INDIAN INFO EXCHANGE

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weather report

Kolkata Weather

21 °C | °F

Precipitation 45%

Humidity 64%

Wind 5 km/h

Mostly Sunny

Indian Indices

NIFTY 50		
25424.65	-288.35	-1.12
SENSEX		
82225.92	-1,068.74	-1.28
NIFTY BANK		
61047.30	-216.95	-0.35
NIFTY IT		
30053.50	-1,497.00	-4.74
NIFTY Auto		
27950.00	-127.00	-0.45

Gold Rates

Today gold price in Kolkata
1,61,780 1,48,300
»
Today gold price in Bangalore
1,61,780 1,48,300
»
Today gold price in India
1,61,780 (₹430) 1,48,300 (₹400)

WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2026. KOLKATA VOLUME 3 ISSUE 293 . PAGES-8 . RS : 4/- MORNING DAILY

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When Team India overcame dire situations to qualify for next round at T20 World Cups
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People gather around ambulances outside a hospital after a fire broke out at a house, in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh.



President Droupadi Murmu, left, is being received by Maharasthra Governor Acharya Devvrat and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis upon her arrival, in Mumbai.

TMC Reacts Strongly After Supreme Court Orders Recruitment of Judicial Officers from Other States for SIR in West Bengal

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: The political atmosphere in West Bengal intensified on Tuesday after the Supreme Court of India directed that judicial officers from neighbouring states be brought in to oversee and assist in the completion of the Special Investigation Report (SIR) in an ongoing matter. The ruling triggered a sharp reaction from the ruling All India Trinamool Congress, which questioned the necessity of such a move and described it as unprecedented. The Supreme Court's direction came in the course of hearing submissions related to the progress of the investigation. The apex court observed that appointing judicial officials from outside the state would enhance transparency and ensure that the process remains free from any perception of bias. The decision, according to legal observers, is aimed at reinforcing public confidence in the integrity of the probe. However, leaders of the Trinamool Congress, commonly known as TMC, responded strongly to the development. Senior party representatives argued that the judiciary and administrative machinery within West Bengal are fully capable of handling the matter. They contended that bringing in judicial officers from other states casts an unnecessary shadow over the competence and credibility of the state's institutions. In statements issued shortly after the order became public, TMC leaders expressed concern that the directive could set a precedent affecting federal principles. They emphasized that the state's judicial officers have consistently upheld constitutional values and discharged their duties without fear or favour.

According to the party, the implication that external supervision is required may undermine public trust in local institutions. The controversy surrounding the SIR has already generated significant political debate. The investigation pertains to a matter that has drawn widespread attention and prompted judicial scrutiny at multiple levels. The Supreme Court's involvement signaled the seriousness with which the case is being treated at the national level. While the apex court did not make adverse observations about the state judiciary, it maintained that the involvement of officers from neighbouring states would serve as an additional safeguard.

Supreme Court Says Aadhaar and Madhyamik Admit Card Valid Documents in West Bengal's SIR Process

ANIKET NASKAR

Kolkata, 24 February: In a significant development concerning the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in West Bengal, the Supreme Court of India has observed that Aadhaar cards and Madhyamik admit cards are valid documents for the purpose of verification under the ongoing process. The observation has brought clarity amid widespread confusion and allegations surrounding the documentation required for the revision exercise in the state. The matter reached the apex court following concerns raised over the acceptance and rejection of certain identity documents during the SIR process. Petitioners had argued that genuine voters were facing difficulties due to inconsistent guidelines and arbitrary refusals of commonly held documents. The court, while hearing the submissions, underscored that documents such as Aadhaar and Madhyamik admit cards cannot be summarily dismissed if they help establish identity and eligibility. The Special Intensive Revision is a focused exercise aimed at updating and verifying electoral rolls to ensure that only



eligible voters remain listed. The process typically involves door-to-door verification, scrutiny of documents and correction of entries wherever necessary. However, in recent weeks, the exercise in several parts of West Bengal has triggered political controversy, with opposition parties alleging that legitimate voters were being harassed or excluded. During the proceedings, the Supreme Court stressed that authorities must adopt a reasonable and fair approach while scrutinising documents. It made it clear that widely recognised identification papers like Aadhaar, which is issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India, carry substantial evidentiary value. Similarly, a Madhyamik admit card, issued to students appearing for the secondary examination conducted by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education, can serve as a credible proof of age and residence in many cases. Legal experts present during the hearing indicated that the court's remarks could have far-reaching implications for the ongoing verification drive. By affirming the acceptability of these documents, the apex court has effectively curtailed any rigid interpretation that might deprive eligible citizens of their voting rights. The judges observed that procedural safeguards must not override the fundamental democratic principle of universal adult franchise. The controversy had intensified after reports emerged from several districts claiming that field-level officials were refusing to accept certain documents during verification. Political leaders in the state alleged that such practices could result in wrongful deletions from the voter list. They demanded uniform and transparent guidelines to prevent confusion and ensure that no eligible voter is left out ahead of upcoming elections. In response to the concerns, state officials maintained that the revision process was being conducted in accordance with established norms and under the supervision of the Election Commission.

Rahul Backs Youth Congress After Chief's Arrest, Says 'Peaceful Protest Is Our Right

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday strongly defended members of the Indian Youth Congress following the arrest of its national chief during a protest, asserting that peaceful demonstration is a constitutional right and not a crime. In a sharp message of solidarity, Gandhi said he was proud of what he described as his "babbar sher comrades," praising the courage and determination of party workers who took to the streets. The remarks came amid heightened political tensions after police detained several Youth Congress members during a demonstration held to press for their demands. According to party sources, the protest was organized to highlight issues concerning unemployment and what they alleged was administrative inaction. Authorities, however, maintained that the gathering had violated certain procedural requirements, prompting police intervention and subsequent arrests. Reacting to the developments, Gandhi accused the government of attempting to stifle dissent



and intimidate opposition voices. He said that the right to peaceful protest is enshrined in the Constitution and forms the bedrock of democratic expression in India. "Raising one's voice against injustice is not unlawful. It is a democratic duty," he said, emphasizing that silencing youth activists would not weaken their resolve. The Congress leader's use of the phrase "babbar sher," a Punjabi expression referring to a fearless lion, was widely interpreted as a message of encouragement to party workers. He lauded the Youth Congress members for standing firm despite what he termed as "pressure tactics" and warned that attempts to curb democratic rights would only strengthen public resistance. The arrest of the Youth Congress chief sparked immediate reactions within the party, with several senior leaders condemning the action and demanding his release. Party spokespersons described the detentions as politically motivated and accused the ruling establishment of misusing law enforcement agencies to target opposition activists. They reiterated that the protest had been peaceful and aimed at drawing attention to pressing socio-economic concerns. Police officials, on their part, stated that they acted in accordance with the law to maintain public order. They indicated that while peaceful protest is permitted, organizers are required to adhere to established guidelines and obtain necessary permissions. Any deviation, they said, could lead to preventive measures to avoid disruption. The episode has once again brought into focus the recurring friction between opposition parties and the government over the space available for dissent.

CM Mamata Banerjee Expresses Anger Over Delay in Approval of Bengal's Name Change Proposal

CHITTAJIT DUTTA



Kolkata, 24 February: Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has sharply criticised the Government of India for what she described as an "unwarranted delay" in approving the proposal to change the name of West Bengal. Speaking at a recent administrative meeting and later addressing party leaders, Banerjee voiced her frustration over the Centre's failure to clear the long-pending resolution passed by the state Assembly seeking to rename the state as "Bangla." The Chief Minister questioned why the proposal, which was unanimously adopted by the Assembly and forwarded to the Centre in accordance with constitutional procedure, has not yet received the necessary approval. She argued that the state government had fulfilled all formal requirements years ago and that there was no justification for further delay. According to Banerjee, the prolonged inaction reflects a disregard for the sentiments of the people of Bengal. The move to rename the state was first initiated with the stated objective of ensuring that the state appears earlier in alphabetical listings of Indian states during official meetings and events. Banerjee has repeatedly maintained that the current name places Bengal at a disadvantage in national forums, where speaking opportunities are often allotted alphabetically. By adopting "Bangla" as the official name in all languages, the state government believes this anomaly would be corrected while also better reflecting the linguistic and cultural identity of the region. Political observers note that the proposal has undergone several iterations. Earlier suggestions included different variations in English, Bengali and Hindi. Eventually, the Assembly agreed on a single name — "Bangla" — for uniform usage. The resolution was then sent to the Centre, as any change in the name of a state requires parliamentary approval following consultation with the concerned state legislature. Banerjee expressed concern that despite repeated reminders and correspondence from the state administration, the matter remains pending. She stated that her government had written to the Centre multiple times seeking clarity but had received no definitive timeline for a decision. The Chief Minister suggested that the delay was politically motivated, alleging that the Centre was deliberately withholding approval. The issue has once again brought the simmering tensions between the state government and the Centre into sharp focus. Relations between the ruling All India Trinamool Congress in the state and the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre have often been marked by confrontation over administrative, financial and political matters. Banerjee has frequently accused the Centre of discriminating against Bengal in fund allocation and policy decisions, charges that the Union government has denied. Reacting to the Chief Minister's remarks, leaders from the state's

Supreme Court Directs Appointment of Judge from Neighbouring State to Complete SIR After Reviewing Calcutta High Court Status Report

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: The Supreme Court has directed that the Special Investigation Report (SIR) in a sensitive matter be completed under the supervision of a judge brought in from a neighbouring state, after perusing a status report submitted before the Calcutta High Court. The order, passed during a recent hearing, underscores the apex court's concern over ensuring transparency, impartiality and public confidence in the ongoing probe. The bench of the Supreme Court of India took note of the findings and observations contained in the status report placed on record by the Calcutta High Court. While refraining from making detailed comments on the merits of the case at this stage, the apex court observed that the nature of the allegations and the circumstances surrounding the investigation warranted additional safeguards to preserve institutional credibility. According to proceedings in court, the status report outlined the progress of the investigation so far, the steps undertaken by the authorities, and certain challenges encountered in the course of the probe. The Supreme Court carefully examined these aspects before concluding that an independent judicial presence from outside the state would help eliminate any apprehension of bias or undue influence. In its direction, the apex court emphasized that the judge to be appointed from a neighbouring state would oversee the completion of the SIR to ensure that the investigation is conducted strictly in accordance with law. The court made it clear that the measure was not a reflection on the competence of the current judicial or investigative authorities, but rather a step aimed at reinforcing public trust in the process. The matter had reached the

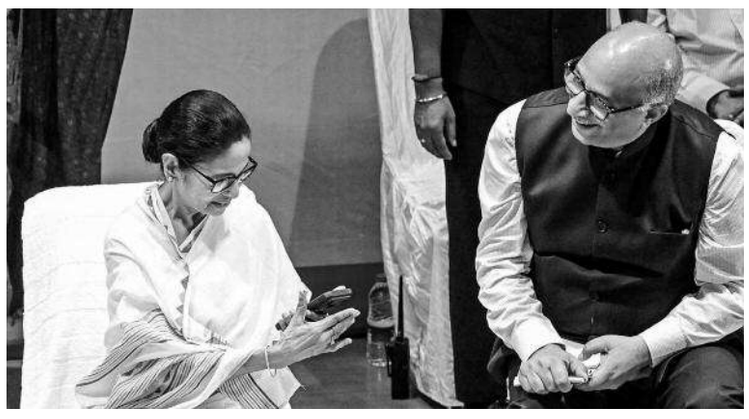


Supreme Court amid concerns raised by petitioners regarding the pace and scope of the investigation. They argued that given the sensitivity of the case and its wider ramifications, there was a need for independent supervision to guarantee fairness. Counsel appearing in the case submitted that public confidence in the justice delivery system is paramount and that even a perception of partiality must be avoided. On the other hand, representatives associated with the state authorities maintained that the investigation was being conducted diligently and in compliance with legal procedures. They pointed to the status report filed before the Calcutta High Court as evidence of transparency and cooperation with judicial oversight. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court decided that additional supervision would be appropriate under the circumstances. Legal experts observed that the decision to bring in a judge from a neighbouring state reflects a broader principle often invoked by constitutional courts in sensitive matters. By ensuring that oversight is carried out by someone not directly connected with the local judicial framework, the court seeks to dispel doubts and strengthen the legitimacy of the eventual findings.

ECI Orders Early Central Force Route March in West Bengal to Ensure Peaceful Assembly Elections

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: The Election Commission of India has directed that central armed forces begin early route marches across sensitive areas of West Bengal in preparation for the upcoming Assembly elections, in a move aimed at ensuring a peaceful and orderly polling process. The decision reflects the poll panel's emphasis on preventive measures to instill confidence among voters and maintain law and order ahead of the high-stakes electoral exercise. According to official sources, the Commission has instructed that central forces be deployed well in advance of polling dates and conduct area domination exercises, commonly referred to as route marches, in districts identified as vulnerable. These marches are intended to reassure citizens, deter potential troublemakers, and signal the presence of impartial security forces tasked with safeguarding the democratic process. The early deployment marks a proactive approach by the Commission, which has in the past faced criticism over incidents of violence during elections in the state. By initiating route marches ahead of the formal campaign peak, the poll body seeks to prevent intimidation, curb the influence of anti-social elements, and create an atmosphere conducive to free and fair voting. Officials familiar with the directive indicated that the central forces will coordinate with the state police while operating under the supervision of election authorities. The objective is not merely to respond to disturbances but to prevent them through visible and sustained patrolling in both urban and rural pockets. Particular focus is expected to be placed on areas with a history of electoral clashes or heightened political rivalry. The Assembly elections in West Bengal are widely anticipated to witness intense competition among major political parties. Over the years, electoral contests in the state have often been accompanied by allegations of violence and coercion. Against this backdrop, the Commission's order is being seen as an effort to reinforce its commitment to neutrality and strict enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct. Political reactions to the directive have begun to surface. Leaders from opposition parties have welcomed the early route march initiative, arguing that the presence of central forces helps build trust among voters who may otherwise feel apprehensive. They contend that impartial security arrangements are essential to ensure that citizens can exercise their franchise without fear. The ruling establishment in the state has maintained that law and order remains under control and that the state police are fully capable of handling election-related responsibilities. However, it has also indicated that it will cooperate with the Commission's directives in the interest of maintaining peace. Officials have reiterated that elections in West Bengal are conducted in accordance with constitutional provisions and that security planning is a collaborative exercise between state and central agencies. Election analysts observe that early route marches serve multiple purposes beyond security. The visible movement of uniformed personnel through localities often has a psychological impact, reassuring residents and discouraging attempts at voter intimidation. Such measures also help election authorities assess ground realities, identify sensitive booths, and fine-tune deployment strategies. The Commission's directive is part of a broader security blueprint that typically includes vulnerability mapping, identification of critical polling stations, and deployment of micro-observers. In previous elections, central forces have been stationed at polling booths, conducted flag marches, and provided security during the counting process.

Union minister claims unauthorised presence of ex-Bengal chief secy at SC-mandated SIR meeting



Staff reporter, Kolkata, 24 February : Union minister Sukanta Majumdar on Tuesday alleged that a high-level meeting convened to take forward the SIR process in West Bengal, as mandated by the Supreme Court, was attended by unauthorised persons, including former chief secretary Manoj Pant. The BJP leader demanded a probe into the issue and the arrest of Pant. Majumdar accused the state's TMC government of trying to influence the judiciary during the meeting held on February 21. Addressing a press conference at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district, he claimed that the meeting with the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court was specifically ordered by the apex court to decide the modalities for implementing the SIR process, and that only designated officials were permitted to attend.

Citing a Supreme Court order, he said it had directed the Chief Electoral Officer, along with one authorised senior officer of the Election Commission, the Chief Secretary, the Director General of Police, and in the presence of the Advocate General and the Additional Solicitor General, to hold a meeting with the high court's Chief Justice on February 21 to discuss the way forward on SIR.

"The order clearly mentions who was authorised to attend the meeting to take forward the SIR process. Despite that, I have received information that Manoj Pant was present. In what capacity did he attend? He is no longer the chief secretary," Majumdar said.

Describing Pant's presence as "completely illegal", the Union minister accused the state government of violating the Supreme Court's directive and attempting to influence proceedings related to the SIR process. He said that the apex court should order a probe into the alleged breach and treat the participation of any unauthorised person as a criminal offence. "If anyone outside the list specified by the Supreme Court attended the meeting, it is a direct violation of the court's order. An FIR should be filed against Manoj Pant, and he should be arrested," Majumdar said.

Responding to the allegation, senior state minister Shashi Panja said the BJP was known for making unsubstantiated claims. She said the BJP should present evidence before making such allegations and added that the people of Bengal would reject such politics. On February 20, the Supreme Court issued an "extraordinary" direction to deploy serving and former district judges to assist the poll panel in the controversy-ridden SIR process in the state. The apex court ordered deputation of judicial officers for the adjudication of claims and objections of persons placed under the logical discrepancy lists and facing removal of their names from the electoral rolls.

Anthropic Co-Founder Dario Amodei Explains Why He Left Sam Altman's OpenAI

Staff reporter, New Delhi, 24 February : Differences over the vision and approach to artificial intelligence: those were the primary reasons Dario Amodei, co-founder of AI firm Anthropic, left OpenAI.On investor and entrepreneur Nikhil Kamath's podcast 'WTF Is', Amodei said he joined OpenAI just a few months after it was founded and led the company's research for several years.Over time, he and a few colleagues developed their own ideas about how AI should be built and what principles the company should follow.

"Eventually, a few other employees and I just kind of had our own revision for how we wanted to make AI and what we wanted the company to stand for. And so we went off and founded Anthropic," he said.When Nikhil asked if Anthropic was like a "fork" from OpenAI, Amodei said that there were two main reasons. First, he and his co-founders had strong beliefs about how AI should be developed. Second, while they were starting to convince some people at OpenAI, he didn't feel they fully accepted their vision.One of the key reasons for his departure was his belief in the potential of scaling AI models. Amodei said that by increasing the size of models and the data they receive, their performance could improve dramatically.

He first saw this with GPT-2 in 2019. "You find when you do that, you find incredible increases in performance. And I was finding that in 2019 with GPT-2, when we just first saw the first glimmers of the scaling laws," he said.If you make models bigger and give them more data and computing power, their performance improves a lot is what he thought. There were some small adjustments like reinforcement learning (RL), but mostly it was about just making the models bigger, he said.

"There were a lot of folks, inside and outside, who didn't believe it at all. And we really made the case to leadership like, 'This is important, this is gonna be a big deal.' And I think they were kind of starting to believe us and ultimately went in that direction," he added.



Another major reason was his concern over responsible AI development. Amodei said his views on OpenAI's approach were doubtful.

He believed that if AI models were going to become like general-purpose thinking tools, almost as capable as the human brain, they could have huge effects on the economy, politics, and society. He felt it was extremely important to build them the right way.<"If these models are gonna be kind of general cognitive agents, like general cognitive tools that match the capability of the human brain, we'd better get this right," he said.

"The economic implications are gonna be enormous. The geopolitical implications are gonna be enormous. The safety implications are gonna be enormous. It's gonna transform how the world works. And so we needed to do it in the right way," he added.

Amodei said that even though OpenAI talked a lot about "doing AI the right way," he wasn't convinced that the company truly had a serious commitment to it. "And so my view is always, 'Don't argue with someone else's vision. Don't try to get someone to do things the way you want to,'" he said.He advised that if you have a strong idea and some people who agree with you, it's better to go your own way. Then, you're responsible only for your own successes and mistakes. "You don't have to answer for anyone else's. And you know, maybe your vision works out, maybe it doesn't, but at least it's yours," Amodei added.

Anthropic had an early version of its model Claude 1, even before OpenAI launched ChatGPT in 2022, but the company chose not to release it, CEO Dario Amodei has revealed. Claude 1 was launched in March 2023.

On Nikhil Kamath's podcast 'WTF Is', Amodei said that releasing a powerful AI prematurely could have pressured other companies to race and launch their own models without proper safety checks.

Former Pakistan PM Imran Khan Receives Eye Treatment At Hospital

Staff reporter, New Delhi, 24 February : Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan received eye treatment on Tuesday, according to a hospital statement, although a spokesman for the ex-cricket star complained he was not allowed to see his personal doctor.Khan has been in jail since 2023 and was sentenced late last year along with his wife to 17 years on corruption charges they both deny.

The 73-year-old's family and lawyer say that he has lost most of the vision in his right eye.Khan was taken to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad for a second dose of eye injections, the hospital said.

"Khan was found to be clinically stable," it added.

However, Khan's press adviser Sayed Zulfiqar Bukhari said that "access should be granted to his personal physician and family".

Last week, more than a dozen international cricket captains concerned for Khan's health urged the Islamabad government to give him "adequate" medical treatment.

Khan was prime minister from 2018 to 2022 before being removed in a no-confidence vote during a political crisis over tensions between his government and Pakistan's powerful military establishment.He has since faced multiple legal cases on corruption and other charges.Khan and his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, maintain that the cases against him are politically motivated.

His arrest triggered nationwide protests in May 2023, some of which turned violent and led to hundreds of arrests.

Khan's lawyer, Salman Safdar, told a news conference on February 12 that "one of Khan's eyes has only 15 percent vision", following a jail visit.The former premier's son, Kasim Khan, said his father's condition was the result of "medical neglect" during his confinement.

"The responsibility lies squarely with the regime in power, the Army Chief and the puppets enabling this cruelty," Kasim Khan said on social media platform X.Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has spent more than 900 days in jail. He is facing numerous cases. Meanwhile, various speculations have been rife, sometimes regarding his health and sometimes regarding his release. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court recently ordered a checkup after his eyesight had decreased by 85 percent.

The Imprisoned leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was transported from Adaila Jail in Rawalpindi to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) located in Islamabad under high tight security. He was taken in a 15-vehicle convoy pf black cars, equipped with signal jammers and accompanied by a strong security detail.In response, he was taken from Adiala Jail to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) at 12:30 a.m. last night. Imran Khan, who is suffering from central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) in his right eye, was administered a second dose of an anti-VEGF injection.

Inside Netanyahu's 'Hexagon' Of Alliances And Why He Wants India In It

Staff reporter, New Delhi, 24 February : As Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Israel visit begins on Wednesday, his Israeli counterpart, Benjamin Netanyahu, announced that his trip will forge a new alliance to counter what he described as "radical" adversaries.

"In the vision I see before me, we will create an entire system, essentially a 'hexagon' of alliances around or within the Middle East," the Israeli leader said. Calling India a "global power" and PM Modi a "personal friend", Netanyahu said that the relationship between the two countries has "grown tighter".

The "hexagon" of alliances includes countries like India, Arab nations, African nations, Mediterranean nations (Greece and Cyprus) and other undisclosed nations in Asia.The description broadly matches the vision of IMEC, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, which aims to bolster economic development by fostering connectivity.

The alliance aims to create an axis of nations that agrees on the reality, challenges and goals against radical axes, namely the Shia axis and the Sunni axis. The Israeli leader said that the nations included in the alliance share different perceptions and added that the cooperation between them could give great results and ensure their "resilience and future".

Although PM Modi praised the relationship between India and Israel as one built on trust and with a shared commitment to peace, New Delhi has historically steered clear of rigid bloc politics, remaining fluid in its engagements with China, Russia and the US alike.

Moreover, India also enjoys close relations with Iran and is expanding strategic collaboration with Saudi Arabia.

Andreas Krieg, associate professor of security studies at King's College London, told Al Jazeera that Netanyahu's alliance "risks hardening regional polarisation, giving Israel's rivals (Iran, but also Turkiye and others) an easy narrative of encirclement, and making some would-be partners more cautious about being seen too close to Israel."



He said that India's interests are defence, technology and trade rather than Israel's regional ambitions.PM Modi will be visiting Israel on a two-day trip from February 25 to 26, his second since the "historic" visit of July 2017, which was the first by any Indian PM to the Jewish state. He is expected to hold an innovation event in Jerusalem and visit Yad Vashem with Netanyahu.

PM Modi, on Sunday night, said he was "looking forward" to discussions during the Israel visit. "India deeply values the enduring friendship with Israel, built on trust, innovation and a shared commitment to peace and progress," he said in a post on social media platform X.

During the two-day visit, PM Modi is expected to address the Knesset, Israel's parliament, a rare honour that underscores the political warmth between the two democracies. Earlier, former President Pranab Mukherjee had addressed the Knesset in 2015 during the first-ever visit by an Indian head of state to Israel.He will also meet Israeli President Isaac Herzog during the visit.

PM Modi's visit follows months of intensive diplomatic engagement between the two sides. External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal have both visited Israel in recent months, while several Israeli ministers have travelled to India. Israel also sent a large government and private-sector delegation to the AI Impact Summit at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, highlighting growing convergence in emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence.

Australian PM Anthony Albanese Evacuated From Residence After Bomb Threat

Staff reporter, Canberra, 24 February: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese was evacuated from his official residence over a bomb threat on Tuesday. He was taken to a separate location for several hours."A thorough search of a protection establishment was undertaken and nothing suspicious was located," the Australian Federal Police (AFP) said in a statement, adding there was "no current threat to the community or public safety".

Albanese was moved from The Lodge, his official Canberra residence, at 6pm while an investigation was carried out. He was later moved back in at 9pm after the inspection was over. Per a report by Guardian Australia, there was a threat of an explosive. The Prime Minister's office told ABC that they trust the police "and thank them for their work".The AFP is responsible for the protection of federal parliamentarians and certain Commonwealth buildings, such as The Lodge and Parliament House. However, there has been an increase in threats to politicians in Australia, regardless of what they stand for. The AFP confirmed in 2024 that there have been 1,000 reports of harassment, nuisance and offensive and threatening communications against parliamentarians over the last year.

On Tuesday, Albanese said his government is writing to Commonwealth realms about its backing for former Prince Andrew to be axed from the line of royal succession.Albanese said he had communicated with his British counterpart, Keir Starmer, about Andrew, who is being investigated for alleged misconduct in public office following revelations about his dealings with the late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.



Today's Horoscope



ARIES : It's one of those days where it's better to hide away from the world, Aries. Tuesday's skies are contentious, as the heartfelt Cancer moon opposes emotionally raw Pluto.



TAURUS : Don't be surprised if you feel mental storm clouds gathering today, Taurus. imbuing the day with a palpable emotional intensity. In order to make the best of this energy.



GEMINI : Powerful moods are at play under Tuesday's skies, Gemini. Your ruling planet, quick-thinking Mercury, finds itself in a heated battle with self-assertive Mars.



CANCER: You can expect to encounter some turbulence under Tuesday's cosmic landscape, Cancer. The moon cruises through your sign, trying her best to help you tune in to both your emotional.



LEO : You're swimming in deep psychological waters today, Leo. Be extra gentle with yourself. The nostalgic Cancer moon digs up long buried feelings that need healing.



VIRGO : Can you feel the heat building, Virgo? Your ruling planet, mental Mercury, locks into an unsettling connection with fiery Mars today.



LIBRA : Intense moods are simmering just below the surface of Tuesday's skies, Libra. The peaceful Cancer moon finds herself embroiled in a tense connection with emotionally-raw Pluto.



SCORPIO : It's all too easy to get frustrated beneath Tuesday's cosmic landscape. Messenger Mercury locks into a quarrel with your ruling planet, self-motivated Mars.



SAGITTARIUS : As a Sagittarius, you rarely succumb to bouts of moody, broody touchiness. Yet, you may find that demeanor hard to escape today!



CAPRICORN : Brace yourself for some rocky terrain today, Capricorn. The connection-centered Cancer moon finds herself in an uneasy squabble with transformative Pluto today.



AQUARIUS : There's much to be done under Tuesday's skies, Aquarius. The trick is trying to stay sane and not to overdo it! prompting intense moods and strange.



PIECES : Powerful moods dominate Tuesday's skies, Pisces. prompting you to examine any unhealed wounds around friendship and group involvement.

Zelensky Reveals The Bunker From Where He Led Response To Russian Invasion

Staff reporter, Ukraine, 23 February: Walking through a warren of tunnels under central Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said it was from this secure compound that he started marshalling Ukraine's response to Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022.To mark the fourth anniversary of the war, Zelensky posted a video message to the nation on Tuesday, shot inside the bunker complex, the most comprehensive look at the facility, which has gained cult status inside Ukraine as a symbol of resistance.

"This office, this small room in the bunker on Bankova Street, this is where I held my first conversations with world leaders at the start of the war," Zelensky said in the address.

Sitting on a black leather chair in a cramped, white-walled room, Zelensky said: "Here I spoke with President (Joe) Biden, and it was right here that I heard: 'Volodymyr, there is a threat. You need to leave Ukraine urgently. We are ready to help with that.'"

"And here I replied that I need ammunition, not a ride."

The presidential headquarters is in Bankova Street. The bunker appears to be a vast Soviet-era bomb shelter designed to support a rump government in the event of a massive attack on the Ukrainian capital.

During the Soviet Union, the now presidential palace was the former headquarters of the Communist Party.



Zelensky, like other leaders, had criticised the building's oppressive atmosphere -- but since Russia's invasion, the complex has proved a useful sanctuary within the now sealed-off government HQ, encircled by a ring of military checkpoints.

AFP heard gunfire near the building on the first day of the Russian invasion, and sources said a vehicle packed with explosives had tried to break into the compound.

Branching off from long, narrow corridors with low curved ceilings are small rooms for different branches of government -- the presidency, the cabinet of ministers, and the parliament. Inside each, a dozen or so chairs, a TV screen, and Ukrainian flags, Zelensky's video shows.

Rows of black cables run along the side of the walls, while large gas pipes and electrical boxes are fixed to the ceilings.

Blue and yellow signs -- the colours of the Ukrainian flag -- direct people to different rooms in the tunnel labyrinth.Bright posters dot the walls, honouring Ukraine's war effort and soldiers -- the only drab of colour alongside luminous green emergency exit signs and red-and-white safety tape fixed to the low ceilings.

Zelensky -- around 170cm (five feet six inches) tall -- ducked as he walked through one, surrounded by exposed wiring, control boxes.

Before a thick metal door leading into the presidential administration was a large yellow-and-blue map of Ukraine, a white dove over the top and the phrase: "God save Ukraine"."Here was our team, the government, daily coordination with the military, phone calls, the search for solutions — everything necessary for Ukraine to endure," Zelensky said.

"Weapons had to be delivered. Medicine and food were delivered to cities blockaded by the enemy," he said.The 19-minute address aimed to rally Ukrainians, recalling the spirit of resistance that embodied the nation when Russia first invaded.

Following years of grinding war and immense losses, Kyiv is being pushed by US President Donald Trump to accept a peace deal that cedes land to Russia and fatigue with the fighting and relentless missile and drone attacks by Moscow's forces is running high.

Ukraine was on Tuesday marking the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, with a show of solidarity from its staunchest allies and no immediate end in sight to Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II.

Tens of thousands of lives have been lost since the Kremlin ordered troops into Ukraine on February 24, 2022, confident of a quick victory but not expecting the fierce resistance that followed. The worldwide fallout of the war has been immense, with many European countries increasing their own defence spending in anticipation of a possible confrontation of their own with Russia.

When Kareena Kapoor Khan Revealed If She Fasts During Ramzan After Marrying Saif Ali Khan



Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 24 February: The holy month of Ramzan is currently ongoing in India, when Muslims observe fasts. Just as social media was wondering if Kareena Kapoor Khan would follow the ritual, an old clip of the actress has resurfaced in which she is heard saying that she does not do it.

In the video making the rounds, a reporter asks Kareena Kapoor Khan if she fasts during Ramzan, to which she replies, "No, I am eating 24*7. No, not at all. I have never done that in my life."Last year, in a chat with Nayandeep Rakshit on his YouTube channel, Soha Ali Khan spoke about the intensity with which Saif and Kareena's marriage was scrutinised.

Soha said, "Even when Kareena and bhai got married, there were lots of strange things-Love Jihad, Ghar Wapsi, all kinds of weird headlines were being made as well. You know, 'You took one of ours, now we will take one of yours.'"

When Saif Ali Khan Called Kareena Kapoor Khan 'Wonderful'

In an old conversation with The Hollywood Reporter, Saif Ali Khan called Kareena a truly "incredible woman". He said, "I am so lucky to be with her because she is one of the most patient and loving people I have met. She is absolutely wonderful. I can go on and on. I know it's a bit mushy. She makes a wonderful home for us. She's a very creative person in front of the camera, but she's equally creative with us."

He concluded by saying that Kareena's happiness has always been his top priority-even if it meant celebrating a rival's success.

Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor Khan are one of the most loved Bollywood couples. Their relationship blossomed on the sets of the 2008 film Tashan. Though the film tanked at the box office, it brought these lovebirds together, and the rest is history.

Kareena Kapoor Khan and Saif Ali Khan dated for several years before getting married on October 16, 2012. They have two sons-Taimur, born in 2016, and Jeh, born in 2021.

Viral Video: The Kerala Story 2 Makers Criticised For Not Bringing 'Malayali Victims' To Press Event

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 24 February: The makers of The Kerala Story 2 got into a heated exchange with members of the media during a press conference in Delhi on Monday, after being accused of "insulting" Kerala with their upcoming film.

Producer Vipul Amrutlal Shah and director Kamakhya Narayan Singh were in the capital to promote the sequel.

At the event, the filmmakers introduced 30 women whom they claimed had allegedly experienced forced religious conversions. However, the interaction soon turned confrontational when journalists questioned the narrative and the absence of any Malayali women among those presented.

According to the filmmakers, the women brought to the press conference were from Bengal, Bihar, Bhilwara, Gangapur, Rajkot, Udaipur, Jammu, Maharashtra, Bhopal, Jharkhand, Faridabad, Meerut, Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, and Indore. When asked why none of the women were from Kerala, Vipul responded, "We brought those who suffered from Kerala after Kerala Story 1. The video is still available on YouTube."

He added, "Had we brought them again, you would have said we brought the same people. You can't argue both sides."

When pressed about how the sequel differs from the first film, Kamakhya Narayan Singh stated, "No, it's the same story. This is a pan-India story." He further maintained that the film was not politically motivated and had no connection with the Kerala elections. Echoing a similar sentiment, Vipul said, "Aapko isko masala dena hai, aap dijiye please. (You add spice to it if you want)."

Another point of contention was the title itself. Journalists questioned why the film continued to be named after Kerala if, as the makers claimed, the issue extended across the country.

In response, the director said, "No, it's related to Kerala also. And from Kerala, how it is all over India. The first time we made this story, people said this is only Kerala's story. We now want to show that this happens across the country, not just Kerala."

The exchange escalated further when a reporter asserted that Kerala is "number one in education" and accused the makers of tarnishing the state's image.

Vipul firmly replied, "Let me ask you a straight and simple question. On the floor of assembly, the then CM had put a report. If you are going to be blind towards the problem in your state, which is a wonderful state. You are destroying the state; you are responsible. Not us. You don't want to accept there's a problem."

The filmmakers also chose not to respond directly to criticism from Anurag Kashyap and Prakash Raj. Instead, Vipul questioned whether those criticising the film had shown sensitivity towards the women presented as victims.Despite the tense exchanges, the makers reiterated that their film seeks to highlight what they describe as a wider national issue rather than target a particular state. The Kerala Story 2 is set to hit cinemas on February 27.

The Kerala High Court on Tuesday ordered the makers of The Kerala Story 2 to arrange a screening of the Hindi film for the court in Kochi before its release on Friday. Later, the makers stated that they are not ready to show the movie to the high court, following which the court deferred the matter for hearing tomorrow to make a final decision.

The Kerala Story 2, the sequel of the National Award-winning The Kerala Story which released in 2023, is courting controversy over its theme of forced religious conversion of Hindu women to Islam.Following the court's order, The Kerala Story 2 makers -- who have so far claimed that the film is based on "true incidents and stories" -- have stated that there are withdrawing the teaser of the movie.

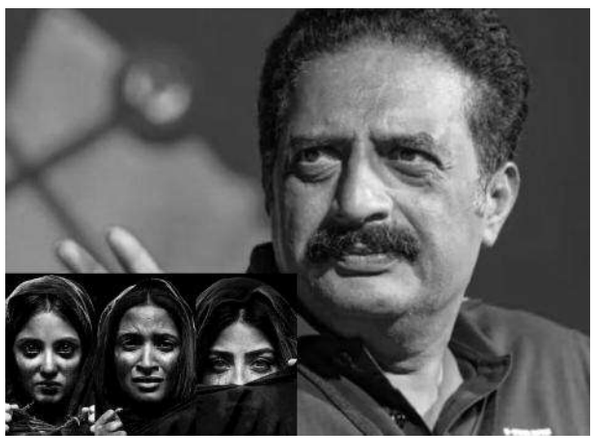
During the hearing at the Kerala High Court, Justice Bechu Kurian observed that "concerns of the people of Kerala about The Kerala Story 2 can't be kept aside".



Varun Dhawan And Others Spotted In Bandra In Mumbai.

Prakash Raj Reacts To The Kerala Story 2 Makers Pulling Down Teaser After High Court Order

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 24 February: The Kerala High Court on Tuesday ordered the makers of The Kerala Story 2 to arrange a screening of the Hindi film for the court in Kochi before its release on Friday. Later, the makers stated that they were not ready to show the movie to the High Court and announced they were withdrawing the teaser. The court deferred the matter for hearing tomorrow to make a final decision.



Prakash Raj, who had earlier reacted to film's director Kamakhya Narayan Singh calling him "intellectually bankrupt", has now shared his reaction to the teaser withdrawal.Sharing a screenshot of The Kerala Story 2 makers pulling down the teaser, Prakash Raj captioned it, "When Kerala fights back for its integrity, the SorryVarkars retreat #justasking."

On Monday, Prakash Raj took to his X account and shared a post highlighting different categories of food preferences. The note listed: vegans, vegetarians, eggetarians, non-vegetarians (who don't eat pork), non-vegetarians (who don't eat beef), non-vegetarians (who eat all meat), and non-vegetarians (who eat only fish). "Let's all continue to live as a society together in harmony," it concluded.

His caption read, "Why Complicate when it is so Simple."Though he did not name the film or its director, the timing of the post was widely seen as a response to the ongoing criticism.

Earlier, the actor had also shared another post referencing the 2023 film The Kerala Story, contrasting it with images of pork curry, beef fry, fish curry, and a vegetarian Onam sadya. Emphasising culinary coexistence, he wrote, "The real #KeralaStory is how pork, beef and fish coexist with vegetarian sadya and all of them live in harmony. Please relish. #justasking. Happy Sunday everyone."

Reacting to Prakash Raj's comments in a conversation with ANI, Kamakhya Narayan Singh said, "I used to think that Prakash Raj ji was a very high-calibre actor, but now I feel that he is equally low as a human being."

He went on to question the larger issue raised by the film's narrative, adding, "I don't know what he himself eats, nor do I care, because his statements reflect what he 'consumes'. But tell me-is it true that our daughters are being forcefully fed beef and converted? And if that is true, then I question Prakash Raj ji's conscience. This can never be acceptable. A civilised society in India will never accept forcing someone to eat beef in order to convert their religion. He has become intellectually bankrupt."

The exchange has further intensified debate around the film, which has already drawn criticism over its portrayal of sensitive themes.

During the hearing at the Kerala High Court, Justice Bechu Kurian observed that "concerns of the people of Kerala about The Kerala Story 2 can't be kept aside".

The court was hearing a petition against the cancellation of the film's censor certificate.A 26-year-old biologist from Kerala had moved the Kerala High Court against the upcoming film The Kerala Story 2.

Identifying himself as a Malayali Brahmin, Sreedev Namboodiri has questioned both the content and the title of the sequel, arguing that it unfairly targets Kerala and its people.Petition Challenges Certification and Alleged Stereotyping

Sreedev Namboodiri, a native of Chittariparamba in Kannur district, has filed a petition seeking cancellation of the censor certificate granted to The Kerala Story 2 by the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC).His plea argues that the Board failed to properly assess whether the film's content could threaten public order, decency, morality, or national integrity, as mandated under Section 5B of the Cinematograph Act.

The petitioner contends that the sequel contains "malicious and stereotypical projections scandalising an entire state without any basis". According to the plea: "A perusal of the trailer of the movie shows that the story is based on women from three different states and takes place mainly in the northern part of India. Yet, the title and scenes try to portray the state in a bad light. The movie tends to alienate Kerala and Keralites from the rest of India, despite the fact that Keralites work across India and the world, contributing to the Indian economy and providing residence and employment to several migrant workers from other parts of India."

Vicky Kaushal's Shout-Out To "Superhero" Katrina Kaif Raising Their Son Vihaan: "Love Her So Much"

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 24 February: Katrina Kaif and Vicky Kaushal welcomed their first child together-a baby boy-on Friday, November 7, 2025. The Uri actor recently opened up about how Katrina is currently being a "superhero" and has been so throughout the pregnancy.



At a recent Hollywood Reporter event, Vicky Kaushal spoke about being a "brand new dad".

He said, "He is three months old right now. There's very little a dad has to do when the baby is three months old. I'm just trying to be a cheerleader, and I'm waiting for him to grow up so I can contribute more."

Giving a shoutout to his wife, actress Katrina Kaif, the Chhaava actor shared, "Right now, the mother is being the superhero, and she has been a warrior through her pregnancy. She has been a warrior as a mother as well. I'm so incredibly proud of her, and I love her so much."

Vicky Kaushal And Katrina Announce Their Son's Name

Sharing an adorable picture of Vicky and Katrina holding their son's tiny hands, the caption read, "Our Ray of Light. Vihaan Kaushal. Prayers are answered. Life is beautiful. Our world has changed in an instant. Gratitude beyond words."

About Vicky And Katrina

Katrina, 43, and Vicky Kaushal, 37, announced their pregnancy in September. The couple married in 2021 in the picturesque locale of Six Senses Fort Barwara in Rajasthan.

They shared the news via an Instagram post on September 23. The couple posted a Polaroid-style photo where Vicky is seen holding Katrina's baby bump. She was dressed casually in a white top and jeans.On the work front, Katrina Kaif was last seen in the crime thriller Merry Christmas, while Vicky Kaushal last appeared in the period drama Chhaava-one of the highest-earning films of 2025.

MTV Splitsvilla 7's Mayank Pawar Dies At 37

Staff Reporter, Mumbai, 24 February: Mayank Pawar, best known for his appearance on MTV Splitsvilla Season 7, has died at the age of 37.

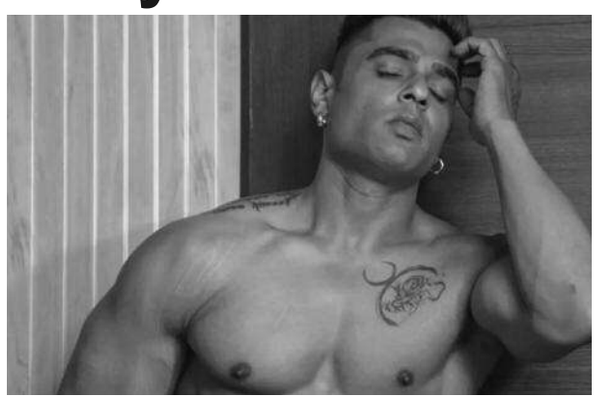
He died on February 23, 2026. The news of his death was confirmed through a statement shared on his official Instagram account on Monday, leaving fans and well-wishers in shock.

The statement paid tribute to his life and legacy, describing him as "a brother, a champion, a mentor, and an inspiration to many". It further read that he would "forever live in the hearts" of those who knew and admired him. Concluding with "Om Shanti", the note requested prayers and remembrance in his honour.The cause of his death has not been disclosed.

A prayer meeting has been organised on February 25, 2026, from 5 pm to 6 pm at Valmiki Mandir in Sangam Park, Rana Pratap Bagh, New Delhi, where family and friends are expected to gather to pay their respects.

After Mayank's family made the post on Instagram, several users took to the comments to mourn his loss. A fan wrote, "A few days back, I was watching his Splitsvilla 7 journey. I can't really believe it. I haven't seen a purer soul than him in any Splitsvilla season. I still remember everyone crying, including Sunny Leone, when he got eliminated. May his soul rest in peace."

Another commented, "We have lost a real gem... Brother, you will always remain in our hearts." Mayank Pawar rose to fame through MTV Splitsvilla 7. During his time on the dating reality show, he was often appreciated for his sincerity and determination during tasks.



While reality television brought him recognition, fitness was always Mayank Pawar's true calling. He had carved out a respected place for himself in the bodybuilding community, having previously won the Mr India title.

The entertainment and fitness community is in shock after the passing of Mayank Pawar. The former contestant of MTV Splitsvilla Season 7 is no more. The news was shared through his official Instagram account, leaving his followers heartbroken.A tribute post on Instagram described him as a brother, champion, mentor, and inspiration. It said that Mayank will always remain in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

Mayank was not only a reality TV star but also a well-known name in the fitness world. He won the Mr India title seven times and was once the overall winner. As a celebrity fitness trainer, he helped many people improve their health and lifestyle.

He was admired for his strong physique and disciplined life. His sudden death has raised questions among fans, though the exact cause has not been shared yet.

A condolence meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, from 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm at Valmiki Temple in Sangam Park, Rana Pratap Bagh.Emotional Moment on Splitsvilla

During his time on Splitsvilla 7, Mayank was known for his calm and simple nature. When he was eliminated from the show, host Sunny Leone became emotional and hugged him.

Hema Malini Gets Emotional After BAFTA Honours Dharmendra: "I Miss Him Every Single Minute"

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: Hema Malini was overwhelmed with emotion as she reacted to Dharmendra being honoured at the 79th BAFTA Awards. The legendary actor, who died in November 2025, was remembered in the In Memoriam segment.

For Hema Malini, it was heartening to see him being recognised on a global platform. She shared that Dharmendra's presence went beyond borders and that he had fans all over the world.

In an interview with Variety India, Hema Malini said, “He was someone whose presence went beyond borders. He had fans in every part of the world. My God, the way he would be mobbed in foreign countries. We didn't travel together much, except for shootings when we got to spend time together. We would sign lots of films together so we could spend time together.”

Remembering Dharmendra fondly, she added, "I miss him every single minute. I keep asking myself, is he really gone? When will I meet him again?”

In November last year, Hema Malini penned a heartfelt note for her husband on Instagram. She wrote, “Dharam ji, he was many things to me. Loving Husband, adoring Father of our two girls, Esha & Ahaana, Friend, Philosopher, Guide, Poet, my ‘go to' person in all times of need - in fact, he was everything to me! And always has been through good times and bad. He endeared himself to all my family members with his easy, friendly ways, always showing affection and interest in all of them."

The actress continued, "As a public personality, his talent, his humility in spite of his popularity, and his universal appeal set him apart as a unique icon unequalled among all the legends. His enduring fame and achievements in the film industry will last forever. My personal loss is indescribable and the vacuum created is something that will last through the rest of my life. After years of togetherness, I am left with myriad memories to relive the many special moments…”



Dharmendra and Hema Malini first met on the sets of Tum Haseen Main Jawaan in 1970. The duo worked together in films like Seeta Aur Geeta, Sholay, Jugnu, and Dream Girl. They tied the knot in 1980, even though Dharmendra was already married to Prakash Kaur and was a father of four.

several Hollywood stars and a handful of beloved Bollywood stars came together under one roof for the 79th British Academy Film Awards. Alia Bhatt made her debut as a presenter whereas Farhan Akhtar graced the stage to receive an award for Boong, a film backed by him. Well, one special moment during the award ceremony was BAFTA honouring late Indian superstar Dharmendra in their In Memoriam section. This touched many hearts. Dharam Paaji’s wife and veteran actor Hema Malini has now reacted to the same, sharing how much she misses Bollywood’s He-Man.

Hema and Dharam Paaji met each other for the first time in 1970 and instantly hit it off. Their bond deepened as they worked together and soon the two actors fell in love. Dharmendra, who was already married to Prakash Kaur, tied the knot with Hema in 1980. On November 24 last year, Dharam Paaji breathed his last at his Mumbai residence at the age of 89 following age-related illness.

Editorial

Science for All: Bridging the Laboratory and the Margins

In the twenty-first century, science and technology have achieved feats once thought impossible. Breakthroughs in medicine, agriculture, artificial intelligence, energy, and communication are reshaping human life at an unprecedented pace. Yet, amid this dazzling progress, a critical question emerges: who truly benefits from these advancements? If scientific innovation remains confined to laboratories, research journals, and elite institutions, then its transformative potential is curtailed. Scientific progress is genuinely meaningful only when it permeates society and reaches those who need it most—particularly the marginalized, the underserved, and the forgotten. The challenge lies not merely in invention but in dissemination, implementation, and social integration. From the development of life-saving medicines to cutting-edge agricultural techniques, the gap between laboratory achievement and public benefit is a persistent concern. India, with its diverse population and stark disparities, illustrates this paradox vividly. While metropolitan cities boast state-of-the-art hospitals, biotech startups, and AI-powered research hubs, large sections of the population in rural and semi-urban areas continue to struggle with basic healthcare, nutrition, and education. A new vaccine may exist in a premier institute, but if it cannot reach a remote village due to logistics, awareness, or affordability, the scientific breakthrough remains largely symbolic. Similarly, precision agriculture technologies that promise higher yields are ineffective for smallholder farmers if access, training, and resources are absent. The problem is not a lack of innovation but a disconnect between creation and application. Science is often celebrated for its novelty and technical sophistication, yet its ultimate purpose—to enhance human well-being—can be compromised when it operates in isolation. The laboratory, while a crucible of discovery, can inadvertently become an ivory tower. Researchers may focus on solving abstract or highly specialized problems, which while intellectually impressive, do not address the immediate concerns of those living at the margins. For science to be socially relevant, its trajectory must be aligned with real-world needs, particularly those of the most vulnerable. Consider healthcare, perhaps the most striking example of this divide. India has witnessed remarkable advancements in genomics, telemedicine, robotic surgery, and vaccine development. Yet, rural populations continue to suffer from preventable diseases, malnutrition, and lack of timely medical intervention. Telemedicine, while technologically promising, is only as effective as the digital literacy and internet access available in remote regions. Vaccination drives, though scientifically sound, require logistical planning, trust-building, and sustained public engagement. Without deliberate strategies to bridge these gaps, scientific progress risks becoming a privilege of the urban and affluent, leaving the marginalized further behind. Education and skill-building form another critical dimension. Scientific literacy is not merely about teaching facts or equations; it is about cultivating curiosity, problem-solving abilities, and an understanding of how scientific methods can improve daily life. Yet educational disparities mean that children in rural schools, informal settlements, or tribal regions often lack access to quality science education. Laboratories may exist in elite institutions, but for the majority, hands-on learning remains a distant concept. If innovation is to be inclusive, it must start with fostering a culture of science among those who have historically been excluded from its benefits. Agriculture, too, demonstrates both the promise and the limitations of modern science. India's farmers face a complex web of challenges: unpredictable weather, soil degradation, market volatility, and resource scarcity. Scientific interventions—high-yield seeds, precision irrigation, pest-resistant crops—can mitigate many of these challenges. Yet the adoption of technology often depends on awareness, affordability, and institutional support. Marginalized farmers, who operate on thin margins, may be unable to invest in new tools or may lack knowledge about their use. Here, science cannot be merely theoretical; it must be accompanied by extension services, cooperative frameworks, and policies that make innovation accessible and sustainable.

Mukul Roy: The Arc of Power, Defection and Political Ephemerality



In the restless theatre of West Bengal politics, few careers have traced as dramatic and instructive a curve as that of Mukul Roy. Once regarded as the principal strategist and organisational architect behind the meteoric rise of the All India Trinamool Congress, later welcomed as a trophy recruit by the Bharatiya Janata Party, and eventually politically diminished amid controversy, illness, and shifting loyalties, Roy's journey is less a personal story than a cautionary tale about the volatility of contemporary Indian politics. His rise and fall illuminate the deeper transformations in Bengal's political culture, the ethics of defection, the fragility of personality-driven power, and the limits of transactional politics in an era of intense ideological polarisation. To understand Mukul Roy's ascent, one must revisit the tectonic shifts that reshaped West Bengal after decades of Left dominance. The political landscape had long been defined by the institutional strength of the Left Front under the stewardship of leaders such as Jyoti Basu. The Left's formidable party machinery, disciplined cadre network, and ideological coherence ensured stability but also bred fatigue and complacency. It was in this environment that the Trinamool Congress, founded and led by Mamata Banerjee, emerged as a disruptive force. Banerjee supplied charisma, street-fighting rhetoric, and a populist touch; Roy, working behind the scenes, contributed organisational steel. Roy's role in building the Trinamool Congress cannot be overstated. He was not a mass orator in the mould of Banerjee, nor did he cultivate the fiery public persona that commands headlines. Instead, he excelled in the quiet arithmetic of politics: forging alliances, nurturing district-level leaders, managing defections from rival parties, and consolidating grassroots networks. In a state where political mobilisation had long been an art perfected by the Left, Roy demonstrated that the Trinamool could match and eventually surpass that machinery. When the Trinamool Congress swept to power in 2011, ending 34 years of Left rule, Roy's imprint on that victory was unmistakable. Power, however, often breeds ambition, and ambition rarely rests content with a secondary role. As the Trinamool matured from insurgent opposition to ruling party, internal tensions sharpened. The very skills that made Roy indispensable also made him formidable. He possessed knowledge of the party's inner workings, controlled networks of loyalists, and commanded respect across factions. In personality-centric parties, proximity to the supreme leader can be both asset and liability. The distance between trusted lieutenant and rival-in-waiting is perilously small. Roy's estrangement from the Trinamool unfolded gradually. Public disagreements were muted at first, couched in the language of discipline and party protocol. Yet beneath the surface lay a struggle for space and influence. The emergence of new leaders, shifting equations within the party, and the centralisation of authority around Banerjee altered the balance. For a politician accustomed to wielding substantial behind-the-scenes influence, diminishing authority can be intolerable. The rupture, when it came, was framed in terms of principle and ideological divergence. But in Bengal's hard-nosed political culture, few observers doubted that power calculus lay at the heart of the split. Roy's defection to the Bharatiya Janata Party marked one of the most high-profile political crossings in recent Bengal history. For the BJP, then striving to expand its footprint in a state where it had long been marginal, Roy's induction was both symbolic and strategic. He brought with him not only insider knowledge of the Trinamool's strengths and vulnerabilities but also a network of local leaders who could facilitate the BJP's organisational expansion. In effect, the BJP sought to replicate the very model Roy had perfected within the Trinamool: incremental growth through targeted recruitment and meticulous booth-level planning. In the run-up to the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections, the BJP's campaign bore the imprint of aggressive expansionism. Roy played a visible role in shaping strategies and welcoming defectors from the Trinamool into the saffron fold. For a time, it appeared that he had reinvented himself as the architect of a new political realignment. Opinion polls predicted a close contest; the BJP's rhetoric suggested an imminent breakthrough. Roy, positioned as a key strategist, seemed poised to reclaim centrality in Bengal's political drama. Yet elections are unforgiving arbiters. The 2021 verdict delivered a resounding mandate for Mamata Banerjee and the Trinamool Congress. The BJP emerged as a formidable opposition but fell far short of its ambition to capture power. For Roy, the defeat was doubly damaging. Not only had the party he once helped build triumphed over his new political home, but his own stature within the BJP began to erode. Electoral setbacks inevitably trigger internal introspection and blame games. In such moments, the value of imported leaders can diminish rapidly.

Roy's subsequent return to the Trinamool Congress was as dramatic as his departure. Political comebacks are not uncommon in India; ideological elasticity has long characterised party affiliations. Yet the optics of Roy's homecoming raised uncomfortable questions. If his earlier exit had been framed as a matter of principle, what did his return signify? Was it reconciliation, expediency, or political survival? The Trinamool leadership welcomed him back, but the trust that once underpinned their partnership seemed irreparably altered. In politics, forgiveness may be strategic, but memory is rarely erased. Complicating Roy's later years were reports concerning his health and personal circumstances, which lent a tragic dimension to his political trajectory. Family statements about his well-being, combined with public confusion over his party affiliations and activities, blurred the line between political manoeuvre and personal vulnerability. The spectacle of a once-formidable strategist appearing politically adrift underscored the precariousness of careers built on shifting alliances. Roy's story invites broader reflection on the phenomenon of defection in Indian politics. Anti-defection laws were designed to ensure stability and ideological coherence. Yet political realignments continue, often facilitated by resignations, by-elections, and tactical calculations. The ethics of such moves remain contested. Supporters argue that politicians must adapt to evolving political landscapes and that ideological rigidity is unrealistic in a diverse democracy. Critics contend that frequent party-switching erodes public trust and reduces politics to opportunism. In West Bengal, where political identity is deeply entwined with cultural and ideological narratives, defections assume heightened significance. The Left's long rule cultivated a tradition of cadre loyalty and ideological training. The Trinamool's rise disrupted that tradition but retained a strong emphasis on leader-centric cohesion. The BJP's expansion introduced a different ideological axis, foregrounding national identity and central leadership. Roy navigated these currents with tactical agility, yet his experience suggests that adaptability has limits. Political capital accumulated within one ecosystem does not automatically translate into enduring authority within another.

There is also a generational dimension to Roy's arc. As Indian politics becomes increasingly mediated by social media, centralised messaging, and personality-driven campaigns, the space for backroom strategists has narrowed. While organisational expertise remains vital, visibility and narrative control have become equally crucial. Roy belonged to a cohort of leaders whose influence derived from structural mastery rather than performative politics. In an age where optics can eclipse organisation, such skills may command less public recognition and, consequently, less political security. The rise and fall of Mukul Roy also reflect the transformation of the voter. Bengal's electorate demonstrated in 2021 that it could distinguish between party and defector, between organisational strength and ideological resonance. The Trinamool's emphatic victory suggested that charisma, welfare politics, and a consolidated support base outweighed the BJP's aggressive recruitment strategy. Roy's movement between parties did not trigger the mass realignment some had anticipated. This outcome underscores a critical lesson: voters are not merely passive recipients of elite manoeuvres. They interpret, judge, and sometimes punish perceived opportunism. None of this is to deny Roy's formidable contributions to Bengal's political history. He played a central role in dismantling a decades-old regime and in shaping the contours of a new one. His strategic acumen altered the balance of power in the state. Even his stint with the BJP contributed to the party's rise as a credible opposition force. Political legacies are rarely linear; they are layered with achievements and miscalculations, triumphs and reversals. Ultimately, Mukul Roy's career serves as a meditation on impermanence. In politics, as in life, proximity to power can create the illusion of permanence. Yet power is contingent, relational, and often unforgiving. Alliances shift, loyalties fray, and the very networks that sustain authority can dissipate with startling speed. Roy's journey from kingmaker to defector to returning prodigal encapsulates the volatility of a political era defined by rapid realignments and heightened polarisation. For Bengal, his story is both specific and universal. It speaks to the state's distinctive political culture, shaped by ideological fervour and fierce loyalty. At the same time, it mirrors national trends: the erosion of traditional party structures, the centrality of charismatic leadership, and the normalisation of defection as strategy. In tracing Roy's arc, one glimpses the broader choreography of Indian democracy in the twenty-first century—dynamic, unpredictable, and at times unforgiving. If there is a final lesson in Mukul Roy's trajectory, it is that political relevance depends not merely on tactical brilliance but on sustained credibility. Organisation can build a party; strategy can win elections.

Industry in Motion: West Bengal's Measured March Toward Renewal



Industrial development in West Bengal has always been a subject weighted with history, emotion and expectation. Few regions in India carry such a layered industrial legacy: from the colonial-era jute mills lining the Hooghly to the engineering hubs of Howrah, from the coalfields of Asansol to the once-thriving manufacturing belts that powered eastern India's economy. For decades, the state stood at the forefront of industrial output. Then came years of stagnation, labour unrest, capital flight and missed opportunities. Today, as policymakers speak of revival and investors scan the horizon for stability and growth, West Bengal's industrial story appears to be progressing not with spectacular leaps but with deliberate, uneven, and cautious steps. The pace may not be dramatic, but it is distinctly its own. The narrative of industrial decline in West Bengal has often been told with sweeping generalisations. The protracted tenure of the Left Front government, led for many years by Jyoti Basu, was marked by a strong pro-labour stance and a complex relationship with private capital. Supporters argue that this period prioritised social equity and rural empowerment; critics counter that rigid labour practices and bureaucratic inertia discouraged investment. The truth, as always, lies somewhere in between. What is undeniable is that by the late 1990s and early 2000s, West Bengal was no longer perceived as a natural destination for large-scale industrial ventures. Investors gravitated toward western and southern states where regulatory processes seemed smoother and industrial ecosystems more dynamic. The political transition of 2011, which brought Mamata Banerjee and the All India Trinamool Congress to power, was accompanied by renewed promises of industrial rejuvenation. The new administration faced a dual challenge. It had to reassure investors wary of past instability while retaining the political base that had rallied around issues of land rights and agrarian justice. The shadow of earlier land acquisition controversies loomed large. Any attempt to accelerate industrialisation risked reopening wounds associated with displacement and distrust. The government's approach, therefore, became one of calibrated engagement: encouraging investment without appearing coercive, promoting industry without sacrificing political legitimacy. In this balancing act lies the essence of West Bengal's current industrial tempo. Unlike states that have embraced aggressive land pooling models or offered sweeping tax concessions, Bengal's strategy has often emphasised incremental growth. Industrial parks have been developed on available land banks; information technology hubs have been expanded in urban clusters; micro, small and medium enterprises have been encouraged as engines of employment. Critics may dismiss this as timidity, but supporters describe it as pragmatism shaped by historical experience. The annual business summits hosted in Kolkata have sought to project an image of openness and opportunity. Memorandums of understanding have been signed, delegations welcomed, and sectors from renewable energy to logistics highlighted as areas of promise. Yet the translation of intent into ground-level transformation remains uneven. Announcements do not always culminate in operational factories; proposals sometimes languish amid procedural delays. Industrial development, after all, depends not merely on political will but on infrastructure, supply chains, financial ecosystems and skilled labour. In each of these domains, West Bengal exhibits both strengths and constraints. Consider infrastructure. The state's geographic position offers inherent advantages. As a gateway to the Northeast and a corridor to Southeast Asia through the Bay of Bengal, it occupies a strategic location. The Kolkata port complex and emerging logistics networks provide connectivity potential. Road and rail improvements over the past decade have enhanced intra-state mobility. Yet bottlenecks persist. Urban congestion, periodic power constraints in certain districts, and bureaucratic layers in clearances can deter large-scale investors accustomed to plug-and-play industrial zones elsewhere. Human capital presents a more nuanced picture. Bengal's long tradition of education has produced a workforce skilled in engineering, science and information technology. The expansion of IT parks in Kolkata's eastern fringes testifies to this advantage. Start-ups and technology firms have found a niche, benefiting from comparatively lower operational costs than in metropolitan giants like Bengaluru or Mumbai. However, the challenge lies in aligning vocational training with contemporary industrial needs. Manufacturing today demands precision, automation and digital integration. Without continuous upskilling, the demographic dividend risks underperformance. Another dimension shaping the state's industrial pace is its political culture. Trade unions remain influential, and labour rights continue to command respect. While this ensures protection against exploitative practices, it can also generate apprehension among investors seeking flexibility. The state government has attempted to strike a conciliatory tone, assuring businesses of stability while reiterating its commitment to workers' welfare. The equilibrium is delicate. Too much emphasis on deregulation could alienate core constituencies; too little could stall capital inflow. It would be simplistic, however, to measure industrial progress solely by the yardstick of mega factories or headline-grabbing investments. In many districts, small and medium enterprises have quietly expanded. Food processing units, textile clusters, leather goods manufacturers and handicraft exporters contribute significantly to employment.

The Rising Toll: Confronting India's Growing Road Safety Crisis



In contemporary India, the rapid expansion of urbanization, industrial growth, and motorization has created both opportunity and peril. Our cities and towns are witnessing unprecedented vehicular growth, with cars, motorcycles, buses, and trucks crowding roads that were never designed for such volume. Yet alongside this economic and infrastructural progress lies a grim statistic that continues to rise almost unchecked: road accidents and traffic violations. The roads, which should symbolize movement, connectivity, and development, have increasingly become sites of tragedy, loss, and public anxiety. Every accident is not merely a statistic; it is a human story of disrupted lives, families thrown into grief, and communities left to bear the consequences of negligence, indiscipline, and systemic inadequacies. Road safety in India has long been a subject of concern, yet the past decade has witnessed a disturbing acceleration in both the number and severity of accidents. Motor vehicle collisions claim tens of thousands of lives every year, making India one of the countries with the highest road fatality rates globally. The problem is multi-dimensional: poor enforcement of traffic laws, reckless driving, inadequate road infrastructure, lack of public awareness, and overburdened emergency services all contribute to a landscape in which accidents have become a daily, almost inevitable, occurrence. The consequences extend far beyond the immediate victims, imposing immense economic, social, and psychological costs on society. At the heart of this crisis lies human behaviour. A significant proportion of accidents can be traced to reckless driving, overspeeding, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and the violation of traffic signals. Despite widespread awareness campaigns and public service messaging, a culture of impunity persists. Many drivers, emboldened by lax enforcement or overconfidence, flout rules with little regard for the potential consequences. The absence of consistent penalties and the prevalence of corruption further exacerbate this behaviour. Traffic violations are not merely minor infractions; they are precursors to life-altering accidents, and yet enforcement often remains sporadic and inconsistent. Infrastructure, too, plays a critical role in shaping road safety outcomes. India's rapid urbanization has often outpaced the development of roads, bridges, and highways. Inadequate signage, poorly maintained roads, insufficient street lighting, and lack of pedestrian crossings create environments that are conducive to accidents. Highways that are designed for speed often intersect with crowded townships, markets, and villages, producing dangerous conflict zones. In cities, the coexistence of private vehicles, two-wheelers, bicycles, and pedestrians in poorly regulated spaces amplifies the risk. Road design and planning, therefore, cannot be treated as secondary concerns; they are central to preventing accidents and ensuring public safety. Public transport, while essential, is another dimension of this challenge. Buses, minibuses, and taxis form the backbone of urban mobility in India, yet they are often implicated in accidents due to overloading, poor maintenance, and aggressive driving schedules. Commercial drivers, under pressure to meet deadlines or maximize earnings, may prioritize speed over safety. Training programs for professional drivers are often inadequate, and regulatory oversight is inconsistent.

Government Overhauls GDP Data Using Granular CPI and WPI Metrics to Improve Accuracy

In a significant move to enhance the credibility and precision of India's economic statistics, the Government of India has announced a comprehensive overhaul of its gross domestic product (GDP) data. The revision process, aimed at refining the measurement of economic growth, relies heavily on more granular inputs from the consumer price index (CPI) and wholesale price index (WPI), marking a major step towards data-driven policy-making.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has stated that the updated methodology will incorporate deeper, item-level price data from both CPI and WPI, allowing for a more nuanced estimation of national income and sectoral output. Officials highlighted that while India's GDP estimates have historically relied on aggregated price indices, this approach often masked short-term fluctuations in different sectors, sometimes leading to under- or over-estimation of growth rates. By integrating highly detailed price information, statisticians expect a more realistic picture of consumption patterns, production costs, and inflation-adjusted economic activity.



Economic analysts have welcomed the move, noting that accurate GDP measurement is critical for effective fiscal and monetary policy. "For policymakers, the reliability of GDP data is paramount. These revisions will improve the responsiveness of government programs, interest rate decisions, and investment planning," said a senior economist. The update is expected to have far-reaching implications for government budget planning, corporate strategy, and market forecasting.

The new approach leverages sector-specific CPI and WPI data, which captures price changes for thousands of commodities and services across urban and rural regions. By adjusting the GDP calculations to reflect these variations, the government aims to provide a more realistic view of both household consumption and industrial activity. The revised methodology also introduces improved deflators that account for changes in relative prices, thereby refining the calculation of real GDP. Officials emphasized that the overhaul is not merely a technical adjustment but a structural improvement in national accounting. "We are moving from broad-brush assumptions to a micro-level data framework. This will ensure that GDP figures are closer to actual economic behavior on the ground," a government spokesperson explained. The Ministry added that the transition will involve revising historical GDP data to maintain consistency and comparability over time, a step crucial for longitudinal economic analysis. Financial markets are closely monitoring the revisions, as any changes in historical GDP growth rates could influence investor sentiment, bond yields, and equity valuations. Analysts predict that while the updated methodology might not drastically alter overall growth trends, it could affect sector-specific figures, particularly in areas where price volatility has been high in recent years, such as food, energy, and manufacturing inputs.

The government has also indicated that this reform aligns with international best practices in national accounting. Institutions such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund advocate for greater use of detailed price indices in GDP estimation to improve comparability and transparency.

By adopting a similar framework, India aims to present its economic statistics in a manner consistent with global standards, enhancing credibility for foreign investors and international organizations.However, some experts caution that while the methodological improvements are significant, challenges remain in collecting and maintaining high-frequency, granular data. Discrepancies in regional reporting, delays in data submission, and differences in quality across sources could still pose limitations. The government has assured that mechanisms are being strengthened to ensure timely and accurate data flows, including enhanced digital reporting and greater coordination between central and state statistical agencies. The MoSPI has confirmed that the revised GDP figures will be published alongside a detailed explanation of the methodology, allowing researchers, economists, and the public to understand the basis of adjustments. This transparency is expected to increase confidence in official statistics, reduce disputes over economic growth rates, and support evidence-based decision-making at all levels.

With India striving to maintain robust economic growth amid global uncertainties, this overhaul of GDP data represents a strategic effort to improve economic governance and planning.

By leveraging detaile d CPI and WPI information, the government seeks to provide a more accurate reflection of the country's economic performance, reinforcing policy effectiveness and market confidence.

Government Eyes ₹1.79 Lakh Crore from IPOs of State-Owned Firms by 2030

In a decisive move to strengthen the country's fiscal position and deepen capital markets, the Government of India has set an ambitious target to raise ₹1.79 lakh crore through initial public offerings (IPOs) of public sector undertakings (PSUs) by 2030. The plan, which spans the next decade, marks one of the most significant disinvestment initiatives in recent times and underscores the government's commitment to monetizing state-owned assets while encouraging broader public participation in equity markets.

Officials within the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) indicated that the exercise would focus on PSUs with strong fundamentals and growth potential, aiming to strike a balance between fiscal gains and operational efficiency. The government plans to undertake these listings in a phased manner, taking care to ensure market stability and avoid excessive pressure on the equity markets. Analysts note that timing and careful selection of companies will be critical to achieving the revenue target while maintaining investor confidence.

Historically, IPOs of state-owned companies have been an important source of revenue for the government. Past offerings have ranged from banking and insurance firms to energy and infrastructure companies, generating funds for developmental programs without increasing public borrowing. However, the ₹1.79 lakh crore target represents an unprecedented scale, reflecting both the government's fiscal ambitions and its broader vision of promoting a market-oriented economy. Experts suggest that proceeds from these offerings could play a key role in financing infrastructure projects, social welfare programs, and other public initiatives, while simultaneously reducing the fiscal deficit. The strategy also aligns with the government's push for greater public participation in capital markets. By offering shares of profitable PSUs to retail investors, authorities aim to foster a culture of investment, broaden equity ownership.

Inauguration of ISNA's Science Journalism Course



The 38th Advanced Training Programme in Science Journalism, organized by the Indian Science News Association (ISNA), was inaugurated on 23rd February. The programme marks another significant step in promoting science communication and journalism in India.Delivering the welcome address, the Chairman of the training programme , Prasanta Kumar Bose, highlighted the glorious legacy of the Indian Science News Association. He recalled that the institution was founded through the initiatives of eminent scientists such as Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray and Dr. Meghnad Saha. He emphasized that ISNA continues to uphold its rich tradition and encourages students to move forward in carrying this legacy ahead.Dr. Amit Krishna De, Secretary of ISNA and Convenor of the course, stated that although the course is primarily conducted online, several offline workshops are also being planned. These include sessions on radio production, science tabloid making, puppetry, and other innovative methods of science communication.The programme was formally inaugurated by Dr. Sandeep Poddar, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Lincoln University College, Malaysia.

In his inaugural address, he remarked that the science journalism course would greatly benefit participants, noting that such specialized courses are not widely available in many foreign universities. He also emphasized the importance of research and innovation in the field of science communication.The Chief Guest of the event was Santosh Kumar Singh, Editor of the daily newspaper Ekdin. He observed that science journalism offers numerous opportunities and diverse career paths, and expressed confidence that ISNA's course would be highly beneficial for aspiring science journalists.The session was presided over by Professor Bikash Chakrabarti, former Director of Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics and President of ISNA. Senior ISNA member and former scientist of the Bose Institute, Professor Manas Chakrabarti, remarked that the course is taught with great sincerity and dedication.Among the distinguished attendees were Dr. Meenakshi De , Dr. Sima Mukhopadhyay, Dr. Saikat Basu, Dr. Buroshiva Dasgupta, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Dr. Arnab Kumar Banerjee, Dr. Debaprasanna Sinha, Dr. Manas Pratim Das, Arpita Chakrabarti, Gautam Sil, and Kallol Basak, among others.The entire program was skillfully conducted by two former students of ISNA's Science Journalism course, Malabika Sengupta and Dr. Esha Pandit.

From Minute Factory to Money Factory: Airtel's $2.2 Billion Bet Signals Aggressive Expansion

Bharat's telecom giant Bharti Airtel has announced a major strategic investment of $2.2 billion, a bold move aimed at transforming the company from a traditional service provider into a diversified digital powerhouse. The investment underscores Airtel's ambition to expand its footprint across wireless, broadband, and enterprise solutions, while capitalizing on emerging opportunities in digital services and technology infrastructure. The investment comes at a time when the Indian telecommunications sector is navigating a period of intense competition, rapid technological disruption, and evolving consumer demands.

Airtel's management emphasized that the $2.2 billion infusion is not merely a financial exercise but a deliberate effort to enhance network capabilities, broaden digital offerings, and accelerate growth in high-margin segments such as cloud services, fintech, and content delivery. Industry experts interpret this as a signal that Airtel is positioning itself for a long-term leadership role in India's increasingly digital economy.

Airtel's strategy involves a multi-pronged approach. The company plans to significantly upgrade its network infrastructure, particularly in rural and semi-urban regions where demand for high-speed connectivity has surged. This includes deploying advanced 4G and 5G technologies, expanding fiber-optic networks, and integrating cutting-edge solutions for enterprise clients. Analysts note that by strengthening its digital backbone, Airtel aims to capture a larger share of both consumer and business markets, while preparing for the next phase of technological evolution in India.

Alongside network expansion, Airtel is placing considerable emphasis on digital services, leveraging its existing subscriber base to cross-sell fintech, content, and cloud solutions. The company's leadership believes that its vast mobile ecosystem can be converted into a "money factory," generating recurring revenues through value-added services and digital platforms. This approach reflects a broader industry trend where telecom operators are diversifying beyond voice and data, seeking higher-margin opportunities in fintech, video streaming, and enterprise solutions.

Market analysts highlight that Airtel's investment is also designed to strengthen its competitive position against rivals such as Reliance Jio and Vodafone Idea. While Jio has made significant inroads with aggressive pricing and bundled offerings, Airtel is betting on superior service quality, network reliability, and value-added digital products to differentiate itself.

The $2.2 billion allocation is expected to fund both organic growth initiatives and strategic partnerships with technology and infrastructure companies, enabling Airtel to scale quickly without compromising service quality. Financial markets responded positively to the announcement, with Airtel's shares seeing upward movement as investors welcomed the company's forward-looking strategy. Analysts suggest that while the scale of investment is substantial, the long-term payoff could be significant if Airtel successfully converts its telecom subscriber base into a broader digital customer ecosystem. The focus on fintech, cloud computing, and digital content aligns with macroeconomic trends that indicate rising demand for digital services across India's urban and rural populations. Airtel's management stressed that this initiative is aligned with the government's broader vision of a digitally empowered economy. With India rapidly adopting digital payments, cloud solutions, and connected devices, telecom companies that can offer integrated solutions stand to benefit the most. By positioning itself as a technology-driven service provider, Airtel aims not only to retain its existing subscriber base but also to attract new customers seeking comprehensive digital experiences. However, industry experts caution that such aggressive expansion carries risks, including rising capital expenditure, regulatory uncertainties, and the challenge of maintaining service quality at scale. Airtel's leadership remains confident that disciplined execution, combined with strategic partnerships and innovation-driven offerings, will mitigate these risks and secure long-term value creation for shareholders.

Heavy Selling in D-Street Wipes Out ₹5 Trillion in Market Value Amid AI Concerns and Tariff Tensions

Mumbai witnessed a dramatic sell-off in the equity markets on Friday as investor sentiment turned sharply negative, wiping out nearly ₹5 trillion in market capitalization. The decline was fueled by mounting concerns over the potential impact of artificial intelligence on traditional business models and renewed fears of escalating international trade tensions. The benchmark indices suffered steep losses, with the Sensex plunging over 1,200 points and the Nifty dropping below key psychological levels, reflecting a broad-based retreat across sectors.



Market analysts attributed the sharp decline to a combination of global and domestic factors. Internationally, investors remain cautious amid reports that several major economies are contemplating stricter regulations on technology exports and imposing tariffs that could disrupt supply chains. These developments have raised concerns that Indian companies, particularly in the technology and manufacturing sectors, may face headwinds in global markets. Domestically, the heavy selling was concentrated in stocks perceived to be most vulnerable to automation and AI-driven disruption, as well as in export-oriented companies sensitive to changes in trade policies. Trading volumes on both the Bombay Stock Exchange and the National Stock Exchange were higher than average, underscoring the intensity of the panic. Analysts noted that investors moved swiftly to liquidate positions in sectors such as IT services, metal, and automotive components, while defensive sectors such as FMCG and pharmaceuticals showed relative resilience. "The market is reacting to fears that AI may accelerate job displacement and alter revenue streams for traditional companies. When combined with tariff uncertainty, this created a perfect storm for investor nervousness," said a senior equity strategist. The rout has also highlighted concerns over valuations. Many high-growth stocks, particularly in the technology space, had seen sharp appreciation in recent months. With uncertainty surrounding AI regulation and its economic implications, investors appear to be re-evaluating risk-reward calculations, leading to widespread profit booking. Large institutional investors, including mutual funds and foreign portfolio investors, were observed trimming positions, intensifying the downward pressure on the indices.

Name Change

I, AJEMODDIN SEIKH(old name) S/O - JALEP SEIKH residing at VILL - INDRAHATA PO - PURANDARPUR PS- KANDI DIST - MURSHIDABAD PIN -742171. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from AJEMODDIN SEIKH (old name) to RAHIDUL SK (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as RAHIDUL SK (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 24/02/2026. RAHIDUL SK (new name) & AJEMODDIN SEIKH (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, ICHAB SEIKH (old name) S/O - JELEBODDI SK residing at VILL- BEJPARA PO - SUNDIPUR PS - BERHAMPORE DIST - MURSHIDABAD PIN- 742134, West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from ICHAB SEIKH (old name) to ISOB SK (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as ISOB SK (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 24/02/2026.ISOB SK (new name) & ICHAB SEIKH (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, GOLAM YERBOX (old name) S/O - NUR MAHAMMAD SEKH residing at VILL- MONAIKANDRA PO - KULI KANDI PS - BURWAN DIST - MURSHIDABAD PIN - 742168. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from GOLAM YERBOX (old name) to GOLAM YEAR BOX (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as GOLAM YEAR BOX (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 24/02/2026. GOLAM YEAR BOX (new name) & GOLAM YERBOX (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, BANDITA MUKHERJEE (old name) S/O - SUMAN MUKHERJEE residing at VILL & PO - BAHINA PS - MOLLARPUR DIST - BIRBHUM PIN- 731216. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from BANDITA MUKHERJEE (old name) to BANDITA SINGHA ROY (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as BANDITA SINGHA ROY (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 25/02/2026. BANDITA SINGHA ROY (new name) & BANDITA MUKHERJEE (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, AJMIL HAK (old name) S/O - SAFED ALI residing at VILL & PO - RANINAGAR PS - PUKURIA DIST - MALDA PIN -732102. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from AJMIL HAK (old name) to AJAHAR ALI (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as AJAHAR ALI (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 24/02/2026.AJAHAR ALI (new name) & AJMIL HAK (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, LAILI KHATUN(old name) W/O - MD ASLAM ALI (D/O - RAHAMAN MONDAL) residing at VILL & PO - RUPRAMPUR PS - MURARAI DIST - BIRBHUM PIN -731219. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from LAILI KHATUN (old name) to LAILI BEGAM (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as LAILI BEGAM (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the 1 Class Judicial Magistrate at Rampurhat Birbhum court dated on 03/09/2025. LAILI BEGAM (new name) & LAILI KHATUN (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Md Abdul Karim Mia (old name) S/o- Md Abdul Aktar Mia residing at Kotwali, Kotwali, English Bazar, Dist-Malda, Pin-732144 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from MD ABDUL KARIM MIA to ABDUL KARIM MIA and henceforth I shall be known as ABDUL KARIM MIA (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 24/02/2026. MD ABDUL KARIM MIA (old name) and ABDUL KARIM MIA (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, DEBASIS MUKHERJEE (old name) S/O - LATE NIRMAL SHIB MUKHERJEE residing at VILL & PO - BAHINA PS - MOLLARPUR DIST - BIRBHUM PIN -731216. West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed My name from DEBASIS MUKHERJEE (old name) to DEBASHISH MUKHERJEE (new name) and henceforth, I shall be Known as DEBASHISH MUKHERJEE (new name) in all purpose, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary public at Berhampore court dated on 25/02/2026. DEBASHISH MUKHERJEE (new name) & DEBASIS MUKHERJEE (old name) both name are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Sk Serazuddin (old name) S/o- Alauddin Sk residing at Bargara, Matajipara, Sagardighi, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742308 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from SK SERAZUDDIN to SERAJUDDIN SK and henceforth I shall be known as SERAJUDDIN SK (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 24/02/2026. SK SERAZUDDIN (old name) and SERAJUDDIN SK (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Munira Mustafa Jalanawala (Old Name) wife of Hamza Zakir Patel Resident of ,35,Ripon Street,Taskeen Apartment,P.O & P.S-Park Street, Kolkata-700016. W.B., have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Munira Patel (New Name) vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Kolkata on 24.02.2026.That Munira Mustafa Jalanawala (Old Name) and Munira Patel (New Name) both are the same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Sahani Bibi (old name) W/o- Hasibul Shaikh residing at Nabibur, Nabipur, Raninagar, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742308 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from SAHANI BIBI to SAHANUR BIBI and henceforth I shall be known as SAHANUR BIBI (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 24/02/2026. SAHANI BIBI (old name) and SAHANUR BIBI (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Deepak Khemka (old name) Son of Om Prakash Khemka , residing at Ps Magnum Block-7, Flat-9B Vip Road Kaikhali Haldiram Opp Haj House Rajarhat Kolkata Pin- 700052, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Deepak Kumar Khemka (New Name) as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit, No 37, dated 24/02/2026. Deepak Kumar Khemka (New Name) and Deepak Khemka (old name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Motiur Rahaman (old name) S/o- Haji Rahaman residing at Senpara, Malibari, Raninagar, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742302 West Bengal, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from MOTIUR RAHAMAN to MATIUR RAHAMAN and henceforth I shall be known as MATIUR RAHAMAN (new name) in all purpose vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Murshidabad dated 24/02/2026. MOTIUR RAHAMAN (old name) and MATIUR RAHAMAN (new name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I MD USMAN ALI GAZI S/O MD KALU GAZI residing at Vill-Uttarbagundi, P.O.-Gotra, P.S.-Basirhat, North 24 Parganas-743422, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as OSMAN ALI GAZI as declared before the Notary Public at Kolkata vide affidavit Dated 24/02/2026. MD USMAN ALI GAZI and OSMAN ALI GAZI both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, NarayanCh Bokshi and Narayan Bakshi (old name) Son of Mukunda Baksi , residing at Khandagram Po.Dhalhara East Medinipur Pin-721636, West Bengal, INDIA, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Narayan Baksi (New Name) as declared before the notary public at Kolkata, vide an affidavit, dated 24/02/2026. Narayan Baksi (New Name) and Narayan Ch Bokshi and Narayan Bakshi(old name) both are same and identical person.

Name Change

I Sadekun Bibi, W/O Afzal Sekh, a resident of Vill: Mirpur, Po: Kathia, PS: Paikar, Birbhum. My actual name is Sadekun Bibi, W/O Afzal Sekh, which is recorded in Aadhaar and Voter Card. My nickname is Dakhelun Bibi, W/O Afzal Sekh, which is recorded in the Sale Deed (No. I - 3765/13). Declare vide affidavit dated 03.02.2026 Ld Executive Magistrate, Rampurhat that Sadekun Bibi and Dakhelun Bibi, same and one identical person.

Name Change

I SUBASH BANIK (old name) S/O- Gyan Chandra Banik,Resident of Arat Ghat Road,Baralghat Road,Ward No.10, of Nabadwip Municipality,P.O & P.S- Nabadwip, Dist-Nadia,Pin-741302, do hereby declare that I have changed my name from SUBASH BANIK (old name) to SUBASH CHANDRA BANIK(new/correct name) and henceforth I shall be Known as SUBASH CHANDRA BANIK (new/correct name) in all purpose, Vide affidavit no.1083, sworn In the court of the Ld. Judicial Magistrate (1st Class)at Nabadwip, Nadia,on Date-10/02/2026 SUBASH CHANDRA BANIK (new/correct name) and SUBASH BANIK (Old Name) both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Abdul Ali Mondal (old name) S/o Late Madar Box Mandal residing at Vill-Kundipur, Po-Ganrapota, PS-Bongaon, Dist-North 24 Parganas, Pin-743251, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Abdul Mandal (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public at Bongaon, North 24 Parganas dated 24/02/26. Abdul Ali Mondal (New Name) and Abdul Ali Mondal(Old name) all are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, SHYAMASHAM BHATTACHERJEE, s/o Chandi Charan Bhattacherjee, residing at Surul, Birbhum, Sriniketan, West Bengal-731236, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that my actual name is SHYAMASHAM BHATTACHERJEE instead of SHAMASHAN BHATTACHARJEE which has been wrongly recorded in my daughter's Secondary Examination Certificate vide an affidavit before the Court of LD. Executive Magistrate (1st Class) at Howrah on 20.02.2026. SHYAMASHAM BHATTACHERJEE and SHAMASHAN BHATTACHARJEE both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, SK Gaffar S/O- Sekh Hasim, resident of Sadhanpur Ambagan, P.O.- Burdwan, P.S.- Burdwan, Dist.- Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal, PIN-713101, do hereby declare that I have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as 'SEKH GAFFAR' in all purpose vide affidavit No- 1280, sworn before the Notary Public at Purba Bardhaman on 24/02/2026. That SK Gaffar and Sekh Gaffar both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Asim Banerjee alias Asim Kumar Banerjee (old name) S/o Late Kartick Chandra Banerjee, residing at Vill-2 No Kundu Para, Manindranagar Colony Po-Cossimbazar, PS-Berhampore, Dist-Murshidabad, Pin-742102, West Bengal, have changed my name and shall henceforth be known as Ashim Kumar Banerjee (New Name) as declared before the Ld. Sub Divisional Executive Magistrate 1st Class at Berhampore, Murshidabad, dated 20/02/26. Ashim Kumar Banerjee (New Name) and Asim Banerjee, Asim Kumar Banerjee(Old name) all are same and identical person.

Name Change

I, Noore Elahi S/o Samsuddin Shaikh residing at Vill.-Udaychandpur PO.-Jibanti, P.S. Berhampore, Dist. Murshidabad, Pin-742136 West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my father's actual name SAMSUDDIN SHAIKH instead of SAMSUDDIN SK, vide an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public at Berhampore dated on 11/02/2026. SAMSUDDIN SHAIKH and SAMSUDDIN SK both are same and one identical person.

Name Change

I, Vijesh Verma S/o Hari Ram Verma residing at 42, Ishan Ghosh Road, Ward No. 123, Purba Barisha, Thakurpukur, Maheshtala, South 24 Parganas, Pin-700008 West Bengal, do hereby solemnly affirm & declare my father's actual name Hari Ram Verma instead of H.P. Barman alias Hari Ram Barman and my mother's actual name Usha Devi Verma instead of Usha Devi Barman, vide an affidavit sworn before the Ld. Judicial Magistrate at Calcutta dated on 20/02/2026. Hari Ram Verma, H.P. Barman and Hari Ram Barman all are same and one identical person. Usha Devi Verma and Usha Devi Barman both are same and one identical person.

JANGIPUR MUNICIPALITY
P.O.Raghunathganj, Dist Murshidabad

TENDER NOTICE

NIT No: MAD/ULB/JM/SWM/NIeT1/25-26 (2nd Call), Date-20/02/2026

Sealed Tender are invited by the Executive Officer, Jangipur Municipality, from the eligible contractors for Construction of GIC Sheet wall(View Guard) at Gurbage Dumping Area at Mouza-Gadaipur beside NH12(Dag No-191 & 195 JL No-02)Latitude-24.482556, Longitude-88.035037. Last date of application for NIeT: 10/03/2026 up to 5.00 PM.The detail NIeT notice may be seen in the Notice Board of Jangipur Municipality.

Sd/-Chairman
Jangipur Municipality

Office of the
Dakshin Sankrail Gram Panchayat
Sankrail, Howrah

e-tenders are invited by Prodhan Dakshin Sankrail Gram Panchayat under Sankrail Dev. Block Dist.-Howrah, from resourceful/bonafide contractors with experience and requisite credential from MPLAD **(NIT No. DSGP/847/MPLAD/2025-2026 Dt:-23/02/2026)**, MPLAd Fund Date of closing of Submission of Tachnical & Financial Bid on **10/03/2026 up to 11.00 am**. For details visit the website **http://wbtenders.gov.in.**

Sd/- Pradhan
Dakshin Sankrail Gram Panchayat, Howrah

Allegations Surface in Cooch Behar as BJP Leader Claims Intimidation to Join Trinamool Congress

Staff reporter, Cooch Behar, 24 February: Political tensions have escalated in the northern district of Cooch Behar following allegations that a local leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party was coerced and threatened in an attempt to compel him to join the ruling Trinamool Congress. The incident has triggered a fresh round of accusations and counter-accusations between the two major political forces in West Bengal, intensifying the already charged atmosphere ahead of the Assembly elections.

According to sources within the BJP's district unit, the party leader in question alleged that he was subjected to sustained pressure and intimidation by individuals purportedly linked to the Trinamool Congress. The BJP has claimed that the pressure tactics were aimed at forcing him to switch allegiance in order to weaken the party's organizational structure in the region. Senior BJP leaders have described the episode as part of a broader pattern of political coercion in certain pockets of the state.The accused Trinamool Congress leadership in the district, however, has categorically denied the allegations. Party representatives have dismissed the claims as politically motivated and designed to malign the ruling party's image. They have asserted that the Trinamool Congress continues to attract leaders from other parties based on its development agenda and mass support, not through intimidation or force.

The controversy has reignited concerns about political polarization in Cooch Behar, a district that has witnessed intense competition between the BJP and the Trinamool Congress in recent electoral cycles. Once considered a stronghold of regional political alignments, the district has increasingly become a battleground for the two dominant state-level forces. Allegations of intimidation, violence, and defections have frequently surfaced, reflecting the high stakes involved.

Local BJP leaders have alleged that the affected functionary received threats warning of consequences if he refused to join the Trinamool Congress. They claim that the leader resisted the pressure and subsequently brought the matter to the attention of party higher-ups. The BJP has demanded a fair and impartial investigation into the incident, arguing that such actions undermine democratic principles and free political participation.

In response, Trinamool Congress leaders in the district have accused the BJP of fabricating the narrative to divert attention from internal discord. They contend that several BJP leaders at the grassroots level have voluntarily expressed interest in joining the ruling party due to dissatisfaction with the BJP's organizational functioning and ideological direction. According to Trinamool representatives, such allegations are often raised to prevent leaders from openly acknowledging their decision to switch sides.

Former Chief Secretary Manoj Pant Attends High-Level State–Judiciary Meeting; Nabanna Clarifies Role and Agenda

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: A high-level meeting between representatives of the West Bengal government and members of the judiciary has drawn significant attention after the presence of former Chief Secretary Manoj Pant at the discussions prompted political and administrative curiosity. The meeting, held in Kolkata, focused on coordination between the executive and judicial branches on key governance and administrative matters. Following questions raised in political circles and sections of the media, Nabanna moved swiftly to clarify the context and purpose of Pant's participation.

According to senior officials at Nabanna, the state secretariat of West Bengal, the meeting was convened as part of routine institutional dialogue aimed at improving cooperation between the state administration and the judiciary. Such meetings, sources said, are not uncommon and are intended to streamline processes related to infrastructure, court administration, and implementation of judicial directives.

Manoj Pant, a senior bureaucrat who previously served as the Chief Secretary of West Bengal, was reportedly present in an advisory capacity. His attendance sparked speculation in some quarters, with opposition leaders questioning whether the former top bureaucrat was playing an informal role in current decision-making processes. However, state officials emphasized that Pant's experience in governance and administrative coordination made his presence both appropriate and valuable.

A senior official from Nabanna stated that Pant was invited because of his institutional knowledge and prior involvement in several projects that required coordination between different branches of government. "There is nothing unusual about seeking the insights of someone who has served in a key administrative position. The objective was to ensure continuity and clarity in discussions that have long-term implications," the official said.The meeting reportedly addressed issues related to judicial infrastructure, including the development and maintenance of court buildings, digitalization initiatives, and logistical support for the smooth functioning of the judiciary across districts. With increasing case loads and the need for modern facilities, the state government has been under pressure to enhance support systems for the courts.Sources indicated that discussions also touched upon budgetary allocations for judicial projects and mechanisms to expedite administrative clearances. While the judiciary functions independently in its decision-making, administrative and financial matters often require coordination with the executive branch.

Sudesh Mahto May Enter Bengal Fray, Likely to Contest from Baghmundi Seat

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: In a development that could add a new dimension to the political landscape of eastern India, former Deputy Chief Minister of Jharkhand, Sudesh Mahto, is reportedly being considered as a candidate for the Baghmundi Assembly seat in the upcoming elections in West Bengal. The possibility of his candidature has sparked intense political speculation, particularly in the tribal-dominated belt of western Bengal, where regional dynamics often play a decisive role.

Sources within political circles indicate that discussions are underway regarding Mahto's potential entry into the electoral contest from Baghmundi, a constituency located in the politically sensitive district of Purulia. The seat, known for its significant tribal population and cross-border socio-cultural ties with neighboring Jharkhand, has historically witnessed closely fought contests.

Mahto, a prominent tribal leader and founder of the All Jharkhand Students Union, has long been a familiar figure in the politics of Jharkhand. His influence among tribal communities and youth voters has been a cornerstone of his political career. Having served as Deputy Chief Minister in Jharkhand, he is regarded as an experienced administrator with deep grassroots connections. Political observers believe that his candidature in Bengal, if confirmed, could signal a strategic attempt to consolidate tribal votes and expand regional influence beyond Jharkhand's borders.

The Baghmundi constituency shares geographical and cultural proximity with Jharkhand, and migration, employment, and shared ethnic identities have historically blurred state boundaries in this region. Analysts suggest that Mahto's appeal may resonate with voters who identify strongly with regional and tribal issues. His presence in the fray could recalibrate existing political equations, particularly if he manages to unify sections of the electorate that feel marginalized or underserved.



While there has been no formal announcement from Mahto himself, leaders associated with his political camp have not dismissed the speculation. Party insiders suggest that exploratory discussions have taken place, and a final decision may depend on broader alliance considerations and electoral strategy. The move is being viewed as potentially significant, especially at a time when parties are seeking to expand their footprint in border districts.

The political implications of Mahto's possible candidature extend beyond a single constituency. The entry of a seasoned Jharkhand leader into Bengal politics may influence campaign narratives, particularly on issues such as tribal welfare, land rights, employment, and rural infrastructure. These themes have often dominated electoral discourse in western Bengal, where economic challenges and development concerns remain pressing.

Major political players in the state, including the ruling Trinamool Congress and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, are closely monitoring the situation. Both parties have invested considerable effort in strengthening their organizational base in Purulia and adjoining districts over recent election cycles. A high-profile entrant like Mahto could compel them to reassess their campaign strategies.

The Trinamool Congress has traditionally relied on a mix of welfare schemes and grassroots mobilization to retain support among tribal communities. On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party has made inroads in the region by focusing on identity politics and national-level narratives. The arrival of an influential tribal leader from a neighboring state may introduce a fresh competitive element, potentially fragmenting vote shares or creating new alliances.

Local residents in Baghmundi have reacted with curiosity to the reports. Some view the prospect as an opportunity to bring greater attention to regional issues, while others remain cautious, emphasizing the need for sustained engagement rather than symbolic candidacies. Political activists on the ground point out that while Mahto's stature is undeniable, translating cross-border influence into electoral success in Bengal would require careful groundwork and coalition-building.

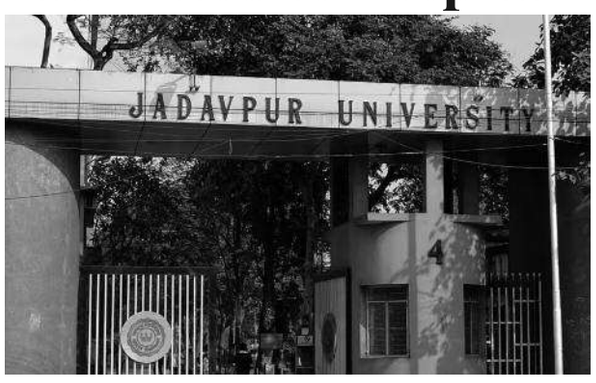
For Mahto, contesting from Baghmundi could represent both an opportunity and a risk. A victory would underscore his regional stature and potentially open new avenues for political collaboration across state lines. A defeat, however, could raise questions about the transferability of his influence beyond Jharkhand's political terrain.

As the state prepares for a closely watched electoral battle, the possible candidature of Sudesh Mahto has added an element of unpredictability. Whether this speculation culminates in a formal announcement remains to be seen. For now, Baghmundi has emerged as a focal point of political intrigue, with parties recalibrating strategies and voters awaiting clarity on who will ultimately step into the contest.



A traffic police personnel signals as tram no. 498 'Gitanjali', a wooden tram built during World War II, runs during a special heritage ride to mark the 153rd anniversary of the Calcutta tram service, in Kolkata, Tuesday.

JU student 'assaulted' after freshers' event, admitted to hospital



Staff reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: : A postgraduate student of Jadavpur University was allegedly assaulted on the campus on Monday evening following a freshers' programme, varsity sources said. The English department student, identified as Priyam Chatterjee (PG-I), was allegedly dragged away from the venue of the department's freshers' event by some members of a group referred to as 'Collective (DSF)' and beaten near the Faculty of Engineering & Technology department, the sources claimed. Professors intervened and rescued the student, taking him to the administrative building, Aurobindo Bhavan, which houses the vice-chancellor's, pro-VC's and registrar's offices. Chatterjee allegedly fell unconscious and remained in a critical condition, the sources said.

Tension escalated further when members of the same group allegedly gheraoed Aurobindo Bhavan, preventing people from entering or leaving the building for some time. Following intervention by faculty members, the injured student was admitted to KPC Medical College and Hospital for treatment. A SFI leader claimed that another student from the economics department was similarly harassed in a separate incident. He said the attack was related to the February 20 incident when two professors and several students were injured in a clash between SFI and We The Independent (WTI) members on the campus. JU VC's office is yet to issue an official statement on the incident.

Welcome showers in parts of south Bengal, temperatures to rise during weekend: IMD



Staff reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: Several places in south Bengal received light rainfall on Tuesday morning, nearly three months after the last showers in the region, the IMD said. According to an Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) official, Kolkata and its adjoining districts last experienced rainfall in November, while a few western districts like Purulia got some drizzle in early December. Dry weather is, however, likely to prevail across the state over the next seven days, the IMD said. It said that maximum and minimum temperatures in all districts of West Bengal are likely to rise by two to three degrees Celsius during the weekend.

Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas district received the highest rainfall at 19 mm, followed by 14.8 mm at Uluberia in Howrah district, the IMD data said. Kolkata received 5.9 mm of rain in the morning and was warm and sunny in the afternoon. The Himalayan tourist town of Darjeeling was the coldest place in the state on Tuesday morning at 7 degrees Celsius, the IMD said. Kolkata recorded a minimum temperature of 19.2 degrees Celsius, while adjoining Salt Lake was a notch lower at 18 degrees Celsius, it said.

The city is likely to get light to moderate rain on Tuesday, the Met office has predicted. The city will get a rainy day after close to four months if the prediction comes out correct.While warm southerly and south-easterly wind is injecting moisture into the land, another weather system — a trough line that runs from Gangetic Bengal to north coastal Andhra — is increasing the chances of rain.

"The chance of rain in Kolkata on Tuesday is about 60%, while thunderstorm is likely in North and South 24 Parganas, Howrah, and East and West Midnapore. We are getting moist wind in the lower system that is injecting moisture from the sea," said meteorologist HR Biswas, head of the Regional Meteorological Centre Kolkata.On Monday, at 31.2°C, it was 0.7 notches above the normal mark. The minimum temperature breached 20°C on Sunday and stood at 20.6°C on Monday, 1.1 notches above normal. The Met officials said that even if it rains, it will not make much impact on the mercury.

Trinamool Congress Prepares Draft List of Candidates Ahead of West Bengal Assembly Elections

Staff reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: With the political temperature steadily rising ahead of the forthcoming Assembly elections in West Bengal, the ruling Trinamool Congress has reportedly prepared a draft list of candidates, signaling the beginning of an intense phase of electoral strategizing. Party insiders indicate that the preliminary list reflects a careful balance between experience and fresh faces, as the leadership seeks to consolidate its position while addressing ground-level feedback from various districts.

According to sources within the party, the draft list was prepared after a series of internal assessments and consultations conducted over the past several weeks. Senior leaders have reportedly gathered inputs from district-level observers, organizational heads, and grassroots workers to gauge the popularity and performance of sitting legislators. The exercise is understood to be part of a broader strategy to ensure that the party fields candidates with strong local connect and organizational credibility.

The move comes at a time when the Trinamool Congress is keen to maintain its electoral dominance in the state. Having secured significant mandates in previous elections, the party leadership is said to be cautious about anti-incumbency sentiments in certain constituencies. As a result, the draft list is believed to include potential replacements in seats where sitting MLAs may face dissatisfaction among voters. At the same time, leaders with proven track records are likely to retain their nominations.

Party sources suggest that special attention has been paid to districts that have witnessed closely fought contests in recent elections. Regions in north Bengal, as well as certain pockets in western and central parts of the state, are being closely scrutinized. The leadership is said to have emphasized winnability as the primary criterion, even if it requires difficult decisions regarding long-standing party figures.

The preparation of the draft list also reflects an effort to project inclusivity and social representation. Insiders claim that the party has considered caste, community, gender, and youth representation while shortlisting names. The Trinamool Congress has consistently highlighted its commitment to social welfare and inclusive governance, and the candidate selection process appears to align with that narrative.

While the draft list has not been made public, it is expected to undergo further review by the party's top leadership before finalization. Political observers note that the involvement of senior strategists and core committee members indicates that the process is being handled with utmost caution. The final list is likely to be announced in phases, depending on the Election Commission's schedule and evolving political developments.

The development has prompted reactions from opposition parties, particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party, which has been preparing its own strategy for the state. BJP leaders have alleged that the ruling party's early move to prepare a draft list reflects nervousness about the upcoming contest. They argue that dissatisfaction among sections of the electorate could pose challenges for the Trinamool Congress, particularly in areas where the BJP has strengthened its grassroots presence.

Political analysts, however, suggest that early preparation may offer the ruling party an organizational advantage. By identifying candidates well in advance, the Trinamool Congress can provide them with adequate time to reconnect with constituents, address local grievances, and reinforce booth-level networks. In a state where electoral battles are often decided by narrow margins, such groundwork can prove crucial.

The draft list preparation also underscores the increasing professionalization of election management in West Bengal politics. Parties are relying more heavily on data-driven assessments, feedback surveys, and constituency-level performance evaluations. Insiders indicate that the Trinamool Congress has taken into account reports on development projects, implementation of welfare schemes, and public perception of individual legislators while shortlisting names.

At the grassroots level, the news of the draft list has generated both anticipation and anxiety among party workers. Aspirants are lobbying for inclusion, while sitting legislators await confirmation of their tickets. In several constituencies, speculation is rife about possible reshuffles or the introduction of new faces aimed at energizing the party's campaign.The coming weeks are expected to witness intensified political activity across the state, with leaders engaging in public meetings, organizational reviews, and alliance discussions. The Trinamool Congress leadership is likely to fine-tune its campaign themes alongside the finalization of candidates, focusing on governance achievements, welfare schemes, and regional identity.

As West Bengal moves closer to another high-stakes electoral battle, the preparation of the Trinamool Congress's draft candidate list marks a significant milestone in the unfolding political narrative. While the final slate of nominees remains under wraps, the early groundwork suggests that the ruling party is gearing up for a fiercely contested election. Whether this strategic head start translates into electoral success will ultimately depend on voter sentiment, opposition mobilization, and the dynamics that unfold in the months ahead.

"Moving, rescuing people at night was challenging": SSB on air ambulance crash in Jharkhand

Staff Reporter, Chatra, 24 February: Following the tragic crash of a Redbird Airways air ambulance aircraft near Simaria on Monday, Ramesh Kumar, Second in Command of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), said all seven people on board, including two crew members, were killed.

Rescue teams faced severe challenges navigating the dense jungle and carrying the bodies over a two-kilometre stretch to the main road.

Speaking to ANI, Ramesh Kumar said, "We received information that a plane had crashed. This area is quite inland. There's no road at all for two kilometres. When we arrived here at night, we saw that no one was found alive. The bodies were retrieved...It was very difficult to retrieve the bodies. We had to carry them from here for two kilometres on one side. We only had one stretcher. We had brought a stretcher from the SSB with us at night, and with that, we carried out the rescue and retrieved the bodies. It was a two-kilometre stretch up to the main road."

"We retrieved all seven bodies. The plane crashed in the middle of the jungle...It's difficult for a person to walk alone here, and this is part of a deep interior forest with a lot of bushes. Moving and rescuing people at night was certainly challenging," Kumar said.

Meanwhile, the Council of Indian Aviation expressed deep concern and extended condolences over the incident.

In a press statement, the President of the Council of Indian Aviation, Dr Nitin Jadhav, on Monday, said, "The Council of Indian Aviation expresses its deepest concern and heartfelt condolences following the tragic crash of a Redbird Airways air ambulance aircraft near Simaria, in the state of, on 23 February 2026."

The statement further noted that the aircraft was operating a critical medical evacuation mission at the time of the accident.

"The aircraft, operated by, was on a critical medical evacuation mission from to, carrying a patient, medical personnel, attendants, and flight crew. Such missions represent the highest level of humanitarian aviation service, where every second is vital in saving lives," it said.

The Redbird Airways Pvt Ltd Beechcraft C90 aircraft VT-AJV was operating a medical evacuation flight from Ranchi to Delhi when it crashed in Kasariya Panchayat, Simariya block, around 7:30 pm.

The aircraft had taken off from Ranchi at 19:11 IST and lost communication and radar contact with Kolkata at approximately 100 NM South-East of Varanasi.

According to officials, a team from Delhi will arrive at the crash site later in the day to conduct a probe and retrieve the aircraft's black box.

Modi compromised, agreed to trade deal amid pressure from Trump: Rahul Gandhi



Staff Reporter, Bhopal, 24 February: Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, on Tuesday, trained guns at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the India-United States trade deal framework, calling him "compromised" and alleging pressure that the former is "under pressure". Addressing Congress' Kisan Mahachaupal in Bhopal, Gandhi challenged PM Modi to cancel the deal after the US Supreme Court ruled against Trump tariffs. Repeating the "sold India" allegations against the Prime Minister, he accused the Centre of providing the data of Indians to the US. Rahul Gandhi said, "The trade agreement with the United States was stalled for four months because it involved agriculture and agricultural products. The Indian government did not want American companies to sell their products here. India's farmers, farm workers, and even the government didn't want this. In my address, I was not just talking about (former Army Chief) Naravane ji. After I finished my address, without consulting his own cabinet ministers, PM Modi called Trump. He lied, pretended that Congress' woman MPs were about to attack, but instead called directly and said he was ready to do the deal. You can see in his eyes that PM Narendra Modi is compromised." "Other countries decided to abandon the deal after the US Supreme Court decision, but PM Modi stayed silent. I challenge Modi ji from this platform that when the US Supreme Court has given its verdict on the deal, then cancel the deal with America. He cannot cancel the deal due to pressure from Trump. India has the largest population and the largest amount of data. But PM Modi gave all our data to the US. If there were no pressure on PM Narendra Modi, he would not have done this. He sold India to save his image and political future," he added. Congress' criticism of the trade deal framework comes as India agreed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs), red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products. While, as per the deal, the United States was to levy a reciprocal tariff rate of 18 per cent, after the US court verdict, Trump announced a global tariff rate of 15 per cent. Gandhi had also recalled his address in the Parliament during the Budget Session, alleging that the Centre is not letting him speak in the Lok Sabha. Reinvoking ex-Army Chief General MM Naravane's unpublished memoir, the Congress MP said that PM Modi "disappeared" when the army required him to make a decision amid the standoff against China in 2020. Rahul Gandhi said, "After the President's address in Parliament, the first speaker in the Lok Sabha is always the Leader of Opposition (LoP). But, for the first time in the history of India, the Leader of the Opposition was not allowed to speak in the Lok Sabha. I was interrupted as soon as I began my address." "Naravane ji wrote in his book that Chinese tanks were advancing towards the Indian border. When Naravane ji called Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on the phone and asked for orders, he received no response. Naravane ji also called NSA Ajit Doval and Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, but got no reply. After two hours, Naravane ji called Rajnath Singh again, requested orders once more, because the decision to fire against the Chinese army was to be taken by the Prime Minister. An Army Chief cannot make a decision on war, as it is a political decision," he added. Citing General Naravane, he accused the Centre of leaving the army "alone." "Rajnath Singh spoke to PM Modi.



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, second right, during a ceremony to lay foundation stones for development projects in the Mundka Assembly constituency, in New Delhi.

Court sends IYC Chief Uday Bhanu Chib for 4-day custody in AI Summit protest case; police say Chib "mastermind of protest"

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: The Patiala House Court on Tuesday granted four-day custody of the Indian Youth Congress President, Uday Bhanu Chib, to the Delhi Police in connection with the AI Summit Protest case. The police said that Chib was the mastermind of the protest carried out by the four co-accused, who are also in police custody. This case involves national security, sovereignty and the integrity of the country. The police had earlier sought seven days' custody of the IYC President. Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC) granted the four-day custody after hearing the submissions of Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) and counsel for the accused Chib. "In view of the above discussion, the application of the IO is partly allowed. The accused Uday Bhanu Chib is remanded to police custody for a period of four (4) days commencing from today till 28.02.2026 (inclusive). On expiry of the said period, the IO shall produce the accused before the concerned court or the concerned Duty Magistrate, along with a detailed remand report," JMFC Ravi ordered. The court said that in the facts of the present case, considering the nature of offences alleged and the request for police custody, it would be appropriate to expressly record the right of the accused to meet his counsel during interrogation without hampering the legitimate needs of investigation. While seeking the remand, Delhi police said that Chib was the person who hatched the conspiracy. APP Atul Shrivastav submitted that Chib provided the logistics to protestors and that he was to be interrogated to identify other accused at Jammu, Amethi and



other places. Senior advocate Sanjoy Ghosh and advocates Subhash Gulati and Rupesh Singh Bhadauria appeared for the IYC President. While opposing the remand prayer, Ghosh said that he was not on the run and was still in Delhi. Ghosh added that the police, who are recovering the T-Shirts, have made the entire system a laughing stock. "This kind of action brings national shame," Ghosh said. Accused persons went there without arms, even without lathis and calling the protest riot-like is totally wrong, Ghosh added. "In a city where people are being murdered, the police are to recover the T-shirt. This is really a downfall," the senior advocate argued. Gulati noted that the custody should not be granted in a mechanical manner and that Chib joined the investigation twice, not evading the police. Police have interrogated Chib for two days now about what they want to know from him. "Chib doesn't know where the T-shirts were printed," counsel said. "If they want to know the name, police can ask the same without taking him into custody," the counsel added. In rebuttal arguments, Delhi Police said that it is a case of unlawful assembly and criminal conspiracy. "The accused is the person who directed other accused persons as they were in contact with him," the police said. Police argued that it is not a case of T-shirts but a case of conspiracy. "T-Shirts were printed in bulk. T-Shirts were to be worn by other people," the police said, adding that there was a common intention behind the protest. Police also said that Chib is the mastermind, and others were provided logistics, maybe funds. When asked by the court why seven days' custody was required, the Delhi Police said that the other accused are in Jammu, Amethi, and Himachal; therefore, the remand is required.

Haryana CM Saini confirms recovery of Rs 578 cr bank Fraud within 24 hours



Staff Reporter, Chandigarh, 24 February: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday confirmed that the Rs 578 crore lost in a fraud at IDFC First Bank, including funds of state departments and boards, was fully recovered within 24 hours, with Rs 556 crore deposited and Rs 22 crore interest returned. He added that a high-level committee will investigate and recommend measures to prevent future incidents. Speaking at the Assembly, CM Saini said,"I want to clarify before this House that the entire amount lost in yesterday's incident, including the funds of some Haryana government departments and boards and corporations, has been deposited back into our accounts within just 24 hours. Speaker, approximately Rs 556 crore was deposited by the bank, of which we also received interest of approximately Rs 22 crore. The interest has also been returned. We have deposited that amount and recovered all of that money within just 24 hours...Four or five middle and lower-level employees of a bank branch in Chandigarh colluded to carry out this operation." He further stated that strict action will be taken against any government official or employee found involved in the matter. "Strict action will be taken against any government official or employee involved in it... We would form a high-level committee that would not only hold the officers and employees involved in this matter accountable but would also make suggestions to prevent future situations like the one that has arisen today," CM Saini added. IDFC FIRST Bank has suspended four employees after it discovered fraudulent activity involving approximately Rs 590 crore in certain Haryana government accounts at its Chandigarh branch, the bank said in its official stock exchange filing. The bank has launched an investigation and plans to recover the funds through legal and disciplinary action. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra has said the Rs 590 crore fraud reported at one of the IDFC First Bank branches is not a systemic kind of issue, and the central bank is watching the developments. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday flagged off the 'NaMo Yuva Run' in Kurukshetra and lauded the initiative, calling it a "significant step" towards a bright future. Addressing the gathering, CM Saini called it a run for the nation's development, reiterating Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a Viksit Bharat (developed India). He said, "It is a matter of pride that youth are participating in thousands in NaMo Yuva Run in Kurukshetra. The youth's energy, which signifies national building and this initiative is a significant step towards a bright future.

Shashi Tharoor praises unveiling of C Rajagopalachari statue at Rashtrapati Bhavan

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Tuesday welcomed the unveiling of a statue of C Rajagopalachari at Rashtrapati Bhavan. He expressed pleasure at honouring Rajaji, the only Indian Governor-General, and reiterated admiration for his liberal economics, free enterprise, social justice and constitutional freedoms without communal bigotry. In a post on X, Tharoor wrote, "I'm truly pleased to see Rajaji honoured by a statue at Rashtrapati Bhavan. He was the first Indian occupant as the only Indian Governor-General of India, before we became a Republic, and he yielded his seat to the new President. I have long admired his convictions and was a strong supporter of his Swatantra Party in my student days. His set of values and principles, liberal economics and support for free enterprise, combined with social justice, strong anchoring in Indian civilisation and religious faith but without a shred of communal bigotry, and a staunch faith in the rights& freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, including keeping the government out of our kitchens, bedrooms and libraries, remain mine to this day. It is sad that there are so few left to follow him today."

The Congress MP's endorsement drew a response from BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla, who welcomed Tharoor's remarks but criticised sections of the opposition for allegedly prioritising colonial-era figures over Indian icons. In a post on X, a BJP spokesperson wrote, "Congress and INDI split over Lutyens' bust has been replaced with Rajaji's Bust. One more step to rid ourselves of colonial baggage, but CONGRESS, ILTIJI MUFTI, UDDHAV SENA OPPOSE IT Now, Shashi Tharoor has welcomed the move Sad that some in Congress put Lutyens above Rajaji Videshi above Swadeshi Colonial above Bharatiya." Earlier, UBT Sena MP was critical in her view of the replacement of the bust of architecht Edward Lutyens, "The future generation of India would only know of Bimal Hasmukh Patel architectural legacy because am certain whatever is left of Lutyens design history will be broken down, redesigned or repurposed under the narrative of ridding ourselves of our colonial history. Many countries preserve the heritage and legacy of their nation's lived history for generations to remember - the good, the bad and the ugly included to learn from but in new India we are hell bent on replacing it with shiny new glass domes or convention centres- with no soul or cultural context." On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the unveiling of the bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji, at the historic central courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan is a moment of pride for the people of India. In his message, the Prime Minister said the bust was unveiled by President Droupadi Murmu and described the occasion, along with the celebration of 'Rajaji Utsav', as a tribute to one of India's important nation-builders.

"The unveiling of the bust of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari Ji, widely known as Rajaji, at the historic central courtyard of Rashtrapati Bhavan by the Honourable President is a moment of pride for the people of India. This occasion and the celebration of 'Rajaji Utsav' honour the memory of one of India's important nation-builders.

Kerala Assembly passes Nativity card bill amid opposition walkout

Staff Reporter, Thiruvananthapuram, 24 February: The Kerala government on Tuesday passed the Nativity Card Bill in the Legislative Assembly, even as the Congress-led Opposition protested and staged a walkout from the House. The government said the new legislation will allow people to officially and proudly identify themselves as Keralites through a state-issued nativity card. Finance Minister K. N. Balagopal described the passage of the Bill as a "historic moment", asserting that it aims to safeguard minority communities. He criticised the Congress-led UDF for staying away from the proceedings, claiming they intended to create controversy rather than engage in the legislative process. Alongside the Nativity Card Bill, the Assembly also cleared the Abkari (Amendment) Bill, 2026; the Kerala Advocates' Clerks Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2026; and the Kerala Advocates' Welfare Fund (Amendment) Bill, 2026. Subject committee reports listed for the day were also taken up, and proposed amendments were accepted. All Bills were passed without discussion due to the Opposition's absence. The UDF had boycotted Tuesday's session over the ongoing row surrounding the Sabarimala gold loss case, during which the Nativity Card Bill was introduced in the absence of Opposition legislators. The Nativity Card Bill gives legal backing to the state government's decision, approved in December 2025, to introduce a permanent, photo-embedded nativity card. The aim is to ensure that no individual faces difficulties in proving their Kerala origin or residence for official or administrative purposes. Introducing the Bill on Monday, Revenue Minister



K. Rajan said the legislation comes against the backdrop of the Centre implementing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act "unilaterally". He stated that the card would allow any Keralite, irrespective of where they currently live, to assert their Malayali identity with dignity. The government clarified that the nativity card will follow the same criteria as the existing nativity certificate. A "native of Kerala" includes individuals born in the state, those with at least one ancestor born in Kerala, or those born outside the state while their parents were working elsewhere--provided they have not acquired foreign citizenship. Last month, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan reiterated that the initiative ensures no person has to struggle to prove their identity or place of residence. The announcement, however, drew criticism from the Bharatiya Janata Party, which termed the initiative "dangerous separatist politics". Chaotic scenes marked the proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly session on Monday. Opposition MLAs protested vociferously on the investigation into the Sabarimala Gold Theft case. Opposition members held placards in the House calling for the resignation of the Devaswom Minister V. N. Vasavan alleging that the state government has failed to ensure a proper investigation. Even as the opposition protested, Law Minister P Rajeev stood up in the house and said that the High Court was supervising the Special Investigation Team (SIT) investigation into the Sabarimala gold theft case, adding that the government does not need to express an opinion on the Kollam Court's bail order for the Tantri. Speaking on the bail granted to the Sabarimala Tantri, Rajeev said, "The High Court is supervising the SIT investigation. The Government does not need to express an opinion.The Kollam Court verdict was like a final judgment. The nature of the order was like a Supreme Court verdict. There is an abnormality in the order that granted bail to the Tantri." The Minister of Law said that the Bench of the High Court had specifically observed that the probe into the Gold theft case was moving in the right direction.

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When Team India overcame dire situations to qualify for next round at T20 World Cups



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: Following their heavy defeat to South Africa in the first Super 8 clash at the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup, the Indian cricket team find themselves backed into a corner. They now need to win both their games, against Zimbabwe and the West Indies to qualify for the semis. After the Super-8 defeat to South Africa, the Indian think tank (and their fans) will keep one eye on the permutations and combinations.

The pathetic batting display on Sunday left Sunil Gavaskar disappointed as South Africa snapped India's 12-match unbeaten streak in the T20 World Cup, handing the defending champions a 76-run defeat. The former captain said India needed to take a cue from South Africa's innings and adapt to the conditions.

"Having seen how (Dewald) Brevis and (David) Miller build their partnership, that was the approach needed from India," Gavaskar said on JioStar. "The Indian batters did not do that. They came out with overconfidence, threw their bat at everything and lost wickets. South Africa clearly outsmarted India and it was a well-deserved win for them."

After losing three early wickets, Miller and Brevis stitched a match-winning 97-run partnership. India, in contrast, were bowled out for 111 in 18.5 overs. "India did not take notes from South Africa's innings. They came out and threw their bat at every delivery hoping for a boundary. That is not how you play T20 cricket."You have to learn from the opposition. If they have scored well on a tricky surface like this, you have to get rid of your ego, observe and adjust."

India lost their top three — Ishan Kishan (0), Abhishek Sharma (15) and Tilak Varma (1) — inside the Powerplay to slip to 26/3."Tilak Varma has been a very street-smart batter. But I was disappointed with his approach in this game... The required run rate was around 9.5 per over, not 15.

"So, Tilak could have given himself more time... So, the responsibility was on Tilak to stick around, build a partnership, and get past the first six overs, but he failed to do that. "You don't always need to score 70 runs in the Powerplay.... But the reckless approach of the Indian batters led to their downfall..."

India are beatable, David Miller, the hero of South Africa's huge 76-run win in Ahmedabad on Sunday, said with firmness in his voice at the post-match news conference.In sport, invincibility isn't permanent at all. That way, no matter how strong India's performances have been in the shortest format since winning the T20 World Cup in 2024, they are bound to slip in a game or two.But there is a line between slipping in an odd game and being hammered by a formidable opposition after getting away with repeated errors against weaker opponents. That's been the Team India story so far in this T20 World Cup.

Right from their tournament opener against USA, India's batting has had a somewhat tough time. One blinder of a knock and the overall poor standard of the opponents in their group saved India the blushes. Against a strong South African side, though, the chinks in India's armoury were exposed on Sunday, their first Super Eight match.

Women's T20 World Cup: Bangladesh face Netherlands in opener, England vs Scotland at Headingley



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: Bangladesh and Netherlands have slotted into Group 1 with Australia, India, Pakistan and South Africa, while Ireland and Scotland have joined hosts England, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and West Indies in Group 2 at the 2026 women's T20 World Cup in June and July this year. Among the early highlights is England's meeting with Scotland at Headingley on June 20, the first time the two teams will meet at a World Cup, men's or women's, on English soil. Ireland and Scotland will also meet in an all-Celtic contest at Old Trafford on June 13. Bangladesh begin their campaign against Netherlands - who are making their tournament debut - on June 14 at Edgbaston and then face Australia at Headingley on June 17, and India on June 25 at Old Trafford. The tournament will run from June 12 to July 5 across venues in England and Wales."Qualifying for our first-ever ICC Women's T20 World Cup fills us with an incredible sense of pride and excitement," Netherlands captain Babbette De Leede said. "It feels extra special because, in many ways, it's almost a 'home' World Cup for us. We're hoping to see a sea of orange in the stands with our families, friends, fans and everyone who has supported Dutch women's cricket over the years."Stepping onto that stage for the very first time will be a milestone for the women's cricket in the Netherlands, and we hope it inspires young Dutch players to dream big and believe that they, too, can one day represent a successful national team."The ICC had released the fixtures earlier, pending confirmation of the remaining teams, whose positions are now finalised after Bangladesh, Ireland, Netherlands and Scotland secured the final four spots through the qualifier in Nepal to complete the 12-team field. The opening match will be played between England and Sri Lanka at Edgbaston on June 12. In a rematch of last edition's semi-final, New Zealand begin their title defence against West Indies in Southampton on June 13 while Australia will meet 2024 finalists South Africa on the same day in Manchester. India face Pakistan at Edgbaston on June 14.The Australia vs India fixture at Lord's will be the final group-stage match of the competition.The top two teams from each group will progress to the semi-finals, to be held on June 30 and July 2. The winners will meet for the title clash at Lord's on July 5. Hosts England and the top five teams from the 2024 edition (Australia, India, New Zealand, South Africa and West Indies) qualified automatically for the edition.

Du Plessis: 'The real test' for Motie and Hosein will come against South Africa & India



Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: If you score 254 in a T20 game, even if it's at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, you can go into the break feeling fairly confident. But West Indies still needed to bowl their overs and bowl them well against a spirited Zimbabwe side in their T20 World Cup game on Monday night, and found Akeal Hosein and Gudakesh Motie, their spin frontmen, in just the right kind of form.Hosein, as expected, bowled in the powerplay, and had 3-1-21-2 by the end of it. The maiden, the third over of the Zimbabwe innings, included the wickets of Brian Bennett and Ryan Burl, and two dots to Sikandar Raza. He finished with 3 for 28. Motie came on after the powerplay, got the wicket of Dion Myers in his first over, bowled his quota of overs on the trot, and finished with 4 for 28, having added the wickets of Raza and Tashinga Musekiwa off back-to-back balls in the 11th over and that of Tony Munyonga in the 13th, also a maiden. "I think tactically they were smart. Akeal Hosein, throwing the ball to him for someone like Bennett, not having seen him before, and that was an absolute beauty," Faf du Plessis said on ESPNcricinfo's TimeOut programme after the game. The delivery to Bennett was indeed a ripper. Flighted up from around the wicket by the left-arm spinner, it landed on middle stump and spun (and bounced) right past Bennett's attempted hoick to the leg side to hit the top of off stump."You normally don't associate him beating the bat on the outside. He normally beats you on the inside quite often," du Plessis elaborated. "So when a ball spins and bounces like that, it shows you it's a quality ball. The way he started the innings... they are two very different spinners. One is a powerplay... almost like a [Samuel] Badree, brilliant in the powerplay, and Motie comes in after six and he just shuts the game down."That flight is something one does associate with Motie, who is a bit more classical than Hosein, a very powerplay kind of bowler. It was that, du Plessis said, and the pace at which the two bowled - slightly slower than usual - that did the trick for them on a red-soil pitch where the ball gripped a little bit. Motie's own moment to remember came against Raza. Flat and on a length from around the wicket, the left-arm spinner got the ball to grip and turn viciously from middle stump to hit off stump, beating Raza's outside edge and leaving him imbalanced. "I am not sure the wicket changed much from the first to the second innings. But just looking at the pace that Akeal Hosein was bowling at, and Motie, there was a little bit of... just above the eyeline for the ball to have time to spin, and you look at someone like Sikandar Raza, he bowled very, very quickly, trying to bowl defensive," du Plessis said. Hosein and Motie combined for 7 for 56 from their eight overs. Raza returned 3-0-52-0. That, to be fair, is also a reflection of the batting power of the two line-ups - Shimron Hetmyer smashed 85 in 34 balls, Rovman Powell 59 in 35 balls, and Sherfane Rutherford 31 not out in 13. Graeme Cremer, a more pedigreed spinner than Raza, was Zimbabwe's only bowler to go at under ten runs an over, returning 1 for 38 from his four.But bowling against Zimbabwe, despite their success at the T20 World Cup so far, especially after burying them under 254, could be vastly different to bowling against South Africa and India, who West Indies play next in the Super Eight."I saw them in South Africa. And I have played a lot of cricket with and against both of them. Amazing spinners. If there's a little bit of something in the wicket, both of them [will exploit it]," du Plessis said.

Harmanpreet stays off the field after picking up knee injury

Staff Reporter, New Delhi, 24 February: Harmanpreet Kaur has picked up an injury and couldn't go out to field during India's defence of their 214 against Australia in the first ODI at Brisbane's Allan Border Field on Tuesday.A BCCI media statement after India's innings, where Harmanpreet scored a half-century, said she had "sustaining an injury to her left knee while batting" and the medical team "is monitoring her progress". Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana led India in Harmanpreet's absence.

It was not clear when Harmanpreet picked up the injury, but she did receive some on-field treatment at the end of the 38th over of India's innings, when she was on 40 from 67 balls. She continued till the 44th over before falling for 53 off 84 balls, having put up a 53-run stand in 61 balls with Kashvee Gautam, who scored 43 in 44 balls before becoming the last batter out.Harmanpreet hit three fours in her innings, which was almost entirely about rebuilding after India had collapsed to 140 for 6 in the 34th over despite Mandhana's 58 off 68 balls from the top.

Australia, who lost the preceding T20I series 2-1, are without two key players for the entire ODI series: Ellyse Perry and Kim Garth both picked up quad injuries in the last T20I and are now in a race to be fit for the one-off Test match that will be played after the ODIs. Megan Schutt, who was not part of the original ODI squad, came into the XI and played her part in restricting India to a low total, returning 2 for 42 from her nine overs.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has provided an update on Harmanpreet Kaur after the Indian skipper sustained a blow to her left knee while batting against Australia in the first innings of the ODI series opener at the Allan Border Field on Tuesday. "Captain Harmanpreet Kaur has not taken the field in the second innings after sustaining an injury to her left knee while batting. The BCCI Medical Team is monitoring her progress. Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is leading the side in her absence," the BCCI said in a statement.

Harmanpreet played a crucial yet sluggish knock, scoring 53 runs off 84 deliveries before being dismissed by Ashleigh Gardner. During her time on the field, the Indian World Cup-winning captain sustained a blow to her knee while facing Megan Schutt but showed resilience and continued batting.However, she did not return to the field for the second innings, with Mandhana coming in her place.

Speaking of the first innings, Australia's disciplined, well-rounded bowling kept India under constant pressure throughout. Despite opting to bat first under cloudy conditions, India were quickly rocked by Australia's new-ball attack, which exploited the seam and swing on offer. Smriti Mandhana battled through a shaky start, finding her rhythm before forming a brief partnership with captain Kaur.

However, Australia struck at key moments, reducing India to 140/6. A brief revival through a 53-run stand between Kaur and Kashvee Gautam raised hopes, but Kaur's dismissal shifted the momentum back to Australia. Gautam's fight with the tail lacked effective support.



Jammu and Kashmir's Shubham Pundir plays a shot during the first day of the Ranji Trophy 2025-26 final cricket match between Karnataka and Jammu & Kashmir, at KSCA Cricket Stadium, in Hubballi, Karnataka, Tuesday.

Thapa thrives, Maclaren and Petratos score in Bagan win over Chennaiyin FC

Staff Reporter, Kolkata, 24 February: Mohun Bagan Super Giant saw off Chennaiyin FC's challenge to emerge victorious in their second ISL-12 match at the Salt Lake Stadium on Monday.The 2-0 margin — Jamie Maclaren scored in the injury time of the first half and Dimitri Petratos got the insurance goal in the 65th minute — could have been bigger, but Bagan coach Sergio Lobera will not be complaining.It's not easy to score against a team that had parked the bus in front of the goal. Two matches, two wins: Bagan should be in a happy space.Anirudh Thapa, in his third season at Bagan, stole the show with his tireless work and accurate passing. In his first season (2023-24), the 28-year-old Thapa was used as No.6 by the then coach Juan Ferrando.

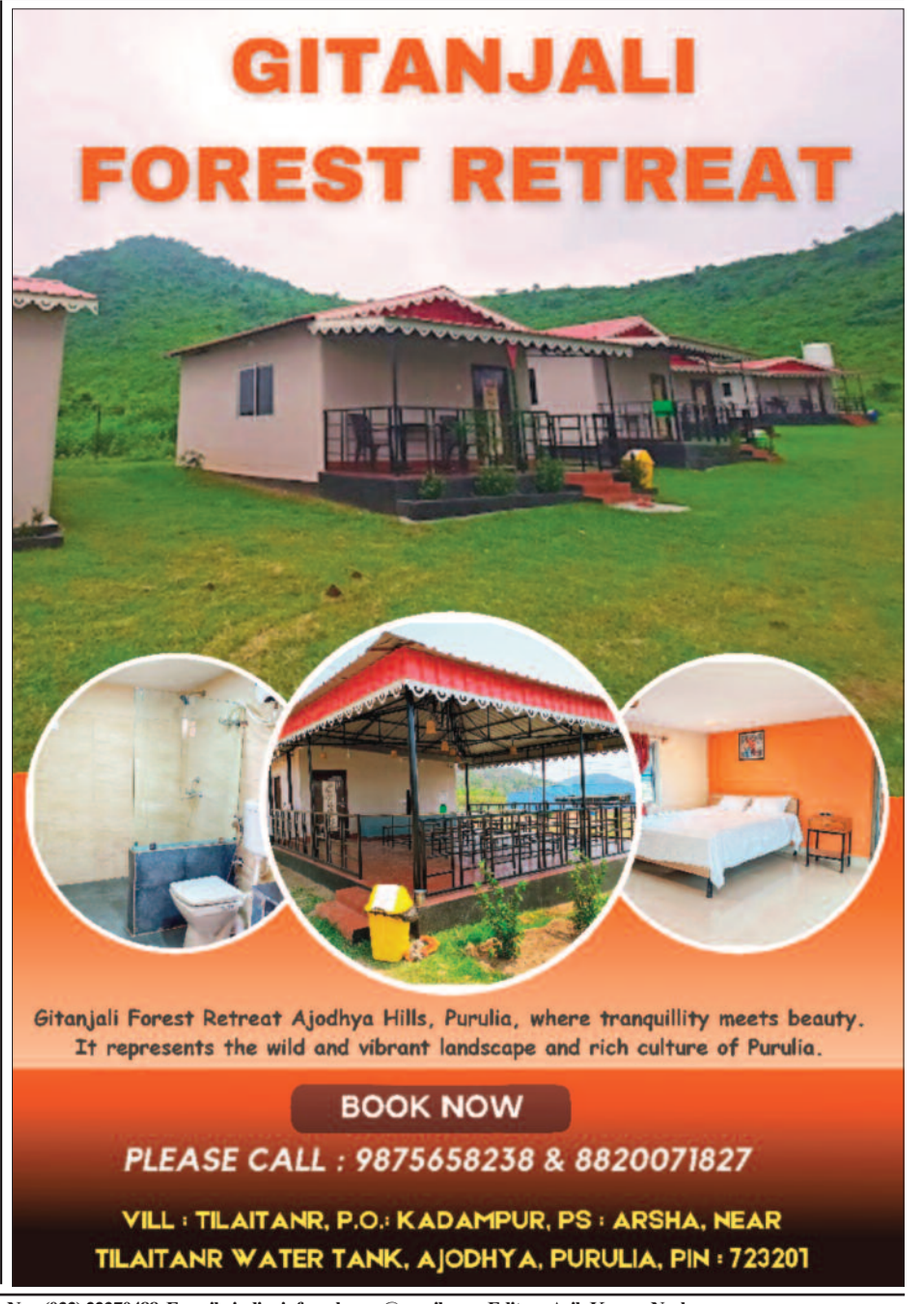
After the Spanish coach was replaced by compatriot Jose Molina, there was a thought that Thapa may get back to his usual No. 8 position. That did not happen. A lengthy injury lay-off last season also did not help his cause.New coach Lobera has been smart enough to allow Thapa to operate from a much more advanced position.In the first match, Thapa was impressive and on Monday he was brilliant. He linked up well with Lalengmawia 'Apuia' Ralte and Petratos and Chennaiyin FC found Thapa too hot to handle.As the opening half was drawing to a close and Bagan were still searching for their first goal, Thapa won back a ball in his own half. He turned and sent a defence-splitting pass for Maclaren.

The Australian kept his composure and slotted the ball past an onrushing Samik Mitra — brought in after regular goalkeeper Mohammad Nawaz had to be taken off following a collision with Bagan defender Mehtab Singh — to get his second goal in as many matches.Maclaren showed alacrity, but Thapa's assist was excellent. Bagan will hope he stays fit till May.The second goal came five minutes after the hour mark, and the build-up and execution were perfect — from Petratos on the right to Apuia to Liston to Subhasish Bose on the left. A prompt delivery by the Bagan captain and Petratos was at the right place to head it home. Petratos was adjudged Man of the Match, an award that Thapa should have won hands down.



East Bengal have already recorded two wins in as many matches in ISL-12. Mohun Bagan Super Giant will look to do the same when they face Chennaiyin FC at the Salt Lake Stadium on Monday. In the build-up to the much-delayed and truncated league, it was being said that the 2025-26 edition would be a two-horse race between Indian football's eternal rivals.That's because most of the other 12 teams in the fray have not built a competitive team, unlike in past seasons, and have not prepared enough. These are the early days, but East Bengal on Saturday already showed promise that this time they are good enough to go the distance. Bagan, last season's ISL Shield and Cup winners, have always been in the mix and this edition will be no different.

When most of the teams — barring their arch-rivals East Bengal — were looking for avenues to curtail cost and suspended first-team practice, Bagan were going full throttle with training sessions. Their opponents in the inaugural match — Kerala Blasters — came for the February 14 clash with barely two weeks of preparations.



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