dry runs. They were constantly testing the waters and challenging the Indian security agencies. They focussed largely on propaganda instead of the real attack.

In the first phase of their operation, they focussed only on putting up posters in various parts of the country. The posters were about the Kashmir issue and the same was found at Delhi, West Bengal. On February 10, several posters relating to the Kashmir issue were seen at Metro stations and other locations in Kolkata.

The probe has found that this module was planning on carrying out a large-scale attack in Delhi and adjoining areas. However further investigation has found that the focus of the module was also largely on Kolkata. Ahead of the elections, this module wanted to carry out attacks on temples and other places such as bus stands and Metro stations.

The ISI has been planning a large scale attack in West Bengal to disrupt the elections. In addition to this, the Pakistani spy agency has also set up multiple modules along the India-Bangladesh border.

With the Jamaat-e-Islami winning big in constituencies that are bordering West Bengal, the ISI feels that carrying out operations in these locations would be relatively easy.

Groups such as the Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami (HuJI) and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) have been roped in to undertake this operation, an official said.

These groups have already starting sending in illegal immigrants in large numbers to these border areas and have hosted them in madrasas. The intention is to push them into India around a month before the West Bengal elections and then effect demographic changes, which would eventually lead to communal clashes.

## Alia Bhatt sends 'all her love' to Yami Gautam and her baby



**Mumbai Feb 23 (IANS)** Bollywood superstar Alia Bhatt on Monday sent her warm wishes, all the love along with a few cute gifts to Yami Gautam and her toddler. Sharing on her social media account, Alia wrote, "All my love to you both dearest Yami".

The post featured a picture originally shared by Yami, showing an adorable soft toy, assortment of baby care essentials including soaps, lotion, powder and other gentle skincare items.

Earlier, Yami had expressed gratitude to Alia for the gifts, and thanked her for sending the goodies for her baby.

Yami had written, "Thank you got these amazing goodies for my baby, Alia.."

Yami who became the talk of the town with her powerpack performance in her movie Haq, received great reviews from not just audiences and critics but also from the who's who of the film industry.

One such fine appreciation was received by Yami from Alia Bhatt.

Just like many, actress Alia Bhatt had also declared herself to be a Yami Gautam fan after witnessing her phenomenal performance in her latest release "Haq".

Alia had taken to her social media account and called "Haq" as Yami's top performances of all time.

# Nani-starrer Paradise's 'Aaya Sher' promo sparks excitement

**Hyderabad, Feb 23 (IANS)** The makers of director Srikanth Odela's eagerly awaited action entertainer 'The Paradise', featuring Telugu star Nani in the lead, on Monday dropped a much-awaited promo of the number 'Aaya Sher' from the film.

The makers shared the promo on the officla handle of the film on X. They said, "Ever seen a lion dance his heart out? You will tomorrow! Here's a glimpse of his roar. #AayaSher promo out now. Full song out tomorrow. #TheParadise GRAND RELEASE WORLDWIDE ON AUGUST 21st, 2026. #JadalZamanaFromAug2




1." The song, which appears to be a celebratory number, features Nani dancing along with his supporters. Nani sports two plaits in the dance number, which has been set to tune by Anirudh. The song has been penned by Kasarla Shyam Kumar and has been rendered by Addula Jangireddy and Akunoori Devaihah along with Anirudh Ravichander.

It may be recalled that 'The Paradise', which is backed by SLV Cinemas, was originally set for a grand release on March 26, 2026. The film is now scheduled to hit screens worldwide on August 21 this year.

The new date picked by the unit for the release thrusts The Paradise straight into a rare three-week festival wave.

## Rashmika Mandanna, Vijay Deverakonda arrive in Udaipur in coordinated outfits ahead of wedding



**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Actors Rashmika Mandanna and Vijay Deverakonda, who are set to tie the nuptial knot, landed in Udaipur on Monday to flag off their wedding festivities.

The wedding ceremony will take place at Mementos by ITC Hotels, Ekaaya Udaipur. While Vijay was dressed in a black leather ensemble, his woman, Rashmika Mandanna complemented him in a sophisticated outfit. The actress' attire featured a blazer with a notch lapel collar, padded shoulders, full-length sleeves folded to the elbow, double front pockets, a tailored design and fit, and an open front.

Vijay rounded up his look with a moustache, and waved to the media and fans before leaving for the wedding venue.

On Sunday, the actor couple officially announced their wedding. Taking to their respective Instagram handles, Rashmika and Vijay wrote, "Our Dearest loves, Before we made any plans, before we chose anything for ourselves, you were already there. With so much love, you gave us a name. You called us 'VIROSH'. So today, with full hearts, we name our coming together in your honour. We would like to name it, 'The Wedding of VIROSH'. Thank you for holding us with so much love. You are a part of us, always. Biggest hugs and full love".

The couple are expected to exchange the vows on February 26, 2026 in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

## Sunny Deol, Vijay Varma to star in action -thriller

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Actors Sunny Deol and Vijay Varma are joining forces for a high intensity action thriller. The film blends powerful action with a gripping, layered storytelling.

A source close to the development revealed, "Sunny Deol and Vijay Varma are coming together for a high-octane action thriller that promises both intensity and scale".

"It's an interesting casting coup as the duo has never worked together before. The project blends powerful action with a gripping, layered story, and with Sunny and Vijay joining hands, it's going to be an exciting watch for the audience", the source added. This collaboration brings



together two actors renowned for their contracting yet commanding presence. Sunny Deol is celebrated for iconic roles, and has long defined high-stakes action with raw power and emotional depth. Vijay Varma, one of the most compelling and exciting actors of his generation, shines in intense, nuanced performances in films 'Gully Boy', 'Darlings', and 'Dahaad'. Each role demonstrates his skill at uncovering nuance in complex characters, suiting bold, character-driven narratives.

Bringing these two dynamic forces together signals a film that might balance scale with substance. While details about the director and production timeline remain under wraps, insiders suggest that the narrative will go beyond stylised action, offering emotional heft and dramatic complexity alongside adrenaline-pumping sequences.

## Riya Munjal talks about confronting eve-teasers in college

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Actress Riya Munjal, who is receiving a lot of positive response to her work in the television show 'Lakshmi Niwas', has spoken up about the instance when she stood-up against the eve-teasers.

The show is currently witnessing an engaging track centred around Bhoomika and Raj Bundela. Bhoomika, the youngest daughter of Srinivas and Lakshmi, played by Riya Munjal, finds herself at the heart of unexpected developments when millionaire Raj Bundela enters her life. Raj, instantly smitten by Bhoomika, takes a bold step by approaching her family with a marriage proposal the very first day he meets her. His consistent support



towards the family in difficult times gradually wins their trust, leading Srinivas and the family to consider his proposal seriously.

Bhoomika's journey is far more layered. A lively, full-of-life girl, she is suddenly pushed into circumstances she wasn't emotionally ready for.

## Mira Rajput meets MIL Supriya Pathak for coffee, Sana Kapur shares 'proof of whom mom loves more'

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Shahid Kapoor's stepmother, Supriya Pathak, loves her daughter-in-law Mira Rajput more than her own daughter, and this was jokingly claimed by Supriya Pathak's own daughter Sanah Kapur.

Recently, Mira met Supriya and Sanah over coffee and Sanah shared a picture on her social media from their fun meet.

Reposting a picture originally shared by Sanah, Mira shared a cheerful family moment with the caption: "Coffee and gup shup @mira.kapoor"

The image also carried a playful note written by Sanah that read: "Ps: if there was any doubt about who mom loves



more….here is clear proof!!! Please notice who she is sticking to."

In the picture, Mira is seen standing close to Supriya Pathak, who appears to be affectionately holding her hand and leaning more towards her, while Sanah Kapur stands beside them smiling. The candid frame captures the trio enjoying a cosy coffee catch-up.

For the uninitiated, Mira is also known to share an equally strong bond with Shahid Kapoor's mother, veteran actress Neelima Azim. The two are often seen spending time together, and Mira shares videos and glimpses of their outings and celebrations on social media.

Talking about Shahid Kapoor and Mira Rajput, the two tied the knot on July 7, 2015, in an intimate ceremony in Delhi. Their marriage was an arranged alliance facilitated through family and spiritual guidance. The couple has now been married for over a decade and are parents to two children, daughter Misha, born in 2016, and son Zain, born in 2018.

On the professional front, Mira has carved her own path by stepping into entrepreneurship and is actively building her presence in the wellness and lifestyle space.

Shahid Kapoor, meanwhile, is busy as a bee with his movie and shooting commitments. He was last seen in the recently released O Romeo, and has Cocktail 2 and Farzi 2 in the pipeline.

## Bhumi Pednekar wishes 'her world, her life' Samiksha on her birthday



**Mumbai Feb 23 (IANS)** Actress Bhumi Pednekar penned a heartfelt note for her sister Samiksha Pednekar on her birthday, calling her as her 'world, heart and life.'

Sharing a warm post, Bhumi shared a beautiful video of Samiksha asking for a wish before blowing the birthday candles on the cake. Bhumi wrote, "My world, my heart, my life Happy Birthday Samu @samikshapednekar."

Talking about the sisters, both Bhumi and Samiksha have often spoken about their close bond, and frequently share glimpses of their sisterhood on social media.

For the uninitiated, the Pednekar sisters belong to a Maharashtrian family, with roots linked to the coastal region of Maharashtra. The two are often seen visiting their hometown and give a glimpse of their traditional and village roots. On the professional front, Bhumi made her acting debut with Dum Laga Ke Haisha opposite Ayushmann Khurrana. Before foraying into Bollywood, the actress had worked behind the scenes as an assistant casting director at Yash Raj Films.

She later went on to star in films such as Toilet: Ek Prem Katha, Shubh Mangal Saavdhan, Bala, Badhaai Do and others.

# Cheers to three decades of sisterhood

**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** Actress Sheeba Akashdeep marked three decades of sisterhood and and being each other's constant with actress Bhagyashree as she shared a heartfelt birthday note that also celebrated their enduring friendship.

Taking to her social media account, Sheeba wrote, "How do you pick a favorite moment from 30 years of sisterhood? From being young, hopeful actresses chasing dreams to standing strong as women, wives, and mothers… we've seen it all together. Through laughter, tears, madness, and memories — you've been my constant. Here's to 30 years and a lifetime more."

The carousel post featured a series of pictures capturing their beautiful journey of friendship and sisterhood over the years.

One picture showed the birthday girl Bhagyashree seated on a bench in a lime-green saree, surrounded by her pet dogs, smiling ear to ear.

Another picture captures Sheeba and




Bhagyashree enjoying a carefree moment in a swimming pool. A third picture features them dressed in elegant traditional attire, sharing a candid laugh at what looks like a celebration party.

Another candid click shows them at a formal gathering, leaning onto each other as they are seen laughing over a joke.

For the uninitiated, Sheeba and Bhagyashree have shared a close bond since the mid-1990s.

Talking about Sheeba, the actress has featured in films like 'Yeh Aag Kab Bujhegi', 'Suryavanshi', 'Pyaar Ka Saaya' and 'Miss 420'. She later transitioned to television and reality shows.

Talking about Bhagyashree, the actress made her Bollywood debut opposite Salman Khan in the 1989 blockbuster 'Maine Pyar Kiya'. She belongs to a royal Patvardhan family of Sangli , making her the Princess of Sangli in Maharashtra.

At the peak of her career, Bhagyashree chose to marry businessman Himalay Dasani in 1990 and stepped away from the entertainment world to focus on family life.

The couple welcomed their son Abhimanyu Dasani in 1990 and daughter Avantika Dasani in 1995. Abhimanyu made his acting debut with 'Mard Ko Dard Nahi Hota' in 2018 and later appeared in films such as 'Nikamma'. Avantika, on the other hand, stepped into acting with the web series 'Mithya'.

**Health**

## Cong leaders slam Vijayan govt over 'isolated incidents' claim in Kerala health sector



**Kochi Feb 23 (IANS)** Senior Congress leaders on Monday mounted a sharp attack on Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan government over recurring allegations of medical negligence, rejecting the state minister's contention that such incidents are "isolated cases".

The criticism came after the Congress General Secretary and Alappuzha Lok Sabha member visited Usha Joseph, a native of his constituency, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Ernakulam, after a pair of scissors that was allegedly left inside her abdomen during a surgery at Vandanam Medical College Hospital in 2021 was removed last week.

Addressing the media, he said inquiry committees announced in the wake of medical negligence cases were often meant to whitewash lapses rather than fix accountability.

"Committees are declared whenever such incidents surface, but no meaningful action follows their reports. If those responsible for medical negligence are not held accountable, are the victims to be treated as the culprits?" he asked.

Venugopal described the inquiry findings as "strange" and said the government should admit mismanagement and take corrective steps instead of attempting to deflect criticism by invoking caste and gender narratives.

# T20 WC: India's 76-run defeat to SA complicates their path to semi-finals



**Ahmedabad, Feb 23 (IANS)** South Africa handing India a 76-run defeat in their Super Eights clash in 2026 Men's T20 World Cup at the NarendraModi Stadium on Sunday snapped the defending champions' 12-match winning streak in the mega event and plunged their semifinal aspirations into serious doubt.

In a rematch of the 2024 T20 World Cup final, the Proteas recovered from early adversity to post 187/7 before dismissing India for just 111 in 18.5 overs. South Africa's innings appeared to be unravelling when JaspritBumrah produced a ferocious opening spell of 2-7 in his first two overs, and reduced the Proteas to 20/3.

Though Bumrah finished with 3-15, and surpassed RavichandranAshwin to become India's all-time leading wicket-taker at T20 World Cups with 33 scalps, David Miller (63) and DewaldBrevis (45) took the game away from India with a breathtaking 97-run partnership off just 51 balls. Tristan Stubbs then hammered an unbeaten 44 off 24 balls to carry South Africa to 187/7.

India's first run chase in this World Cup began disastrously and never recovered as at the end of the powerplay, they were in tatters at 31/3. ShivamDube top-scored with 42 but received little support from the middle order, as South Africa's pace attack was relentless, led by Marco Jansen's 4-22, varied their lengths and speeds well to annihilate India's batting line-up.

The heavy defeat leaves India's path to the semifinals considerably more complicated. The SuryakumarYadav-led side must now win both of their remaining Super Eights matches to guarantee a place in the final four - against Zimbabwe in Chennai on February 26 and West Indies in Kolkata on March 1. Should India win only one of those matches, their qualification will hinge entirely on other results and net run rate - a precarious position for a side that arrived at this stage as heavy favourites and defending champions. As of now, India's net run rate is at -3.8.

A similar situation unfolded for India in 2012 T20 World Cup in Sri Lanka, where a nine-wicket loss to Australia pushed their net run rate into negative and despite two wins, they never recovered enough to get into semi-finals. For India, a tournament that once seemed destined to end in glory on home soil has suddenly taken a dramatically uncertain turn after being totally outplayed by the Proteas.

## 'Ishan-Abhishek issue India must fix fast'

**Ahmedabad, Feb 23 (IANS)**Former India cricketer AbhishekNayar highlighted concerns around India's opening pair following their struggles in the Super Eight stage of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, particularly against off-spin in the powerplay.

Kishan is India's second-highest run-getter in the ongoing tournament. The wicketkeeper-batter has amassed 176 runs in five matches at an average of 35.20.

The World No. 1 T20I batter, Abhishek, is having a disastrous run with the bat in the T20 World Cup. In four matches, the left-handed batter has scored just 15 runs. Sharma has three ducks to his name in the ongoing marquee event.

Speaking on JioHotstar, Nayar pointed to the lack of clarity and rhythm at the top of the order, referencing IshanKishan and Abhishek Sharma. The former batter explained that off-spinners operating with the new ball can extract variable bounce and subtle deviation, especially when hitting the seam, which makes aggressive stroke play risky in the powerplay overs.

## I agree that you have to use Sundar vs left-handers, but Axar has been your MVP: Ashwin



**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Former India all-rounder RavichandranAshwin has pointed out key selection and batting decisions that contributed to India's crushing 76-run loss to South Africa in their Super Eights clash of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 on Sunday at the NarendraModi Stadium. India were bowled out for 111 while chasing 188, marking their biggest defeat in a T20 World Cup and ending a 13-match unbeaten streak in the tournament. Ashwin flagged the choice of playing Washington Sundar over Axar Patel and sending Rinku Singh to bat at No. 8 as pivotal errors.

"I agree that the IPL is good for match-ups, but you have to change the team because you are going to play 14 games. But in such ICC campaigns, the more stable you can keep the team, the better. I agree 100 per cent that you have to use Washington Sundar against left-handers; you have to play him, I agree with all that. But Axar Patel has been your MVP in T20 cricket.

## West Indies post massive 254-6 against Zimbabwe



**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** ShimronHetmyer blasted a scintillating 85 off 34 balls as West Indies posted the second-highest team total in the history of T20 World Cup, a massive 254-6, against Zimbabwe in a Super Eights fixture here on Monday.

in to bat, Hetmyer produced the fastest fifty in T20 World Cups for West Indies, smashing seven sixes and seven fours during his entertaining innings.

He achieved the milestone in 19 balls. He added 122 off 52 balls with Rovman Powell (59). After the two departed, Sherfane Rutherford (31) and Romario Shepherd (21) piled up further agony on the Zimbabwe bowlers.

Richard Ngarava (2/47) and Blessing Muzarabani (2/42) managed two wickets. Brief Score: Zimbabwe : 254-6 in 20 overs (ShimronHetmyer 85; Richard Ngarava 2/47).

## Spinners in focus as England, Pakistan eye crucial Super Eights points



**Pallekele, Feb 23 (IANS)** On a surface expected to assist slow bowlers, both England and Pakistan will lean heavily on their spin resources in their Super Eights clash in the T20 World Cup in Pallekele on Tuesday.

England may not have hit top gear yet, but the two-time champions have found ways to win. They kicked off their Super Eights campaign with a commanding 51-run victory over Sri Lanka, a result that significantly boosted their net run rate and took them to the top of the standings. Defending a modest total against Sri Lanka, England played according to the conditions perfectly. Their spinners did the bulk of the work along with pacer Jofra Archer to trigger a dramatic Sri Lankan batting collapse. The ever-reliable leg spinner Adil Rashid and left arm spinner Liam Dawson have combined well to get the wickets. Meanwhile, Will Jacks has emerged as an unlikely match-winner.

His off-spin has been handy, but it is his contributions with the bat, 39 against Nepal, 16 against Scotland and 53 versus Italy, that have repeatedly bailed England out of trouble.

Opener Phil Salt returned to form with a match-winning knock against Sri Lanka, as he batted beyond the powerplay for the first time in the tournament.

# Ranji Trophy: Formidable Karnataka chase ninth title against first-time finalists J&K



**Hubbali, Feb 23 (IANS)** Jammu and Kashmir will attempt to write the most unlikely chapter in Indian domestic cricket history when they take on a formidable eight-time champions Karnataka in the Ranji Trophy final starting on Tuesday.

While ParasDogra-captained J&K have a maiden title up for grabs, DevduttPadikkal-led Karnataka are chasing their first crown in well over a decade. J&K's only defeat in this season came in a 35-run loss to Mumbai in October, and they have not looked back since then.

Having defeated Delhi in Delhi, Madhya Pradesh in Indore and Bengal in Kalyani to reach this title clash, J&K have all the tools in their arsenal to have a strong crack at winning the title and change the trajectory of cricket in their state. Karnataka, meanwhile, enter as resounding favourites after amassing 736 and 323 runs in the two innings of their semi-final against Uttarakhand, with KL Rahul, DevduttPadikkal and R. Smaran all scoring heavily.

Karun Nair and Padikkal, who is expected to recover from a hand injury in time for the final, have also been in commanding form.

It would also help that Karnataka has won in both of their previous meetings against J&K. An interesting sub-plot in the final will be the clash of Karnataka's batters against J&K ace pacer Auqib Nabi.

Nabi, 29, has been the driving force behind J&K's success by taking 55 wickets in nine matches at an average of 12.72 this season, the second-highest tally in the competition.

Apart from his handy lower-order batting, Nabi needs just five more to finish as the leading wicket-taker.

Left-arm quick Sunil Kumar and spinner AbidMushtaq have provided strong support, but Nabi remains the bowler Karnataka will most want to see the back of. Hubbali has hosted only one match this season - Karnataka winning over Chandigarh by an innings and 185 runs, where Smaran made a majestic 227. Yet J&K have made a habit of defying expectation and their wait for a title could end, provided they upstage Karnataka, a task easier said than done.

## Shimron Hetmyer blasts fastest fifty by a West Indies batter in T20 WC



**Mumbai, Feb 23 (IANS)** West Indies batter ShimronHetmyer put on a dazzling display of power-hitting, racing to a record fastest half-century for a Caribbean batter in the T20 World Cup in their Super 8 Group 1 clash against Zimbabwe at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Monday.

Asked to bat first, Hetmyer reached the milestone in 19 balls, hitting four boundaries and five maximums in the process, improving on his own record for the fastest fifty by a West Indies batter in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Hetmyer had earlier blasted a half-century in 22 balls against Scotland in the opening match of this World Cup at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata, breaking the previous record of fifty in 23 balls by Chris Gayle at the Oval in 2009.

## T20 World Cup: Sundar Pichai meets childhood hero Sunil Gavaskar



**Ahmedabad, Feb 23 (IANS)** Google CEO Sundar Pichai, an avid cricket fan, had a memorable fan boy moment as he carried the ICC T20 World Cup alongside his childhood idol Sunil Gavaskar.

Pichai and Gavaskar carried the trophy to the centre of the field ahead of the T20 World Cup match between India and South Africa at the NarendraModi stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday.Chennai-born, IIT Kharagpur-educated Pichai is a self-confessed fan of legends Gavaskar and Sachin Tendulkar, whom he met during the 2019 ODI World Cup in England. 'When I was young, Sunny (Gavaskar) was a big idol for me. I used to have his Sportstar (magazine) posters on my walls. I have followed him from a young age, I used to listen to it on radio for the games in the West Indies with my grand dad and uncle, so I have always been into the game,' he told commentator Ravi Shastri on JioHotstar.

'I did dream of being a cricketer like so many Indians. I used to be a huge fan of Gavaskar when he was playing and later, Sachin when he played,' he has said in the past.

## Australia to return to South Africa for first Test tour



**New Delhi, Feb 23 (IANS)** Australia will tour South Africa for a landmark three-Test series in 2026-27, marking their first red-ball visit to the country since the infamous 2018 ball-tampering episode in Cape Town. Cricket South Africa unveiled their international schedule for the 2026-27 season, confirming a marquee contest between the two most recent World Test Championship winners. The series will culminate at Newlands in Cape Town, the venue where the 2018 scandal unfolded and triggered one of the most turbulent chapters in Australian cricket history.

The tour will begin with a three-match ODI series in September, with matches slated for Durban, Johannesburg and Potchefstroom. Australia will then shift focus to the longer format, with Tests scheduled in Durban, Gqeberha and Cape Town. A warm-up fixture in Potchefstroom is also part of the itinerary. Australia are also expected to play limited-overs matches in neighbouring Zimbabwe before crossing into South Africa.

Several members of the current Australian squad, including captain Pat Cummins, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon and Josh

## Ivashka stuns top seed Gomez; Shimizu, Gray, and Ajdukovic advance in Maha Open ATP Challenger



**Pune, Feb 23 (IANS)** Former top-50-ranked player IlyaIvashka pulled off the upset of the day, knocking out top seed Federico Agustin Gomez in a thrilling three-set battle in the opening round of the Maha Open ATP Challenger 75 Men's Tennis Championship at the Mhalunge Balewadi Tennis Stadium at the Shiv Chhatrapati Kreeda Sankul in Pune on Monday. The tournament is organised by Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) in association with the Department of Sports and Youth Services, Govt of Maharashtra, PCMC, PMC, and PMDTA, and sponsored by Pune Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (PMRDA).

Ivashka dominated the opening set 6-1 before Gomez roared back to take the second by the same score line. The decider went down to an intense tie-breaker, where Ivashka held his nerve to seal a 6-1, 1-6, 7-6(7) victory in a match lasting 2 hours and 25 minutes, booking his place in the second round.

Japan's Yuta Shimizu produced a clinical performance to defeat Italy's Lorenzo Carboni 6-4, 6-4 in straight sets. Britain's Alastair Gray battled past Poland's Daniel Michalski 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in a hard-fought contest. Croatia's DujeAjdukovic also advanced comfortably with a 6-2, 6-4 win over Korea's Shin San-hui.

It was not a great outing for the two Indian qualifiers as Takuya Kumasaka of Japan defeated S.D. PrajwalDev 6-4, 6-2, while Chinese Taipei's Tung-Lin Wu enjoyed a 7-5, 6-4 win over Digvijaypratap Singh in the final round of qualifying matches. Japan's Maks Kasnikowski, Masamichi Imamura, Yusuke Takahashi, and Malaysian Mitsuki Wei Kang Leong were the other qualifiers.

# Coyle eyes positive result in Kolkata

Mail News Service



**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Jamshedpur FC head coach Owen Coyle has said his team is ready for a tough challenge against East Bengal FC in their first away match of the season on February 27. Despite the difference in financial resources between the two clubs, Coyle expressed confidence in his side's ability to compete strongly.

Speaking after Jamshedpur FC's second consecutive win, Coyle acknowledged that East Bengal have invested heavily in their squad this season. <

However, he stressed that success is not determined only by budget. "We've shown before that you don't need the biggest budget to build a strong team," he said.

Jamshedpur FC have started the campaign positively, collecting six points from their opening two matches. Coyle described the strong start as crucial in a short league season. He said early wins help avoid the pressure of catching up later in the competition. While satisfied with the results, the coach admitted there is room for improvement. He felt the team controlled large parts of recent matches but conceded possession too easily at times. He also said the final pass and finishing in attacking areas need to be sharper. Coyle praised the team's defensive performance, highlighting two consecutive clean sheets.

He said the players have shown strong commitment in defending as a unit. Looking ahead to the Kolkata clash, Coyle called it a demanding test but said his team will prepare well. He added that if Jamshedpur FC perform at their best, they are capable of securing another positive result.

## JFC tickets now live for clash against Inter Kashi

**Jamshedpur, Feb 18:** Football fever is gripping the city as Jamshedpur FC announces that tickets for their highly anticipated match against Inter Kashi, scheduled on 6th March, 7:30 PM are now live in the District by Zomato.

The Men of Steel, fresh from two consecutive victories at home, are looking to keep their winning streak alive against the newly promoted Inter Kashi, who have strengthened their squad with impressive signings. The I-League champions have made their mark in the ISL, and fans are eager to witness their skills on the big stage.

The match is scheduled to take place on March 6th, 7:30 PM, at the iconic Furnace.

# Tata Steel lease expires: Govt to decide future of 10,852 acres

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Administrative activity has intensified regarding the 'Tata Sublease Agreement,' which defines the geographical and economic landscape of Jamshedpur. Following the appointment of Ravi Ranjan Vikram to the vacant post of Kolhan Commissioner, the lease renewal process is set to gain momentum.

According to sources, the Commissioner will hold a high-level review meeting with the East Singhbhum Deputy Commissioner (DC) after February 26th. The meeting will focus on finalizing the terms of the agreement and the lease renewal proposal.

**Tata Steel Currently Acting as 'Caretaker' :** The previous 20-year agreement between the Jharkhand Government and Tata Steel, signed in 2005, expired on December 31, 2025. Technically, the entire 10,852.27 acres of land in Jamshedpur has now reverted to the Jharkhand Government. However, until a new agreement is formally signed, Tata Steel will continue to manage civic amenities and maintenance in the role of a 'Caretaker.'



**The Land Division:** A City Split into Five Categories

**The subleased land under Tata Steel is categorized into five distinct schedules:**

**Schedule A (Plant):** 1,065.98 acres dedicated to industrial production.

**Schedule B (Housing):** 1,641.44 acres for employee quarters and flats.

**Schedule C (Amenities):** 2,339.20 acres for playgrounds, parks, and community centers.

**Schedule D (Commercial):** 4,015.96 acres for markets and shopping complexes.

**Vacant Land:** 1,789.78 acres reserved for future development.

**The Challenge of Encroachment and 125 Settlements :** History shows that delays in lease agreements often lead to increased encroachment. Between 1996 and 2005, the absence of an active agreement saw rapid encroachment on 1,786.89 acres, leading to the formation of 86 settlements-a number that has now grown to 125. Tata Steel has already excluded the land occupied by these settlements from its sublease.

## 'Special 9' team formed for land protection

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The administration is taking no risks this time. To keep vacant land free from encroachment until the new agreement is finalized, a joint team has been formed under the leadership of the Dhalbhum Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO). This 'Special 9' team includes nine officials from both the district administration and Tata Steel.

**Protests and Administrative Proposals :** While the East Singhbhum district administration has already forwarded the renewal proposal to the State Revenue Department, several tribal organizations are protesting the lease renewal. These protests and various legal aspects are expected to be discussed in detail during the meeting on February 26th.

## Outrage erupts over 9-year JTET delay, demand justice

Mail News Service

**Ranchi, Feb 23:** A wave of outrage has swept across Jharkhand as millions of trained and qualified teaching aspirants face a staggering nine-year wait for the Jharkhand Teacher Eligibility Test (JTET). The prolonged delay in conducting the exam has pushed over 3.5 lakh candidates into a state of mental, financial, and social despair, leading to a massive showdown between the Jharkhand Trained Teachers' Association and the state government.

The core of the anger lies in a decade-long vacuum of opportunity. While the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) mandates that eligibility tests be held at least once or twice every year, Jharkhand has managed to conduct the JTET only twice in its 26-year history-specifically in 2013 and 2016.

Association representatives have lashed out at the government, stating that this failure is causing Jharkhand's youth to fall drastically behind national educational standards. "We have the degrees, we have the training, but the government has locked the doors to our careers for nine years," one frustrated aspirant stated during a recent protest. The current firestorm was fueled by the government's recent "flip-flop" policy. In August 2024, expectations soared when applications were finally invited, drawing a massive response from 350,000 candidates. However, the process quickly turned into a farce. The initial notification was withdrawn after it was found to have a "flawed and erroneous" syllabus. A second attempt to frame rules based on district-wise languages was scrapped following intense backlash.

These repeated withdrawals have left candidates in a state of deep confusion and hopelessness. The growing outrage recently spilled onto the streets of Ranchi through peaceful marches and sit-ins. The pressure finally forced a meeting between a seven-member delegation and the Chief Minister. During the high-stakes discussion, the CM reportedly issued an assurance that a revised manual would be finalized and the exam conducted within one month. Despite the verbal assurance, the Association remains on high alert. They are demanding immediate cabinet approval of the revised JTET manual and a firm, unchangeable exam schedule. For the lakhs of aspirants currently "aging out" of eligibility, this is no longer just about an exam-it is a fight for justice and their professional survival.

## Epilepsy screening camp under project Ullas benefits 65 patients



**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** A total of 65 people were screened at a free epilepsy screening and treatment camp organised under 'Project Ullas' in Potka block on Monday. The initiative aims to provide free screening, treatment, counselling, and medicines to epilepsy patients across the district.

The camps were held at two Ayushman Arogya Mandirs in Harina and Haldipokhar, where specialist doctors from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, were present. Patients were examined, provided medical consultation, and given free medicines. Suspected patients also received counselling as part of the programme. The district administration is organising these camps under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner Karn Satyarthi, with the District Health Committee conducting block-wise camps to ensure wider coverage and accessibility of treatment for epilepsy patients. Officials said the initiative is aimed at identifying undiagnosed cases and ensuring timely treatment, particularly in rural and remote areas. The presence of specialist doctors has further strengthened the quality of care being provided during the camps. A similar camp is scheduled to be held on February 24 at the Sub-Divisional Hospital in Ghatsila. The Deputy Commissioner has appealed to the public to spread awareness about the camps and encourage people showing symptoms of epilepsy to attend, so that they can receive proper diagnosis and treatment. (W-pb)

## Majhi-Chaudhary team secures third consecutive victory

### IMA Jamshedpur Elections

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The Majhi-Chaudhary team emerged triumphant once again in the annual elections of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) Jamshedpur branch. Dr. G.C. Majhi won the President post, and Dr. Saurabh Chaudhary secured the Secretary post for the third consecutive term, completing their hat-trick of victories. Their leadership continues to enjoy strong support from the city's medical community. In the executive committee elections, Dr. Rajeev Thakur became the most popular candidate, receiving 466 votes, the highest any candidate secured in this year's polls. Commenting on his win, Dr. Thakur said, "I am deeply honored by the support of my colleagues. I hope to serve the organization with dedication and work toward advancing its initiatives." The elections saw a 47% turnout, with 548 of 1,154 registered doctors casting their votes. This participation underscored the medical community's continued trust in the current leadership. The process was overseen by a three-member election committee consisting of Dr. Umashankar Singh, Dr. Ram Narayan Prasad, and Dr. Neeraj Kumar, who ensured a peaceful and transparent election.



Dr. Majhi reflected on the voter engagement, saying, "The turnout shows that doctors in Jamshedpur are committed to strengthening IMA. We are grateful for their confidence and trust in our leadership." Dr. G.C. Majhi defeated Dr. Mrityunjay Singh for the President post with 324 votes to 223, winning by a margin of 101 votes. For Secretary, Dr. Saurabh Chaudhary secured a decisive victory with 400 votes, surpassing Dr. Abhishek Mundu, who received 142 votes, a margin of 258 votes.

The Vice President race was closely contested. Dr. Vibhuti Bhushan (372 votes) and Dr. Devesh Bahadur (343 votes) emerged victorious, while Dr. Sanjay Johri trailed with 291 votes.

Dr. Rajeev Thakur led the 18-member executive committee with 466 votes, followed closely by Dr. Jai Bhaduri (460), Dr. Gyan Prakash Jaiswal (457), and Dr. Deepak Kumar (456). Reflecting on his success, Dr. Thakur said, "These votes are a responsibility, not just recognition. I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues to bring positive changes to IMA."

**Joint Secretaries:** Dr. Suresh Chaubey and Dr. Sunita Kumari

**Treasurer:** Dr. Amit Kumar

**Auditor:** Dr. Akhouri Mintu Sinha

**Women Executive Members:** Dr. Pramila Purti and Dr. Sweta Sahay

Observers credited the victory in part to Dr. A.K. Lal, former Civil Surgeon and State Vice President, whose guidance and endorsement of the balanced Majhi-Chaudhary team helped influence voters. Dr. Chaudhary noted, "Dr. A.K. Lal's support was invaluable. His insights and experience guided our team's strategy and strengthened our connection with the members."

Speaking after the results, Dr. Majhi outlined the team's focus for the coming year: "Our priority will be to relocate the IMA building to a new, more accessible site and bring more young doctors into the organization." Dr. Chaudhary added, "Winning for the third time increases our responsibility. We plan to elevate IMA through creative initiatives and technical innovations that will benefit all members."

## Five new butterfly species found in Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** Nature lovers have reason to celebrate as a recent scientific study has confirmed the presence of five new butterfly species in Jharkhand. Researchers documented these species in the Jamshedpur Forest Division, Porahat Forest Division, and the Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary.

The study was published in the January 2026 issue of the journal Nova Geodesia. Forest guard Raja Ghosh and researcher Mohammad Abu Imran Mallik conducted the research.

**Unique Ecological Characteristics :** Among the butterflies recorded in Dalma forests, the Orchid Tit is known for its special ecological association with orchid plants. The Copper Flash shows clear differences between male and female wing colours. Males display deep reddish-brown wings, while females appear light blue.

The Suffused Snow Flat is native to the Indo-Malayan region and is often seen resting with open wings in shaded evergreen forests.

The Red Spot is a small butterfly with reddish-brown streaks on the underside of its wings. Female Painted Courtesans mimic the Magpie Crow butterfly to protect themselves from predators.

## Pond renovation project launched in Podadih

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** In a significant step towards strengthening rural infrastructure and water conservation, the foundation stone for the renovation of a pond at Podadih Tola Mudasai under Podadih Panchayat in Potka block was laid on Monday.



The project, estimated at Rs 2.439 million, will be executed by the state's minor irrigation wing under the water resources department.

The foundation ceremony was performed by Potka MLA Sanjeev Sardar after traditional rituals, amid a warm welcome by local villagers.

Addressing the gathering, the MLA said that in line with the state government's directives, renovation of major ponds across nearly all villages in the Potka assembly constituency is being undertaken ahead of the summer season.

He emphasized that the initiative will significantly ease irrigation and bathing-related challenges faced by rural residents, while also promoting water conservation and strengthening local water resources.

Sardar further noted that the project would directly benefit farmers by ensuring better water availability for agricultural purposes. He urged villagers to actively monitor the development work to ensure quality execution and timely completion, stressing that public participation is key to the success of government schemes. Reaffirming his commitment to continuous development in the constituency, the MLA assured that no village in Potka would be deprived of basic amenities. Villagers expressed gratitude for the project, describing the pond renovation as a crucial development for the area. Several local representatives and community members were present at the event. (W-pm)

## Loyola organises post-examination trek to Dalma

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** After the successful completion of the final examinations, Loyola School organised a trekking expedition on 20th and 21st February for students of Std 6 to 11. The trek was conducted at the scenic Dalma Wildlife Sanctuary, offering students an opportunity to reconnect with nature while building resilience and teamwork.

A total of 260 students from Classes VI and VII participated in the trek on 20th February 2026, and 240 students from Classes VIII, IX, and XI on 21st February 2026. The groups began their trek at 8:30 a.m. from the base and reached the guest house atop the hill by 11:00 a.m. After a well-earned lunch and a short period of rest, the students descended and returned safely to the school premises by 4:30 p.m.

The trekking expedition was headed by Dale Sir, along with other Senior School sports teachers, who ensured that all safety protocols were followed.The trek not only promoted physical fitness but also instilled qualities of perseverance, discipline, and camaraderie among the participants. Loyola School extends its heartfelt gratitude to Shaba Alam, IFO, and the entire Dalma staff for their wholehearted cooperation and support in facilitating the programme. Their guidance and assistance contributed significantly to the smooth and successful conduct of the event. The trek proved to be a refreshing and memorable experience for all students, encouraging a spirit of adventure and connect with nature. (W-pb)



## Train delays cripple Ghatshila tourism

Mail News Service

**Ghatshila, Feb 23:** The persistent irregularity of train schedules has begun to take a severe toll on the tourism industry in Ghatshila. A significant decline in tourists arriving from West Bengal-particularly from Kolkata and Howrah-has left local hotel operators facing mounting financial losses.

Due to unpredictable train delays, travellers are increasingly cancelling pre-booked hotel rooms. This trend has forced hotel owners to issue frequent refunds, further straining their revenue.

Sumanto Mukherjee, a local hotel operator, expressed deep concern over the situation. "The footfall of tourists has become negligible. Even the rooms booked well in advance are being cancelled because of train delays. This is currently our biggest challenge," he stated.

**Impact on Transport Providers :** The crisis extends beyond the hospitality sector. Auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers, who depend on tourist arrivals for their livelihood, are struggling to make ends meet. Many drivers who purchased vehicles on credit are now finding it difficult to even pay their monthly EMI installments, leaving them in a state of financial distress.

**Staff Layoffs in Hotels :** With the sharp drop in visitors, hotel owners have begun cutting costs by reducing their workforce. To manage monthly budgets and overheads, several establishments are downsizing. In many cases, operators are struggling to provide regular salaries to their remaining staff.

**A Blow to the Local Economy :** While Ghatshila is globally recognized for its copper reserves, it is equally famous for its tourism and literary heritage. However, the region currently suffers from a dire lack of facilities at popular tourist spots.

## Mataji Ashram celebrates 191st birth anniv of Sri Ramakrishna

Mail News Service

**Jamshedpur, Feb 23:** The four-day celebration marking the 191st birth anniversary of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and the 88th annual festival of Mataji Ashram commenced with great devotion and enthusiasm on Sunday.



The spiritual event will continue through Wednesday, drawing devotees and dignitaries from across the region.

The inaugural day witnessed the presence of Uday Maharaj, Mahadev Maharaj, Raveen Maharaj, MLA Sanjib Sardar and social worker Shekhar Dey. The atmosphere resonated with devotion as Kamal Kanti Ghosh presented soulful Ramakrishna music. Welcoming the gathering, Sunil Kumar De highlighted the Ashram's year-round religious and service-oriented activities. Addressing the devotees, Uday Maharaj described Sri Ramakrishna as the embodiment of religious harmony, stating that his liberal spiritual teachings and universal message remain profoundly relevant even today.

MLA Sanjib Sardar termed Mataji Ashram an ideal religious institution that consistently undertakes spiritual and humanitarian initiatives. Echoing similar sentiments, Shekhar Dey said the Ashram stands as a center of spirituality and service, continuously contributing to society and representing a treasured religious heritage of Jharkhand. The programme also featured vibrant cultural performances. Members of Kalindi Nav Natya Samiti presented Harinam Sankirtan and Hariloot, adding to the devotional fervour of the occasion. Dulal Mukherjee delivered the vote of thanks, while the proceedings were conducted by Rajkumar Sahu and Anand Sahu. A large number of devotees attended the opening day of the celebrations, making the event a spiritually uplifting and memorable occasion. ( W-pm)