









# NHRC seeks report on three deaths in Kolkata manhole

The National Human Rights Commission has stated that if the contents of media reports about the incident are true, they raise a significant issue of human rights violation for the victims

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report on the death of three construction workers in a manhole at Kolkata Leather Complex earlier this month and sought a report from the West Bengal government, an official said on Friday.

The Commission has issued notices to the state's Chief Secretary and Commissioner of Police, West Bengal, calling for a detailed report on the matter within two weeks. It is expected to include the status of the investigation.

The deaths occurred after the victims inhaled toxic gases during repairs in a 10-foot-



deep manhole on 2 February.

According to the media report, carried on 3 February, the victims were deployed by a contractor to renovate a portion of a drainage network under the Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority (KMDA).

The Commission has observed that the contents, if true, raise a serious issue of violation of the human rights of the victims, said a statement.



use of work-friendly and technology-based robotic machines.

It issued an advisory on 24 September, 2021, for the Protection of Human Rights of the Persons Engaged in Hazardous Cleaning to the Union, State Governments and local authorities with an object to ensure complete eradication of such practice.

In a separate case, the NHRC took suo motu cognisance of a media report that about 38 students of a government-run school, fell ill after inhaling poisonous gas emitting from a nearby cement factory in Baloda Bazar district, Chhattisgarh on 22 January, 2025.

According to the media report, the students complained of nausea, vomiting and uneasiness and they started fainting. The NHRC issued notices to the Chief Secretary, Government of Chhattisgarh, calling for a detailed report on the matter within four weeks.

## Viral video: Health dept seeks report from CMOH

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

The state health department today sought a report from Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) of Nadia district today in connection with misbehaviour of a doctor with a child's father.

Sources at the state health department claimed that Nabanna was upset with the reports that the father of a patient at Santipur State General Hospital had to clean the floor, and asked the state health secretary to seek a report from the CMOH, Nadia with immediate effect. On Friday, there was a commotion at the Santipur State General Hospital, where a doctor had reportedly asked the father of a five-year old child to clean the floor allegedly after his child vomited following administering of an injection. The incident's video went viral.

## SPECIAL BOND



School teacher Indrani Ganguly and members of her cultural organisation hand over roses and mementos to police personnel on the occasion of Valentine's Day, Friday. ■ SNS

## Bengal school job scam: Accused Sujay Bhadra approaches Calcutta HC with bail petition

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

Sujay Krishna Bhadra, a prime accused in the multi-crore cash-for-school-job case in West Bengal on Friday filed a bail petition at a division Bench of the Calcutta High Court in connection with the case registered by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the matter.

Bhadra has filed the bail petition on health grounds. Although recently granted bail in the case filed by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in the school-job case, Bhadra could not come out of the bars because CBI, which is running a parallel probe in the matter, has shown him as arrested.

The division Bench headed by Justice Arijit Banerjee has admitted the petition and asked CBI to submit the medical report of Bhadra by February 18, which will be the next date of hearing in the matter.



On 11 February, after three consecutive failures, the CBI had been able to get the voice samples of Bhadra.

On Friday, the CBI also got permission from the special court in Kolkata to collect the voice samples of another accused in the case Kuntal Ghosh, in light fresh evidence secured by the investigating officials in the matter.

Earlier, the ED sleuths too have collected the voice samples of Bhadra. The trial process in the ED-registered case at a special court of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Kolkata

has already started this month.

Heavyweight individuals named as accused are the former West Bengal education minister and Trinamul Congress secretary general Partha Chatterjee, his close aide Arpita Mukherjee, and his son-in-law Kalyanmoy Bhattacharya among others.

Babli Chatterjee Memorial Trust, a trust named after Chatterjee's deceased wife is also named in the ED chargesheet as an accused entity. It is alleged that the ill-proceeds were shown as donations to this particular trust and thus diverted.

## Bengal school job case: CBI gets court nod for collecting Kuntal Ghosh's voice samples

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), on Friday, received the permission of a special court in Kolkata to collect the voice samples of Kuntal Ghosh, another accused in the cash-for-school job case in West Bengal.

On 11 February, after three failed attempts, the CBI finally collected the voice samples of the prime accused in the case, Sujay Krishna Bhadra.

The CBI counsel, on Friday, informed the special court that the collection of voice samples of Kuntal Ghosh has become necessary following the sourcing of new evidence by the investigating officials.

Satisfied with the arguments of the CBI counsel, the judge of the special court permitted the Central agency to collect Ghosh's

voice samples. February 18 has been fixed by the court for the collection of the voice samples.

Ghosh is currently out on bail. He was arrested a couple of years back by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), which is conducting a parallel probe in the school job case. Later CBI too had shown him as arrested in connection with the school job case.

The main charge against Ghosh is that he was responsible for collecting several crores of rupees from different job-seekers who paid money to get jobs in state-run schools in West Bengal.

Another charge against him was the creation of a fake website showing unsuccessful candidates in teachers' eligibility test (TET) examinations as successful ones.

The trial process in the ED-registered case at a special

court of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in Kolkata has already started this month. There are a total of 53 accused - 29 individuals and 24 corporate entities or trusts - as mentioned in the subsequent charge sheets filed by ED in the matter.

Heavyweight individuals named as accused are the former West Bengal Education Minister and Trinamool Congress secretary general Partha Chatterjee, his close aide Arpita Mukherjee, and his son-in-law Kalyanmoy Bhattacharya among others.

Babli Chatterjee Memorial Trust, a trust named after Chatterjee's deceased wife, is also named in the ED charge sheet as an accused entity. It is alleged that the ill-proceeds were shown as donations to this particular trust and thus diverted.



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
HOOGHLY, 14 FEBRUARY

The senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader Dilip Ghosh today visited Triveni Kumbh Mela. He was highly impressed to know that more than a lakh took the holy dip on auspicious Maghi Purnima day and the state government has tried its best to hold the Triveni Kumbh mela smoothly.

The senior BJP leader, answering to the Media, said the allotment of funds by the state government on development issues is insufficient. The central government is all set to provide the

necessary funds but the state government lags behind with its share of funds against the fund provided by the central government for the completion of development projects.

The state government has allotted only 1,400 crore for industrial growth, which is insufficient for setting up of large-scale industries, capable of providing massive job opportunities. Maximum allotment of funds is for madrasas, while the allotment of funds for state-run schools is insufficient. Appeasement and vote bank politics is the guiding theme of the entire state Budget, said Mr Ghosh.

## Trinamul biggest beneficiary of binary politics: CPM report on Bengal

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

The CPM, in its internal party document, has identified Trinamul Congress as the biggest beneficiary of binary polarisation of politics in West Bengal.

In the document, which had done an analysis of the party's election strategy, the CPM's central leadership had stressed that the party comrades at all levels should pay more attention to counter BJP both "politically" and "ideologically".

"In West Bengal, the party has been fighting both the Trinamul Congress and BJP for the past decade. While doing so, the party at all levels must pay more attention to counter the BJP politically and ideologically. This is important since a large section of secular-minded people see the TMC as an effective counter to the BJP because of the binary politics that has revolved," the party's internal



document read.

However, a section of the state leadership of the party in West Bengal, feels that identifying Trinamul Congress as the biggest beneficiary in this binary polarisation in state politics is a somewhat oversimplified formula.

"While it is true that a section of the secular-minded people in the state have accepted Trinamul Congress as an effective counter to the BJP, at the same time, a large section of anti-TMC voters are now accepting BJP as an effective counter to the state's ruling party. In such a situation, in West Bengal perspective,

what is required is a balanced campaign strategy as regards opposing Trinamul Congress and BJP in the state simultaneously," said a state committee member of the CPM who refused to be named.

In fact, the trend in binary polarisation in West Bengal politics was first evident in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, where BJP turned out to be the biggest beneficiary increasing their winning tally in the state to 18 from just two in 2014.

However, in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections, while the trend of binary polarisation continued, it was the Trinamul Congress who became the beneficiary of that. The same trend continued in the 2024 Lok Sabha with the state ruling party again being the biggest beneficiary.

In all three elections the CPM-led Left Front ended scoring ducks.

Earlier this month CPM released its draft political res-

olution for the forthcoming 24th party Congress scheduled in April this year at Madurai in Tamil Nadu, where the leadership had stressed more on independent political lines in the coming days rather than on electoral understanding.

"The party should pay more attention to the independent political campaign and mass mobilization around the political platform of the party. There should be no blurring of our independent identity or diminishing of our independent activities in the name of electoral understanding or alliances," read the draft political resolution, a copy of which is available with agencies.

As regards maintaining the independent line, the draft resolution had cautiously touched upon the two states of Tripura and West Bengal, where the CPM-led Left Front had electoral understanding and seat-sharing arrangements in the past elections.

## MD, MS students must undergo 3-month residential rotation: NMC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has directed that all postgraduate medical students doing MD/MS courses in broad specialties must have to complete a mandatory three-month-long district residency programme (DRP) on rotation in district hospitals or the district health system.

As per Section 5.2(V) of PGMER-2023, this programme aims to enhance their clinical and managerial skills while contributing their services in the public health system.

The NMC has also reiterated that PG medical students undergoing the training programme should primarily be accommodated within their respective states or Union Territories (UTs).

The commission has issued guidelines in this regard to all medical colleges and health authorities in respective states and UTs across the country.



The inter-state posting of the MD/MS students should be rare and would require prior approval of the Postgraduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB) of the NMC, sole regulatory authority monitoring medical education in the country.

"If any state feels such a requirement, prior approval of the Postgraduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB) of NMC must be obtained before proceeding further,"

the directive stated. It also flagged concerns over No Objection Certificates (NOCs) being issued without fulfilling the prescribed norms.

In its guidelines, the NMC has clarified that the inter-state posting for this purpose should be 'rare and only in extraordinary circumstances,' emphasising strict adherence to the PG medical education regulations of 2023.

The NMC clarified that postgraduate students in

non-clinical specialties, where direct patient care is not involved, will be trained in coordination with the district health officer or chief medical officer.

Their roles may include diagnostics, laboratory services, pharmacy, forensic services, general clinical duties, managerial responsibilities, and public health program implementation. Additionally, they may be posted in research units, laboratories, or field sites of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and other national research organisations.

It also flagged concerns over no objection certificates (NOCs) being issued by deans/ principals and directorates of medical education without fulfilling the prescribed norms. Authorities have been instructed to strictly follow the approved procedure to ensure compliance with PGMER-2023 regulations.

## Aviation ministry pushes for better air links to Europe, Asia from city

RAJIB CHAKRABORTY  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

The ministry of civil aviation has prioritised Kolkata airport in a major push to enhance international air connectivity, facilitating better access to Europe and Asia. Several international carriers, including Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Lufthansa, British Airways, and Air India, are set to join operations, further expanding Kolkata's reach as a global travel hub, sources said.

Union minister of civil aviation, Rammohan Naidu Kinjarapu, has recognised Kolkata's strategic importance and directed focused efforts to improve its connectivity. In line with this, the ministry has instructed Kolkata airport



officials and technical personnel to attend a two-day workshop in Delhi to discuss expansion plans and operational improvements from Kolkata. Currently, Kolkata has limited direct flight connections to Europe, requiring travellers to rely on connecting flights via major hubs such as Istanbul, Dubai, Bangkok, or Singapore. While Kolkata enjoys strong connectivity with southeast Asian nations, the government is

actively working to establish direct links to European destinations.

A senior official from the civil aviation ministry stated: "The Indian government is committed to transforming city airport into a key hub for flights to both Europe and southeast Asia. Addressing challenges such as airline interest and infrastructure limitations is a priority in this endeavour." As part of this

initiative, major international airlines, including Emirates, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Lufthansa, British Airways, and Air India, are expected to expand their operations through their respective hubs, ensuring improved connectivity to global destinations.

This expansion aligns with the 100-year celebration of Kolkata airport, underscoring its historical significance and future potential. Given its geographical advantage, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International (NSCB) Airport is poised to play a crucial role in India's aviation growth strategy, particularly in strengthening connections with Europe and Asia. With the implementation of this initiative, travellers from Kolkata will benefit from

more affordable and convenient international travel options, reinforcing the city's position as a pivotal hub in India's aviation sector. "I also urged our officials to be globally competitive as we must set new benchmarks in speed and execution without compromising on quality. This 2-day workshop brings together AAI officials from different zones, fostering greater collaboration and a unified approach to strengthen our civil aviation sector.

"Inaugurated AAI's workshop on Major Infrastructure Projects today, applauding AAI's efforts in advancing regional connectivity, embracing digital innovation, and championing sustainability," Minister Kinjarapu today wrote on his X-handle.

## HC summons Bengal home secy over govt's 'non-cooperation' with panel on chit funds

AGENCIES  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

The Calcutta High Court on Thursday summoned West Bengal home secretary Nandini Chakraborty to be present in the court next week and clarify the state government's points in a case related to the state's alleged non-cooperation with a committee formed to ensure compensation for the victims losing money after investing in the deposit schemes of chit fund entities in the state.

Chakraborty will have to appear at the division Bench of Justice Joymalaya Bagchi and Justice Gaurang Kanth on 20 February and explain the state government's obser-

vation on the accusations in the matter.

In the wake of the mushrooming of chit funds or Ponzi entities in the state in the last decade, a committee, headed by a retired justice, was formed to ensure proper compensation for the victims losing crores of money by depositing in the multi-level-marketing schemes of such shady entities. However, a case was filed of the Calcutta High Court accusing the state government of not extending cooperation to the said committee, especially as to making provisions for necessary infrastructure and filling up the post there.

The HC bench took the complaints quite seriously and observed that it was

unfortunate that the vacant post in the committee had not been filled up and even the terms of officers appointed in the committee and whose tenures there had expired had not been extended. The complaint is also there the state government is yet to give the clearance for fixing and paying the remuneration of the chairman of the committee.

The Calcutta High Court observed that such non-cooperation on part of the state government was especially unfortunate when the court itself took initiative of forming the committee only after getting assurance of full cooperation from the state government.





## HC allows Mohan Bhagwat’s public meeting in Burdwan



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BURDWAN, 14 FEBRUARY

The Calcutta High Court today gave a go-ahead for the public meeting of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at a sports stadium beside Burdwan town.

Bhagwat, during his Bengal tour was scheduled to address the public meeting at the Sports Authority of India stadium on 16 February. The district police and administration had restrained the permission for the public meeting on the plea that use of loudspeakers were 'banned' during the ensuing Madhyamiki examination. The dais for the meeting has been

erected in the farthest northern corner of the stadium for the scheduled 50 minutes programme.

The SDM, Burdwan (North), Tirthankar Biswas, said that the permission was detained on the ground of the use of loudspeakers in the proposed meeting that's restrained by a previous HC order.

The RSS, challenging the district administration's decision, had moved the HC. Today, the HC judge, Justice Amrita Sinha, in her order has given a go ahead of the programme and the order has specifically mentioned that the use of loudspeakers in the programme is allowed.

## 15 patients regain vision at Bishnupur camp: TMC

Since inception, 6,55,494 individuals have received health check-ups with 11,015 people walking in for treatment on Friday



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOLKATA, 14 FEBRUARY

More than 8,000 people visited the Sebaashray camps at Satgachia today.

Forty two camps have been opened in Satgachia. Sebaashray is the initiative of Abhishek Banerjee, Trinamul Congress national general secretary and the party's MP from Diamond Harbour. The camps will be held in the vast areas that fall under Diamond Harbour Lok Sabha seat. Then it moved to Falta followed by Bishnupur and

Metiabruz. The camps are held for 10 days in each Assembly segment. Mr Banerjee oversees the entire exercise.

Mr Banerjee on his X-handle wrote: "What makes #Sabaashray truly exceptional is not just the scale of its outreach but the spirit that drives it- expecting nothing in return, yet delivering everything that matters. The initiative thrives on simple yet profound logic that when intent is pure, the impact is boundless."

The Trinamul Congress in its official X-handle wrote: "When you lose your eyesight, you don't just lose



your vision; you lose the colors of your dreams and the confidence to chase them. Through #Sebaashray, Shri@abhishekaic is bringing back not just sight, but hope and dignity.

"15 individuals from the Bishnupur Model Camp have regained their vision after successful, free cataract surgeries at Renuka Eye Institute.

"For them, it's more than a surgery, it's a second chance to see their world, their loved ones, and their dreams once again."

Abhishek on Friday evening wrote on his X-handle: "Love isn't just

about grand gestures, it's about showing up, standing by and delivering when it matters most. #Sebaashray stands as a testament to my commitment to the people of Diamond Harbour, whose trust has shaped my journey in public service. Since inception, 6,55,494 individuals have received health check-ups, diagnostic screenings, free medicines and referral services.

"Today, on Day 43, the 42 Health Camps in Satgachia extended care to 11,015 people, ensuring that every ailment is met with a solution and every concern is heard."

## NFR introduces special trains for Prayagraj Mahakumbh pilgrims



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SILIGURI, 14 FEBRUARY

To accommodate the anticipated surge of pilgrims for the 2025 MahaKumbh Mela in Prayagraj, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has announced additional special trains. NFR CPRO KK Sharma stated that two pairs of special trains will operate between Jogbani and Tundla, catering to devotees travelling to the grand religious event.

Special train No. 05718 will depart from Jogbani at 6.40 p.m. on 14 February, reaching Tundla at 7 p.m. the next day. Its return journey (train No. 05717) will leave Tundla at 9.40 on 16 February, arriving at Jogbani at 2.20 a.m. on 18 February. Similarly, train No. 05720 will depart Jogbani at 6.40 p.m. on 15 February, reaching Tundla at 7 pm the following day, with its return (train No. 05719) scheduled from Tundla at 9.40 p.m. on 17 February,

arriving at Jogbani at 2.20 a.m. on 19 February. These trains, comprising 22 coaches including AC-2 tier, AC-3 tier, sleeper class, and general sitting coaches, will halt at key stations like Forbesganj, Katihar, Barauni, Patliputra, Prayagraj, and Etawah.

Additionally, a one-way special train (No. 05841) will run from Rangpara North to Tundla, departing at 5.30 p.m. on 15 February and arriving at 6.30 a.m. on 17 February. NFR is also operating a daily pair of Maghi Purnima special trains (Nos. 07540 and 07539) between Katihar and Manihari until 21 February, featuring eight coaches for passenger convenience.

Mr Sharma emphasised that these initiatives aim to provide comfortable and hassle-free travel for pilgrims. Passengers are advised to check stoppages and timings on the IRTC website or NFR's social media platforms before planning their journey.

## T E N D E R

**SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
**E-TENDER NOTICE No. NIT/11/25/05, Dated : 10.02.2025**  
For and on behalf of the president of India, The Sr. Divisional Materials Manager/ South East Central Railway, Bilaspur Division invites e-tender for the following items:  

Sl. No.	Tender No.	Due Date	Due Time	Tender Cost (Rs.)	EMD (Rs.)
1	11255153	03.03.2025	10:30	00	86970.00

**Description :** Manufacturing and supply of clamps for Joggled Fish Plate for BG Kg (UIC) as per RDSO Drg. No. T-5852 & T-5852/1 or latest with reference date as tender closing date and confirming to specification No. IS-2062-1992 with fittings as listed in the Drawing. One set of clamps consists of following items : (i) MS Clamps as per RDSO drg. No. T-5852-01 No. (ii) MS Clamps as per RDSO Drg. No. T-5852/1-01 No. (iii) Bolt with Nut 25x280mm as per RDSO Drg. No. T-11523-01 No. (iv) Single coil spring washer as per RDSO Drg. No. T-10773-01 No. (Warranty Period : 30 Months after the date of delivery). Tenderer/bidders may please Visit IREPS website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in>  
**Note:** In controversial condition regarding description, English text version will be considered certified.  
CPR/10/487 Sr. Divl. Materials Manager, S.E.C. Railway, Bilaspur  
South East Central Railway @seccrail

**NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
**E-Tendering Notice No. 2025-Feb-02 DATED: 11.02.25**  
**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
Divisional Railway Manager (Engineering), N. C. Rly Agra for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through on Line only (E-Tendering) for the following works. The details of the tender are as under:  
**S N : 1 Tender No: 2025-Feb-02-01 Approx Cost ₹ : ₹ 5704800.90**  
**Description of work:** Sewage cleaning arrangement and operation of well at MTJ under jurisdiction of ADEN/MTJ for two years.  
**S N : 2 Tender No : 2025-Feb-02-02 Approx Cost ₹ : ₹ 39538909.42**  
**Description of work:** (A) Improvement of drainage at LHS no. 362 by Box culvert in Mathura-Achhnera section. (B) Mathura-Palwal-Replacement of Arch Bridge no. 1433/3 of UP & DN span 1x0.47 m span and other minor bridges with RCC box culvert. (C) Rehabilitation of bridge no 1436/2 with protective works etc. in Mathura-Palwal section.  
For full details and submission of bid please see the Indian Railways website "[www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)". Tenders can only be submitted through web portal "[www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)" up to 15.00 hrs on 05.03.25. 294/25 (DG)  
North central railways @CPNCR North central railways @cpnrcr www.nccr.indianrailways.gov.in

**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
**Tender No.: LRW4-BGB-BOGIE-FRAME-2025, dated 12.02.2025, Dy. Chief Mechanical Engineer BMF/BGB, Bogie Manufacturing Factory, 88/1 Adhar Das Road, Budge Budge, Kolkata-700137**  
Invites open E-Tenders against Tender No. LRW4-BGB-BOGIE-FRAME-2025 for the following work. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Name of Work:** Bogie Frame Machining using 5-Axis CNC Milling Machine as per scope of work. **Advertised Value:** Rs. 48,38,000/- **Earnest Money:** Rs. 96,800/- **Tender Document Cost:** Rs. 0.00. **Bidding System:** Single Packet System. **Period of Completion:** 3 months. **Validity of offer:** 120 Days. **Date and time of uploading of tender:** 12.02.2025 at 14.50 hrs. **Bidding Start Date:** 20.02.2025. **Tender closing date and time:** 06.03.2025 at 12.00 hrs. The details of Tender are available at website: [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) MSC-334/2023-24  
Tender Notice is also available at websites: [www.ea.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.ea.indianrailways.gov.in) / [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

**S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER**  
**e-Tender Notice No.: EL-G-RNC-OT-SOLAR-07-25, Dated: 13.02.2025, Sr. DEE(G), South Eastern Railway, Ranchi**  
for and on behalf of President of India, invites e-Tender against Tender Notice No. EL-G-RNC-OT-SOLAR-07-25, Date: 13.02.2025 is scheduled to open on 07.03.2025 at 16.00 hrs. or later. **Brief Description/ Name of the work:** Supply, installation, commissioning and testing of solar power plant at Ranchi Division. **Tender Cost:** ₹ 12,66,60,519.46. **EMD/Bid security:** ₹ 7,83,300. **Tender closing date & time:** 16.00 hrs. on 07.03.2025. **Website particular:** <https://www.ireps.gov.in>. The tender details can be viewed at the website <https://www.ireps.gov.in>. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderers/bidders can participate on e-tender. All relevant papers must be uploaded by tenderers with tender document at the time of participating in e-tendering. (PR-1137)

**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
**Open Tender Notice No.: 63-SDSTE-ASN-2024-25, dated: 13.02.2025, Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecom. Engineer, Eastern Railway, Asansol Division, Station Road, Asansol, Pin-713301**  
invites e-Tender for the following work. **Name of Work/Location:** Asansol Division-Annual Maintenance Contract (AMC) for Maintenance of Networking equipments of UTS/PRS and FOIS network over Asansol Division of 02 years. **Advertised Value:** Rs. 22,08,064.92. **Earnest Money:** Rs. 44,200/- **Completion period of the work:** 24 months from the date of issue of L.O.A. **Date and time of Closing of the tender:** 10.03.2025 at 15.00 hrs. **Website particulars:** <http://www.ireps.gov.in> Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. The tenderer/ bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate & must be registered on IREPS portal. Only registered tenderer/bidders can participate in e-Tendering. ASN-331/2024-25  
Tender Notices are also available at Website: [www.ea.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.ea.indianrailways.gov.in) / [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

**EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY**  
**CORRIGENDUM NOTICE**  
e-tender is invited on Behalf of the President of India for the under mentioned work :-  
Tender No. : ECR-CAO-C-S-EPC-02-24-25. Name of work : Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) for Construction of New BG Rail Bridge (2x32.086m Open Web Steel Girder + 33x122.0 m Open Web Steel Girder) with Sub-structure of Double line Track and Superstructure of Single line Track across River Ganga between Bikanrshila and Katarah Stations on New Railway Line Project. Following corrigendum is issue in connection with above tender :  
1. Last date of Request for Bid document : 03.03.2025 up to 12.15 Hrs. 2. Bid Due date: 03.03.2025 up to 12.15 Hrs.  
The above e-tender document along with full information is available on website <http://www.ireps.gov.in>. Note : In case of any discrepancies found in tender notice, English version will be final. Tenderers are requested to visit the website <http://www.ireps.gov.in> atleast 15 days before last date of closing, for latest corrigendum/corrections etc in connection with this e-tender. Any change/addendum/ corrigendum will be published on IREPS website only. CAO/Con/South/ ECR/Mahendraghat, Patna PR/02107/CON/Engg./C/24-25/40

**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**Executive Engineer**  
**P. W. Division No. 1 Nagpur**  
**INVITATION FOR TENDERS**  
**E-mail: div1nagpur.ee@mahapwd.com**  
**E-Tender Notice No. 75/2024-25**  
Online tenders in B-1 are invited by the Executive Engineer, Public Works Division No. 1, Nagpur for the following work from P.W.D. Registered Contractor. The name of work, estimated cost, time limit for completion etc. are as under.  

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs. in lakh)	Cost of Blank Tender Form (Rs.)	Time limit in Tender (Calendar Months)
1.	Providing Water Proofing Treatment to Administrative Building at Hon'ble High Court Bombay Bench, Nagpur.	261.00	2,360.00	12 Months
2.	Repairs and Renovation of Hon'ble Judges Chambers at Hon'ble High Court Bombay Bench, Nagpur.	325.00	2360.00	12 Months
3.	Repairs and Renovation of Court Rooms at Hon'ble High Court Bombay Bench, Nagpur.	372.00	2360.00	12 Months
4.	Repairs and Renovation of Administrative Buildings at Hon'ble High Court Bombay Bench, Nagpur.	334.00	2360.00	12 Months
5.	Construction of Compound Wall, Police Chowky, Parking Shed and other Misc. Work of Hon'ble High Court Justice Bunglow Vivek, Sneha and Seva, at Nagpur.	225.00	2360.00	12 Months
6.	Construction of Wall Compound, Gajbebo, Toilet, Ground Development, Drainage Repairs and other Misc. Work at Hon'ble Judges Bunglow Anuradha at Hon'ble High Court Bombay Bench, Nagpur.	155.00	2360.00	12 Months
7.	Providing Parking Shed, Police Chowkey, Toilet, Compound Wall, Sewer Line and Misc. Repairs at Hon'ble High Court, Justice Bunglow Hiranyagarbha, Civil Lines, Nagpur.	131.00	2360.00	12 Months
8.	Repairs and Renovation to Hon'ble High Court Judges Bunglow Seva, Sunil and Soudamini at High Court Bombay Bench, Nagpur.	370.00	2360.00	12 Months

- Detailed tender notice can be seen on website: <https://mahatenders.gov.in> / <https://mahapwd.gov.in>
- Detailed tender notice can be seen on the Notice Board in the office of the undersigned.
- Right is reserved to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.
- In this Tender Notice, Tender downloading, Tender opening etc. information available on website.
- The bidder shall submit the hard copy of tender document (Technical and Financial Envelope) in sealed envelope within 3 days from last date of submission at the office of tender opening authority.
- Post Qualification Criteria will be applicable for the said construction work.

O.W. No: 1512  
Date: 06-02-2025  
DGIPR/ROC-6414/24-25  
**Executive Engineer**  
**P.W. Dn. No. 1 Nagpur**

## MORE TENDER ADS ON PAGE 2 & 13

**NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY**  
**Open E-Tender Notice**  
**No. W/118/NIT/Sr.DEN(Co.)JP/ENGG Dated: 12.02.2025**  
Divl.Rly. Manager, N.W. Railway, Jaipur for and on behalf of President of India invites open E-Tender for the following works upto 15.30 hours on the date shown as below- **Sr. No. 1. Name of work with location :** ENGG-JP-2024-25-110 JP Division - Supply of machine crushed Track Ballast and loading the same into Railway Wagons/Hoppers at ballast Depot J.N. **Approx. Cost of work :** 71711715.30 **Earnest money Rs. :** 508600.00 **Sr. No. 2. Name of work with location :** ENGG-JP-2024-25-112 Jaipur division - Flash Butt Welding of 20 rail panels/Free Rails/2 Rail panels/3 Rail panels of all rail sections (New/SH) at site (in situ/Cess) using Mobile Flash Butt in connection with TRR (P)-209.933 Km in Rewari - Phulera chord section **Approx. Cost of work :** 40993351.85 **Earnest money Rs. :** 355000.00 **Sr. No. 3. Name of work with location :** ENGG-JP-2024-25-113 Sr. DEN (N)/JP Section - Augmentation of drainage arrangement system, retaining wall and road approaches in various locations of RUB's in the SSE/W-NNL section under ADEN-RGS jurisdiction. **Approx. Cost of work :** 23328637.82 **Earnest money Rs. :** 266700.00 **Sr. No. 4. Name of work with location :** ENGG-JP-2024-25-114 Sr. DEN (N)/JP Section - Augmentation of drainage arrangement system, retaining wall and road approaches in various locations of RUB's in the SSE/W-SIKAR section under ADEN-SIKAR jurisdiction. **Approx. Cost of work :** 116643189.10 **Earnest money Rs. :** 617500.00 **Sr. No. 5. Name of work with location :** ENGG-JP-2024-25-115 Sr. DEN (N)/JP Section - Augmentation of drainage arrangement system, retaining wall and road approaches in various locations of RUB's in the SSE/W-SIKAR section under ADEN-SIKAR jurisdiction. **Approx. Cost of work :** 93501323.88 **Earnest money Rs. :** 617500.00 **1. Detail is available on N.W.Rly website- [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) and Notice Board in WA section, DPM Office, NWR/Jaipur.**  
**2. Tender No. ENGG-JP-2024-25-110** is to be closed on 05.03.2025 at 15.30 hrs and opened on 05.03.2025 at 16.00 hrs & Tender No. ENGG-JP-2024-25-112 to 115 is to be closed on 07.03.2025 at 15.30 hrs and opened on 07.03.2025 at 16.00 hrs. **3. M/s CREATIVE MINERALS INDIA PVT. LTD MATHURA, Plot no. 03, Sector 04, Shri Radha Valley, Mathura (UP) 281001 shall not be participated in Tender no. ENGG-JP-2024-25-110, 185-CR/25**  
Please join us at: @NWRrailways @nwrailways

**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
E-Tenders are invited by Chief Works Manager, C & W Workshop, Eastern Railway, Liluah, Howrah, PIN-711204 from reputed approved and eligible contractors of Railways and those of appropriate list of Dept. of Govt./Public sector undertaking for the under mentioned works : **Sl No. 1. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-1. Name of Work :** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-1 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 2. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-2. Name of Work :** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-2 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 3. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-3. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-3 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 90,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,80,000.00. **Sl No. 4. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-4. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-4 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 5. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-5. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-5 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 6. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-6. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-6 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 7. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-7. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-7 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 8. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-8. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-8 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 9. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-9. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-9 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 10. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-10. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-10 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 11. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-11. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-11 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 12. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-12. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-12 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 13. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-13. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-13 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 14. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-14. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-14 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 15. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-15. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-15 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 16. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-16. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-16 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 17. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-17. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-17 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 18. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-18. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-18 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 19. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-19. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-19 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 20. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-20. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-20 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 21. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-21. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-21 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 22. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-22. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-22 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 23. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-23. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-23 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 24. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-24. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-24 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 25. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-25. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-25 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 26. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-26. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-26 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 27. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-27. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-27 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 28. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-28. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-28 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 29. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-29. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-29 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 30. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-30. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-30 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 31. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-31. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-31 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00. **Sl No. 32. Tender No. : Engg-1-25-26-LLHOpen Item-32. Name of Work:** Open E-tender for Zonal work for Zone no.-32 for 2025-26 P.E. 30.06.2026 under AEN/Workshop/ Liluah and CWM/Liluah. **Approx. Cost of Work :** ₹ 75,00,000.00. **Earnest Money :** ₹ 1,50,000.00.



# Conflicts today extend beyond people & nations: PM Modi

The PM remarked that this has led to an environmental crisis that threatens the planet

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday observed that conflicts nowadays extend beyond people and nations, with humanity increasingly in conflict with nature.

He remarked that this has led to an environmental crisis that threatens the planet. He emphasised that the answer to this challenge lies in the shared traditions of Asia, rooted in the principles of Dharma (belief in Buddhism).

The PM was delivering his remarks, during the SAMVAD programme organised in Thailand, via video message.

Highlighting the theme of SAMVAD, which speaks of the Asian Century, Mr Modi noted that while people often refer to Asia's economic rise, this conference highlights that the Asian Century is not just



about economic value but also about social values.

He emphasised that the teachings of Bhagwan Buddha can guide the world in creating a peaceful and progressive era, and his wisdom holds the power to lead towards a human-centric future.

Talking about one of the core themes of SAMVAD—

conflict avoidance, the PM remarked that conflicts often arise from the belief that only one path is correct while others are wrong. He cited Bhagwan Buddha's insight on this issue, noting that some people cling to their own views and argue, seeing only one side as true. He emphasised that multiple perspectives can exist on the

same issue.

Mr Modi highlighted another cause of conflict—perceiving others as fundamentally different from ourselves. He remarked that differences lead to distance, and distance can turn into discord. To counter this, he cited a verse from the Dhammapada, which states that everyone fears pain and death.

He emphasised that by recognising others as similar to ourselves, we can ensure that no harm or violence occurs. He added that if these words are followed, conflict can be avoided.

"Many of the world's issues stem from taking extreme positions rather than a balanced approach," said the PM. He highlighted that extreme views lead to conflicts, environmental crises, and even stress-related health problems.

He emphasised that the solution to these challenges lies in the teachings of Bhagwan

Buddha, who urged everyone to follow the Middle Path and avoid extremes. The principle of moderation, he noted, remains relevant today and offers guidance in addressing global challenges.

Mr Modi remarked that he hails from Vadnagar, a small town in western India that was once a great seat of Buddhist learning. In the Indian Parliament, he represents Varanasi, which includes Sarnath, the sacred place where Bhagwan Buddha delivered his first discourse. He noted that it is a beautiful coincidence that places associated with Bhagwan Buddha have shaped his journey.

"Our reverence for Bhagwan Buddha is reflected in the policies of the Indian Government," the PM said. He also highlighted the collaboration with many nations over the past decade to promote the teachings of Bhagwan Buddha.

## Modi covered up Adani's corruption even in America: Rahul Gandhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi covered up billionaire businessman Gautam Adani's alleged corruption even in the United States.

The statement comes in the wake of Modi's response to a query if he discussed the case of Adani with US President Donald Trump. Modi had stated that "when heads of two countries meet, they do not discuss such personal matters".

Gandhi, in a post on X, said: "If you ask questions in the country, there is silence. Abroad, it is a personal matter. Modi ji covered up Adani ji's corruption even in America."

The Leader of the Opposition who has been accusing Modi of favouring Adani further said: "When filing a friend's pocket is 'nation building' for Modi ji... bribery and looting the nation's wealth becomes a personal



matter."

It may be mentioned that in November last year, Gandhi had demanded Adani's immediate arrest after the US Department of Justice (DoJ) and US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) indicted him and others for alleged bribery.

"It is now pretty clear and established in America that Adani has broken both Amer-

ican law and Indian law. He has been indicted in the US. I am wondering why Adani is still running around a free man in this country, despite being accused of a Rs 2,000 scam and multiple others," he had said.

The Adani Group had denied all allegations made by the US DoJ and the US SEC, and said all possible legal recourse will be sought.

## Ashok Gehlot has no moral right to speak on phone tapping: Union Minister Shekhawat

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
JODHPUR, 14 FEBRUARY

Union Minister for Tourism, Art and Culture Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Friday hit back at former Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot for the latter's comments on alleged tapping of Agriculture Minister Dr Kirodi Lal Meena's phone, saying the ex-CM at least has no moral right to raise finger at others on this issue.

Talking to the media at his residence here Shekhawat elaborated: "Occurrence of phone tapping was the maximum during Gehlot's regime in the state and these were then confirmed by none other than his own aides".

The Union Minister said: "The then OSD in the CMO, under Gehlot, Lokesh Sharma had made statement in a Delhi Court that phone tap-



ping occurred under the previous regime, this was held in illegal manner.

"I was also asked to leak it to media", Shekhawat quoted Sharma as saying.

So, at least those who had committed such acts have no moral right to target others over this issue, Shekhawat said.

He also criticised the Congress and the other opposition parties for the latter's protest

against amendment in the Waqf Board Act.

The Minister said: "Those who encroached and holding possession of the Waqf Board's properties are opposing the new legislation.

On the Congress' criticism against the government agencies for alleged lapses and/or mismanagement in organising the Maha Kumbh in the Prayagraj, Shekhawat said: "They are in habit of condemning us for the sake of opposing. About mega event of Kumbh they do oppose in public domain but then rush up the Kumbha Nagari for taking holy dip. Same attitude was evident in the criticism of Covid-19 vaccine. They had criticised the government publicly, then silently rushed to the vaccination centre to take the jab at the earliest."

## SC extends protection from arrest to former IAS trainee officer Puja Khedkar

PARMOD KUMAR  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

The Supreme Court on Friday extended its interim protection from arrest to former IAS trainee officer Puja Khedkar accused of forging her documents to obtain eligibility for the 2022 Union Public Service Commission test under the reservation for other backward classes (OBC) and persons with benchmark disabilities.

On a request from Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, a Justice BV Nagarathna, heading a bench also comprising Justice Satish Chandra Sharma granted more time to Delhi police to file its response on Khedkar's challenge to the Delhi High court order rejecting her plea for anticipatory bail.

Posting the matter for hearing on 18 March, the court extended its 15 January



2025, order protecting Puja Khedkar from any coercive step. However, the court asked Khedkar to cooperate in the investigation.

"List after three weeks. Let interim protection be continued till then provided she is cooperating for investigation," ordered the top

court and posted the matter for hearing on 18 March.

In the course of the hearing of the matter, senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, representing Pooja Khedkar, told the bench that she has not been called for questioning by the police and she is willing to cooperate.

On the last date of hearing, the top court ordered that no coercive steps would be taken against Khedkar till the next date of hearing.

Khedkar is accused of allegedly fraudulently availing reservation meant for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Persons with Benchmark Dis-

abilities in order to clear the Union Public Service Commission exam (UPSC exam).

The Delhi High Court while dismissing anticipatory bail plea had made strong observations against Khedkar saying it is a "classic example of fraud, not only with a constitutional body but also with society and the nation as a whole."

The High Court had emphasised that interrogation is necessary to uncover the conspiracy involved.

The High Court had also highlighted that the father and mother held high-ranking positions, suggesting the possibility of collusion with influential individuals.

Khedkar is facing criminal charges filed by the Delhi Police, accusing her of cheating and unlawfully claiming OBC and disability quota benefits in the civil services examination.

## GIS to focus on urban development: MP Chief Minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHOPAL, 14 FEBRUARY

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Dr Mohan Yadav, said on Friday that the 'Global Investors Summit' (GIS) would focus on urban development, as the state offers unique investment opportunities in key areas like Rs 50,000 crore in 'Housing for All', Rs 17,230 crore in essential facilities, and Rs 32,400 crore in real estate development. The two-day GIS would commence here on 24 February.

He pointed out that the state is emerging as a leading one in India's urban transformation, with smart cities, robust infrastructure and seamless growth.

He said that Madhya Pradesh integrates strategic investments, sustainable development, and cutting-edge digital governance. The CM said the state is rapidly expanding its infrastructure, housing, and smart city projects with ongoing urban projects worth Rs 72,000 crore and upcoming projects worth Rs 88,000 crore.

Dr Yadav noted that with seven smart cities, world-class connectivity, and progressive urban policies, Madhya Pradesh is well-positioned to provide superior infrastructure to investors and developers.

The CM said that the state has introduced the MP Re-Densification Policy 2022 and MP Redevelopment Policy 2022 to promote modern infrastructure and redevelopment. He said the MP TDR Rules 2018 optimize land use and support sustainable urban development. The CM said the state's EV Policy 2025 promotes electric mobility with infrastructure incentives while the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Policy 2019 fosters high-density urban growth around transit hubs.

## Nobody will be left in Thackeray's Sena, claims BJP MLC Pravin Darekar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, 14 FEBRUARY

BJP Member of Legislative Council (MLC) Pravin Darekar, who is known to be a confidante of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, said in Mumbai on Friday that not a single MLA will be left in Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, if Aaditya Thackeray begins to monitor the movements of his MPs and MLAs, to prevent them from defecting.

"Why do you need to take permission to eat? Aaditya Thackeray had gone to meet Chief Minister Fadnavis. Did he take permission? If everybody has to take prior permissions, then not even a



single person will be left in the party (Thackeray-led Shiv Sena)," Darekar said.

Darekar was reacting to Aaditya Thackeray's diktat issued to his MPs on Thursday that they must seek prior permission before attending any luncheon meetings called by

leaders of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, who are reportedly luring Thackeray MLAs through 'Operation Tiger'.

In a related development, Deputy Chief Minister Shinde said: "We are trying to grow the Shiv Sena. We welcome

all those who are joining the party. Eventually, those who have stayed back (in Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena) will also join us."

Aaditya Thackeray had issued his diktat, a day after Rajan Salvi, an old Bal Thackeray-era loyalist veteran from coastal Konkan region, who spent more than 35 years in the undivided Shiv Sena, left Thackeray-led Sena and joined Shinde-led Sena, giving a boost to Deputy CM Shinde's 'Operation Tiger' strategy of luring away members of Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to join his party.

However, sources had said that Aaditya Thackeray's diktat had upset some Shiv Sena MPs, who expressed their displeasure.

## BPSC protest gains momentum after Khan Sir claims proof of irregularities

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
PATNA, 14 FEBRUARY

The ongoing protest over alleged irregularities in the BPSC 70th PT (preliminary test) got another momentum as Khan Sir alias Faizal Khan, who is leading the students movement, claimed that he has got proof of the examination having been rigged.

Khan Sir said instead of printing a new set of question papers for the BPSC 70th PT examination held on 4 January, the BPSC used the remaining set of question papers printed for the examination held on 13 December, 2024.

He said that he will present the evidence in the High Court and expressed confidence that after seeing the evidence the High Court will order to cancel the exam.

Reacting to the allegations, the BPSC stated that some coaching operators are



spreading confusion and asked BPSC aspirants to remain alert.

In a post on the social media platform 'X', it stated: "The Commission clarifies that for the re-examination held on 4 January, three sets of new question papers were printed as per the number of candidates and as per the provisions of the Commission.

One set of question papers was selected under the Element of Surprise and used in the re-examination.

"It took 21 days to conduct the re-examination only because of printing of new sets of the question paper. Hence, the allegations being propagated/broadcast on social media are completely baseless."

Even after two months of the examination, the protest continues at the government-designated protest site in Gardani Bagh, Patna. Students said that they were not tired and they would continue to protest till the government accepted their demand of re-examination. They also observed that the protest will escalate in the coming days.

As the assembly session is about to start here they will approach all party leaders to raise their demands in the House.

## Jharkhand police's opium eradication drive: 9,871 acres of illicit crops destroyed, 86 arrested

SHASHI SINGH  
RANCHI, 14 FEBRUARY

A special drive to eliminate illegal opium cultivation is being conducted across Khunti, Ranchi, Seraikela-Kharsawan, and Chaibasa districts under Ranchi Zone from 5 February 2025, to 17 February 2025. The campaign is being carried out as per the directives of the government and the Director General of Police.

According to a statement issued by the police headquarters, the campaign has so far resulted in the destruction of 6,473 acres of illicit opium cultivation and the arrest of 55 individuals in Muruh, Arki, Khunti, Saiko, and Maranghada police station areas of Khunti district. In Ranchi district, operations in Bundu, Tamar, Dasham Falls, Rahe, Sonahatu, and Namkum police station areas have led to the destruction of 2,484 acres of crops and the arrest

of 19 individuals. In Chaibasa district, 394 acres of illegal cultivation were destroyed in Bandgaon, Tebo, Karakela, and Toklo police station areas, while in Seraikela-Kharsawan district, 520 acres were cleared in Kuchai, Ichagarh, Chowka, and Kharsawan police station areas, with 12 people arrested.

In total, 9,871 acres of illegal opium cultivation have been eradicated, and 86 individuals have been taken into custody. It is estimated that one acre of opium cultivation yields around 3 to 4 kilograms of raw opium, which is valued at approximately 4 to 5 lakh per kilogram in the market. This campaign has successfully prevented a significant amount of illegal opium from entering the drug market.

On 13 February 2025, under the leadership of the Inspector General of Police (IGP), South Chotanagpur Zone, Ranchi, an operation was conducted in Parasi



village under Kundla Panchayat in the Tamar police station area of Ranchi district to destroy illicit opium crops. The campaign involved the Rural Superintendent of Police (SP), the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) of Bundu, and other officials and personnel. During the operation, awareness was raised among local residents about the adverse effects of illegal opium cultivation, urging them to refrain from engaging in such activities.

The campaign is being monitored daily under the

supervision of the Inspector General of Police. The police administration has appealed to the general public to provide information about illegal opium cultivation. Citizens have also been made aware of the strict legal consequences, which include heavy fines and imprisonment of up to 20 years.

The Jharkhand Police has received public cooperation in this extensive campaign, and the administration has appreciated the efforts of all officials and personnel involved in the operation.







# ‘BJP govt should not cite lack of funds for Mahila Samman scheme’

Acting CM Atishi also tried to showcase the poor performance of BJP governments in other states

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Dishing out data on the AAP government's good financial performance, outgoing Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Friday sought to plug any chance for the next BJP government offering an excuse of lack of funds for not implementing schemes like Rs 2,500 monthly financial assistance to women.

Addressing the media here, Acting Chief Minister Atishi took pains to justify the AAP government's freebies or free social welfare schemes, dispelling doubts that the Arvind Kejriwal brand of welfare politics did not mean 'bad economics'.

The Acting Chief Minister said she was sharing the data about the AAP government's good economic performance so that BJP leaders do not

blame the outgoing government for the alleged poor state of finances and delay the implementation of the BJP's poll promises.

"I hope the new BJP government will not make financial excuses and fulfil all its promises made to women and others," she said.

She said Delhi's Budget outlay under Central rule in 2014-15 was Rs 31,000 crore and under the Congress government in 2009-10 the outlay was Rs 25,000 crore, she said.

After the 10-year rule under the AAP government, in 2024-25 the city's Budget outlay was Rs 77,000 crore, marking a rise of 2.5 times, she said.

Talking about the debt that the AAP government acquired in legacy from the previous Congress government, she said the debt to GDP ratio in 2014 was 6.6 per cent and it came down in 2023 to 3.9 per cent and in



2024 the figure stood at 3 per cent.

"Under Arvind Kejriwal, the city's debt to GDP ratio was halved from 6.6 per cent to 3 per cent," she said, highlighting how well the AAP

government managed the finances.

Acting CM Atishi also tried to showcase the poor performance of BJP governments in other states by sharing debt to GDP ratio in Uttar

**Addressing the media here, Acting Chief Minister Atishi took pains to justify the AAP government's freebies or free social welfare schemes, dispelling doubts that the Arvind Kejriwal brand of welfare politics did not mean 'bad economics'.**

Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. "In BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, the debt to GDP ratio is 32.5 per cent and in Madhya Pradesh, the debt to GDP ratio is 33 per cent," she said.

She also highlighted a CAG report in 2022 which complemented the AAP-led Delhi government for being the only revenue-surplus state in the country since 2015.

## Assam Budget Session 2025 to focus on development and communal harmony, says Deputy Speaker

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
GUWAHATI, 14 FEBRUARY

Deputy Speaker of the Assam Assembly, Numal Momin, said on Friday that the upcoming budget session, set to commence on 17 February, will be a significant event aimed at uniting the people and fostering communal harmony in the state.

"This is an important session, and the budget will carry immense significance," Momin stated. "Assam is a diverse state, home to many communities and religions living in communal harmony. This budget will reflect that diversity and bring people together. Additionally, since this session will be accessible to many residents, it will boost public morale and encourage greater participation in governance."

Momin also highlighted

**At the same time, political tensions between the ruling party and the opposition Congress are intensifying, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma frequently targeting key Congress leaders.**

that several key bills are expected to be introduced during the session, although he did not provide specifics.

Ahead of the budget session, Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Jayanta Mallabaruah, ceremonially launched the Online Building Permission System (OBPS) in Guwahati on February 13. This system, now available across 32 municipalities in the state, aims to streamline the building approval process and enhance public service delivery.

"The OBPS will provide a smooth and citizen-centric service, making it easier for

people to obtain building permissions efficiently," Mallabaruah said.

The upcoming budget session comes at a critical time for Assam. With Assembly elections two years away, the BJP-led government is expected to focus on policies that reinforce economic growth, infrastructure development, and social welfare.

At the same time, political tensions between the ruling party and the opposition Congress are intensifying, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma frequently targeting key Congress leaders.

## Protesting students accuse Jamia of breach of privacy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

A day after several students of Jamia Millia Islamia were detained and later released over their protest against show cause notices sent to two PhD scholars, they alleged on Friday that their names and other details were made public by the varsity which was a "clear violation of their privacy".

According to the Student's Federation of India (SFI), the administration has put up the crucial details such as address and phone numbers along with their photographs outside the varsity gate for everyone to see, which is a breach of the privacy of the students.

"No amount of suspension notices against these students can justify the violations of their privacy. There are young women in this list and students just out of

their teens. Nothing gives the Jamia admin the right to destroy the futures of these students," the Left-affiliated organisation said in a statement.

The protest began on Monday, with students condemning what they termed as the administration's "crackdown on student activism". The university claimed the protesting students vandalised university property, including the central canteen, and broke the gate of the security advisor's office, forcing the administration to take action.

Some of the students allegedly involved in the protest claimed they also got suspension letters from the Jamia administration.

"On February 10, you were identified as leading an unruly and rowdy group of individuals to vandalize and deface the university's property.

## Satyendar Jain ED case: Union govt seeks President's nod for trial



AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

In fresh trouble for former Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Kumar Jain of the Aam Aadmi Party, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has requested President Droupadi Murmu to grant prosecution sanction for initiating legal proceedings against him in a money laundering case, official sources said.

The President's approval has been sought under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik

Suraksha Sanhita which outlines the requirement of prior government sanction before a court can take cognizance of offenses committed by public servants.

Jain was arrested by the ED in a Rs 4.8-crore money laundering case in May 2022 for allegedly using four companies linked to him to swindle money. He stepped out of jail on bail in October last year.

The ED case was based on the CBI's FIR lodged against the former Delhi Min-

ister in 2017 under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

In April 2022, the ED had provisionally attached immovable properties worth Rs 4.81 crore belonging to the companies linked to Jain and his aides.

Apart from the alleged corruption and money laundering cases filed against the former minister, Jain is also accused of threatening Tihar Jail staff during his stay.

Last month, Assistant Superintendent Jaidev and Deputy Superintendent Parveen Kumar, Tihar Jail, had complained against Jain in an 'incident report' on 8 December 2022, that when they went to serve a Show Cause Notice to Jain as per rule 1272 of DPR, 2018, he threatened them.

Jain has been blatantly intimidating these officers and others for their acts trying to prevent him from availing facilities of massage, lavish food and other VIP treatments, that came to the fore recently, said a jail official.

**"On February 10, you were identified as leading an unruly and rowdy group of individuals to vandalize and deface the university's property," a letter from the Jamia authorities said**



"Furthermore, on February 11, you again participated in an unauthorized and unlawful protest within the JMI campus, disrupting the normal functioning of university and creating ruckus inside the campus thereby resulting in gross inconven-

ience to other students teachers and employees of the University," according to a student who claims to have received the suspension letter.

"This letter serves to inform you that you are suspended with immediate effect from

## Sanitation workers backbone of Delhi: LG Saxena

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Lieutenant Governor (LG) VK Saxena said on Friday that sanitation workers are the backbone of Delhi, without them one cannot imagine a clean national capital.

Interacting with sanitation officials and swachhta sainiks of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) as part of his 'Samvaad', he acknowledged their vital role in maintaining the city's cleanliness and sanitation and stressed the critical role they play in the overall health of Delhi.

Addressing the sanitation workers, the LG said: "You are the backbone of Delhi, and without you, it's difficult to imagine a clean Delhi. I

commend your dedication, particularly during challenging times like the Covid-19 pandemic, Yamuna river floods, and the successful organisation of the G-20 summit."

Referring to the recently-concluded Delhi Assembly polls, Saxena said: "Today, we are meeting at a time when the people of Delhi have changed and elected a new government. Actually, this change, brought about by the public, will be visible only when Delhi becomes completely clean and green. Sanitation workers have made strong efforts to clean Delhi. However these efforts are falling short. We still have to work harder and make Delhi clean."

## Uttar Pradesh no longer a ‘BIMARU’ state: Nitin Gadkari

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
LUCKNOW, 14 FEBRUARY

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari praised the development in Uttar Pradesh, stating that the state is no longer a 'BIMARU' state but has become one of the leading contributors to India's economy.

He also said that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has successfully worked towards establishing 'Ram Rajya' in Uttar Pradesh.

The Union Road Transport and Highways Minister was addressing at the inauguration and foundation stone laying program of various development works worth Rs 1,028

crore organized here on Friday.

During this, he said, "Under PM Narendra Modi's leadership, India aims to become a global leader and a \$5 trillion economy, with Uttar Pradesh playing a crucial role in achieving this target."

He mentioned that strong infrastructure in roads, water, energy, transport, and communication will boost industries, attract investment, and create new employment opportunities.

Highlighting infrastructure development in UP, Gadkari said that Rs 1.25 lakh crore worth of roads have been completed, Rs 1 lakh crore worth of projects are under construction, and another

Rs 1 lakh crore worth of projects are in the pipeline.

He further noted that the Kanpur-Lucknow Expressway is being built using 'Automated Intelligent Machine and Guided Construction' technology for the first time in India, ensuring superior road quality and zero potholes for the next 10 years.

"Additionally, to drive industrial growth in Purvanchal, a Rs 75,000 crore road network is planned from Varanasi to Kolkata and Gorakhpur to Siliguri," Gadkari said. He requested Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to expedite land acquisition and environmental clearances for these projects to ensure timely execution.

## Mahakumbh sets a new world record of cleanliness

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, 14 FEBRUARY

The land of Tirtharaj Prayagraj is not only holding cultural heritage of humanity as a grand Mahakumbh-2025, but Sangamnagar is also witnessing historical world records. Along with the world record of the confluence bath of 50 crore devotees, Tirtharaj set a unique world record towards cleanliness on Friday.

Under this, more than 300 sanitation workers set up a world record by cleaning the Ganges at different ghats simultaneously. All the prescribed procedures were adopted by the Mela Authority to create this record. Now the representatives of the Guinness Book of World Records will verify the entire process and will provide a certificate after certifying this record. After receiving the certificate, it will be a unique record in itself, where so many cleaning workers simultaneously launched a cam-

paign to clean the river for more than half-an-hour at different ghats.

In view of the global image of Mahakumbh in Prayagraj, the state government has waged a public awareness campaign to clean the river. Due to this campaign, crores of devotees coming to Mahakumbh are bathing in the holy, pure and clean water of mother Ganga, mother Yamuna and invisible mother Saraswati. Now, this campaign is going to get authenticity in the form of world records.

Akanksha Rana, Special Officer (OSD) of the Fair Authority, said that on the instructions of the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the target of setting up the records of the largest river cleaning campaign was set, which has been completed today with the entire process. Under this, Ganga cleaning campaign was carried out simultaneously at the three ghats (Ram Ghat, Bhardwaj Ghat and Gangeshwar Ghat) built on



the Ganges river. Through this campaign, which lasted for more than half-an-hour, awareness was also spread to keep the river and ghats clean.

According to Rana, representatives of the Guinness Book of World Records were also present to watch this campaign. Also present were professors of MNIT. Videography of this entire process was also done, which will be

recognized after watching and verifying this record. The purpose of this record is not only to achieve world records, but also to highlight the dedication of the Mahakumbh to the preservation of holy rivers. Through this, emphasis will be laid on the importance of ecological protection and spiritual relations with the natural environment.

After completing the process of making world

**According to Rana, representatives of the Guinness Book of World Records were also present to watch this campaign.**

records of river cleaning simultaneously, now the Mela Authority will move towards another world record on Saturday as well. This record will be of the largest synchronised sweeping drive. Under this, a coordinated cleaning activity will be met by 15,000 participants. The importance of this record is to promote hygiene and environmental protection as the internal values of the Mahakumbh Mela, which will strengthen the message of collective responsibility to maintain the sanctity of major sites.

Earlier, the fair administration set this record with 10,000 participants in 2019, which they hope to improve on this time.



### US-India Pivot

The high-profile meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump underscores the delicate balance between cooperation and contention in bilateral trade and strategic relations. While both leaders projected a vision of a “mega partnership” driven by energy deals, defence cooperation, and immigration agreements, underlying tensions on tariffs and trade imbalances remain unresolved. The engagement signals progress, but the broader implications for India’s economic interests demand careful scrutiny. One of the key takeaways from the Modi-Trump meeting was India’s commitment to increasing oil and gas imports from the US. For Washington, this aligns with Mr Trump’s push to narrow the trade deficit by boosting energy exports. For New Delhi, securing diverse energy sources is a strategic imperative, especially as geopolitical uncertainties continue to disrupt global supply chains. However, the flip side of this deal is India’s trade deficit, which could widen further if US energy proves costlier due to a strong dollar. This raises questions about long-term affordability and whether such purchases are sustainable without compromising fiscal prudence. The defence sector was another focal point, with Mr Modi expressing interest in acquiring advanced fighter jets from the US. This aligns with India’s broader push to modernise its military, particularly given regional security concerns. While access to cutting-edge US technology strengthens India’s defence capabilities, over-reliance on American arms could create dependencies that limit strategic autonomy. Balancing these purchases with the “Make in India” initiative will be key in ensuring that domestic defence production does not suffer at the cost of foreign acquisitions. Trade barriers remain a thorny issue. Mr Trump’s persistent complaints about India’s high tariffs reflect the larger struggle between protectionism and market access. Mr Modi’s willingness to reduce some tariffs on US goods is a pragmatic step to soften trade friction, but this is unlikely to appease Mr Trump, who has shown a strong inclination toward aggressive trade policies. With the US increasingly using tariffs as a leverage tool, India must brace for the possibility of stricter trade conditions in future. Immigration, another recurring friction point, also featured in discussions between Mr Modi and Mr Trump. India’s acceptance of deported undocumented migrants was a gesture of cooperation, but concerns remain over the fate of legal Indian immigrants, particularly those on H-1B visas. Any tightening of US visa policies would impact Indian professionals, especially in the tech sector, affecting remittances and employment opportunities. The broader message from the Modi-Trump meeting is clear: while India and the US seek to deepen economic and strategic ties, transactional diplomacy continues to define the relationship. Energy deals and defence purchases can smoothen trade disputes in the short term, but structural issues such as tariffs and visa policies require sustained negotiations. Mr Modi must navigate these complexities by leveraging India’s growing global stature while safeguarding its economic interests. A “mega partnership” may be the aspirational goal, but ensuring it remains equitable and mutually beneficial is the real challenge ahead.

### AI Diplomacy

The Artificial Intelligence Action Summit in Paris showcased the growing divide in global AI governance. While 61 countries, including India, backed a collective statement on AI ethics, sustainability, and cooperation, two major players – the United States and the United Kingdom – chose not to sign it. Their refusal underscores a broader geopolitical struggle over AI leadership, one that places national interests above international collaboration. Against this backdrop, India’s proactive stance in advocating for global AI standards marks an important shift in its approach to emerging technologies. At the heart of the summit was the question of how AI should be regulated. The final communique emphasised six key principles, including inclusivity, transparency, and ethical deployment of AI. However, the US objected to language promoting international cooperation, preferring a more unilateral approach. The UK, too, cited national interests as a reason for staying out. These decisions align with the broader policy direction of major Western economies, which often resist multilateral frameworks that might constrain their technological dominance. India, on the other hand, struck a balanced position, pushing for AI governance while ensuring that innovation is not stifled. Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the need for collective global efforts to set standards that can mitigate AI risks while fostering trust. India also emphasised inclusivity, particularly for nations in the Global South, which face challenges in accessing AI infrastructure, compute power, and skilled talent. This approach positions India as a bridge between technologically advanced economies and emerging markets, advocating for an AI framework that benefits all. The summit also highlighted the evolving nature of global AI competition. With China’s rapid advancements in AI, particularly with cost-effective models that challenge Western dominance, the Americans framed AI regulation as a national security issue. This stance reflects concerns over data privacy, surveillance, and AI-driven disinformation campaigns. However, by rejecting multilateral commitments, the US risks deepening global AI fragmentation, leading to competing regulatory regimes instead of a cohesive international framework. For India, this moment presents a unique opportunity. By advocating for AI governance while prioritising innovation, it can shape the global AI conversation in ways that align with its long-term technological ambitions. The decision to host the next AI Action Summit underscores India’s growing influence in this space. If it can leverage its strengths in AI research, software development, and digital infrastructure, it could become a key player in defining ethical AI standards for the world. As AI continues to evolve, the lack of a unified global approach remains a challenge. Countries are prioritising their strategic interests over collective regulation, creating risks of unchecked AI deployment. India’s push for a balanced approach – one that fosters trust, inclusivity, and innovation – could serve as a model for responsible AI governance. With its role in hosting the next summit, India now has the chance to lead this critical conversation on the global stage.

# Drawing new lines

Trump may see the US as the indisputable hegemon in the region, but a lot has changed in the past few years. Russia and China have gained considerable global influence. China used its economic might and global rise to gain a potent voice. Russian president Vladimir Putin will not accept any deal in Ukraine which will scuttle his gains in Ukraine. At the end of Trump’s term, China will be far more formidable. Europe will refuse to play his master’s voice



In November 2017, after a lengthy meeting with Chinese president Xi Jinping, Donald Trump boasted that he and Xi can solve “probably all” the world’s problems. Today, he believes he alone can solve all the world’s problems. That explains his boast in the company of his friend Benjamin Netanyahu that US “will take over Gaza” and “own it”. The king believes he has the right to single-handedly redraw the world map as he sees fit. Trump believes, so does Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, that the strong are destined to gobble up the weak. Redrawing the world map is very much on their agenda. The Israeli leader claims that the war has “already changed the face of the Middle East.”

The irony of Netanyahu’s pompous claim is too stark to miss. He is the first foreign dignitary to meet President Trump which is “a testimony not only to the strength of the Israeli-American alliance” but also the vitality of their friendship.

In fact, Netanyahu boasts that Israeli soldiers “have redrawn the map”. He is confident that together with President Trump, they “can redraw it even further, and for the better.” This is Trump’s “golden age of peace” in the Middle East! Netanyahu has his own dream of bringing about a new regional order in the Middle East.

Redrawing the map is a sinister game with disastrous consequences. Africa is still paying the price for the colonial carve up of the continent.

During the colonial period, European powers drew up these borders according to their own interests and without much consideration for the natural or cultural landscape of the region. This resulted in many countries having straight line boundaries that do not align with the natural or ethnic divisions within Africa.

The Middle East has its own share of the problem. The 1916 Sykes-Picot map of the division of territorial spoils between Britain and France of what is today the modern Middle East hasn’t fared any better.

When Sykes and Picot hammered out their agreement, the strategic interests of the British and French took precedence over the tangled sectarian and ethnic demographics of the region. The region continues to pay the price for imperial arrogance.

Now there is a Trump-Netanyahu plan. Trump has his own compulsions to do the strong leader act. There will be more bluster than substance. But his acts will be disruptive. And pretty dangerous too.

Trump is testing the limits of his power. Like Netanyahu, Trump too is seeking to redraw the world map as he deems fit. He is practically threatening the world leaders that those who do not “bend the knee” should be prepared to face the consequences.

He has created a febrile and unpredictable political atmosphere around his administration. Trump believes personal interventions can swiftly and permanently end longstanding conflicts such as Gaza.

His belief that his constant lies, exaggerations and inventions can create new realities, both reshaping the present and permanently rewriting history is delusional, to say the least.

The leaders in the Middle East are wary of Trump’s unpredictability and his impulsive and reckless comportments. And hence they will be wary of playing along. Trump’s team contains quite a few hawks, even

extreme hawks. The Arab leaders are aware of serious disruption in bilateral relationships.

That explains a flurry of high-level confabulations. Syrian interim president Ahmad al-Sharaa has undertaken his first international trip to Saudi Arabia. Earlier, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan visited Damascus in January.

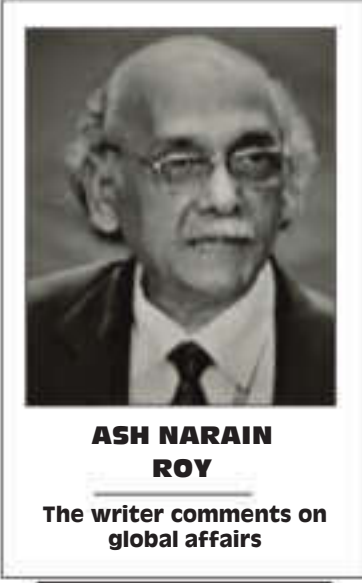
Riyadh is engaged in an active dialogue with Europe and the US to help lift economic sanctions imposed on Syria. There are clear indications that Trump will push for Abraham Accords 2.0. The US wants Saudi Arabia to join. Riyadh has been insisting on a Palestinian state as a precondition for any deal with Israel.

US special envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff has said that Qatar, which along with the US and Egypt, mediated the Gaza ceasefire, is also a candidate for normalization.

Trump is far more open in siding with Israel than during his first term. Washington and Tel Aviv may also be preparing the ground for Israeli settlements in Gaza. Trump’s support for a US-Israel-Saudi axis is an open secret.

Trump may see the US as the indisputable hegemon in the region, but a lot has changed in the past few years. Russia and China have gained considerable global influence. China used its economic might and global rise to gain a potent voice.

Russian president Vladimir Putin will not accept any deal in Ukraine which will scuttle his gains in Ukraine. At the end of Trump’s term, China will be far more formidable. Europe will refuse to play his master’s voice. Why is Israel continuing to



ASH NARAIN ROY  
The writer comments on global affairs

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## Yamuna revival

SIR, The Yamuna river figured prominently in the just-concluded Delhi Assembly elections. After the BJP’s victory, Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured Delhi that the new government would make every effort to clean the river. “It may be a long haul, but Mother Yamuna will surely bless our efforts,” he said.

Will this help the cause of the river? The Central government has a huge role to play here. Since the Yamuna is the biggest tributary of the Ganga, the National Mission for Clean Ganga can make a huge impact on its fate.



So too can the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, Jal Shakti Ministry – including the Central Water Commission and the Upper Yamuna River Board – the Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (which has the Delhi Development Authority under it) and the Central Pollution Control Board.

Unfortunately, these central agencies have not performed well enough to give the Yamuna a new lease of life in Delhi. The Yamuna puzzle has many components. A Delhi water policy can be a key instrument to provide guidance

on these issues.

The new government in Delhi can, through the involvement of people, prepare such a policy. Importantly, the BJP is also in power in other Yamuna basin states like Haryana, Uttar

Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

The AAP and the Congress must act as a responsible Opposition in the Delhi Assembly and Parliament and keep the Yamuna issue alive. A lot can and must be

done to improve the state of the Yamuna in Delhi. The challenge of climate change must also be considered.

Yours, etc.,  
Shovanlal Chakraborty,  
Kolkata, 12 February.

### ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

SIR, This has reference to your editorial “Deportation Drive” published on 6 February. Ahead of PM Modi’s visit to Washington, the massive crackdown on illegal Indian immigrants by the Trump administration is very unfortunate and condemnable. Though launched in the context of national security and economic stability, this forceful deportation initiative has nevertheless caused a great political furore over the inhuman treatment meted out to the returnees, particularly the use of handcuffs, shackles and a military aircraft. It has tarnished India’s global image and also raised multiple socio-economic, political and diplomatic concerns that need immediate attention.

No doubt, travelling abroad in pursuit of dreams for greener pastures is an age-old trend. But to realise them through irregular means is not justified as it results in financial loss and physical and mental stress. The US action has highlighted some key takeaway points to discourage unlawful migration from the country. India is one of the top illegal sources of immigration to the US and Europe. The government should address critical issues such as socio-economic distress, lack of affordable quality education and ample employment opportunities that drive desperate young aspirants to seek entry into the US through illegal means. It should engage with the US, the acclaimed champion of human rights, to ensure that the Trump administration treats the illegal migrants considerately and addresses their concerns; should revisit its migration policies and negotiate with Western countries for structured work visas for skilled and unskilled workers to migrate legally. It should tighten the noose around the necks of unregulated travel agents and unscrupulous human traffickers who befool people in the name of international migration, and should rehabilitate the distraught deportees and educate others not to move abroad illegally.

Yours, etc., D S Kang, Hoshiarpur, 10 February.

### Monarchy's popularity amid instability

Never since the abolition of Nepal’s monarchy in May 2008 has the institution been as much a topic of interest and discussion as it has in recent months. Former King Gyanendra’s recent trip to India to attend the Kumbh Mela and the concurrent meetings with Indian political leaders has been viewed by the media, political analysts and leaders as potentially meaningful.

This is not the first time such visits have taken place. But this one comes when one after another corruption scandal is hitting the headlines, and the public distrust in government is high.

Right here and now, should a referendum take place, the majority would probably vote for a constitutional monarchy to make a comeback. This contrasts with the months and years leading up to the overthrow of the institution.

The assassination in June 2001 of King Birendra – who in 1991 instituted multiparty democracy – along with nine other royal family members led to Gyanendra’s ascension to the throne. The Maoist insurgency, which lasted a decade beginning in 1996, was in full bloom and elections were not being held.

In February 2005, Gyanendra declared a state of emergency and dissolved the Parliament, which was re-elected in April 2006. Broad public out-

### THE KATHMANDU POST

cry followed the direct rule of Gyanendra, who was deposed by the first Constituent Assembly two years later. A referendum would probably vote for the same conclusion.

Since then, nearly 17 years have passed under a republic system, and public perceptions of – and support for – the monarchy are on the mend. Lately, Gyanendra’s scheduled visits to various districts have drawn large crowds. Some of it may have been staged, as these visits are not impromptu but done with planning and as die-hard loyalists make it a point of showing up.

But crowds are increasingly getting larger. It is not a sea of people by any means, but it is growing – growing by the day. This is giving rise to conjecture that it is only a matter of time before the institution – essentially left for dead – is restored after a long hiatus. The question is, what changed in these 17 years?

The same way Gyanendra for the most part can be blamed for planting a seed for the monarchy’s demise, the leading contemporary parties can be blamed for elevating his popularity. Gyanendra miscalculated by adopting a high-handed approach when he staged a coup in February 2005, forming a government of royalists, some of whom were of questionable abilities.

There was a similar coup by his father, Mahendra, in December 1960, establishing the partyless Panchayat system, but that move was welcomed by people, who were disgusted by the corruption in the Nepali Congress-led government.

Gyanendra’s attempt to emulate his father, on the other hand, drew public ire; corruption was present but not rampant. Fast forward to now, one cannot claim the same. Since 1991 in general and 2008 particularly, corruption has been the norm rather than the exception.





# ‘Kumbh has awakened Hindus’

Mahakumbh 2025 is the world's largest gathering, with an estimated 400 to 450 million visitors. It is scheduled from January 13 to February 26 at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh. According to astronomical calculations, the 2025 edition is unique since the constellation alignment seen is witnessed once in 144 years. The Kumbh Mela has also been recognized as part of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

Mahant Ravindra Puri, president, Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad talked to Manoj Bhadra of The Statesman about the success of the Mahakumbh as well as the stampede which claimed "30 lives".

**Q: All three 'Amrit snans' at the revered Mahakumbh have ended with the active participation of all 13 akharas. What is your comment on the government arrangements this time?**

A: I have been attending all editions of the Ardh Kumbh and Mahakumbh since 1995. But this was the first time we enjoyed such excellent facilities... 'Na buhuto, na bhavishyati' (neither in the past nor there be another such in future).

Besides, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was very concerned about the well being of the seers, and he personally attended to their problem. He himself visited the akharas to inspect their facilities several times.

**Q: Prayagraj Mahakumbh is also identified as the biggest ever Hindu conclave.**

**A:** We are fortunate that at last the Hindus have awakened and they have attended this Mahakumbh with their families and friends. This unity of the Hindus will have a positive impact in the country as well as in the world too.

Earlier other religions thought that Hindus are not united and they had taken advantage. But now everything has changed in this Mahakumbh and Hindus are united to safeguard their religion.

We are expecting that till the end of this Mahakumbh, around 50 crore people would have taken a dip in the Sangam. All the credit goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for their good arrangements.

**Q: On Mauni Amavasya, the main Amrit Snan day, there was a stampede in which several pilgrims were killed and injured. Though the official figure is 30, many reports have claimed the number to be much higher. What is your comment?**

A: It was an unfortunate incident and we the Akharas were first to con- d-ole it and even suspended our Amrit Snan till the situation normalized, and the pilgrims who came from far-flung areas took the dip in the Sangam. As you are aware, on that day, there were around 8 to 10 crore people in and around the Kumbh. There were also some people who were against the Sanatan ideology. So 'Katchadhari' people tried to create disturbances, but it was controlled by the security forces in time. But I can say that when

there are big gatherings, such incidents happen.

**Q: The Opposition blamed the Centre and the state government for the incident.**

A: The Opposition leaders and 'anti-Sanatani' forces are not happy witnessing such unity among the Hindus for the first time in the country. When they could not find anything to criticize the government, the stampede has given them an opportunity to defame the government and even our seers.

These opposition leaders are giving statements without any basis and even people have now rejected their views. It is on record that around 40 crore pilgrims have visited Mahakumbh and appreciated the facilities and arrangements provided by the government. How can these opposition leaders try to blackmail the majority Hindus?

**Q: There have been some reels and clippings on social media about alleged mismanagement at Mahakumbh. Some of these had also shown the negative view point of seers.**

A: The anti-Hindu forces had employed several YouTubers to dent the image of the Mahakumbh. They took videos and photos to create a negative narrative of the Hindu-Sanatani congregation. This was the reason that these so-called Leftist YouTubers picked up some fake saints and sadhus to defame the Sanatan Dharma.

I personally do not rule out that the stampede that happened on January 29 could be the handiwork of these forces.



**Q: Several opposition leaders and even some environmentalists have raised the issue of a polluted Sangam.**

A: I have also heard about it and seen it in the media. But I ask you, did any of the devotees complain about it or did people fall ill? These anti-Sanatani forces are trying everything to create confusion among the Hindus to suspend their yatra to Prayagraj. But all their conspiracies had failed, and people in large numbers have bathed in Sangam and other places, and more will come till Shivratri on February 26.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other dignitaries have also bathed in the so-called polluted

Sangam. These types of conspiracies are always hatched by these anti-Hindu forces just to create a division among the society.

**Q: Shankaracharya Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati has even demanded the resignation of Yogi Adityanath over the stampede incident.**

A: Asking for resignation from the chief minister is due to deep frustration and nothing else. This is shameful for us. And a 'sadhu' should not be involved in politics. But I can definitely comment that these types of saints are like vultures who try to damage their own community and religion.

# US policies a historical throwback

TAKENORI INOKI

Will the start of U.S. President Donald Trump's second administration lead to a foundational change in U.S. trade policy? Both Japanese companies and their counterparts elsewhere in the world have strong interests in and serious fears about what will eventually happen. It is quite difficult to predict how the returning president will affect the world economic order in the medium and long terms.

One area of interest is what structural changes will occur in global trade and production as a result of the additional tariffs on exports to the United States.

Setting higher tariff barriers means the forceful exercise of a sovereign right of a nation. But it cannot be ignored that the sovereignty of the United States is weakening. This is because mega companies with global operations have gotten around various regulations at home and abroad, and accumulated swathes of confidential information regarding national security and financial transactions. They are U.S. titans that have achieved rapid growth by accelerating industrial transformation through the development of information and communications technology.

When we think about the United States' further tilt toward trade protectionism via additional tariffs, we cannot overlook the U.S. history of utilizing tariffs as the economic basis of governance for a long time after its foundation. Trump's remark that "Tariff is the most beautiful word" other than "religion" or "love" doesn't sound like a joke.

Going back to the 19th century, tariffs accounted for almost 90 per cent of federal government revenue until the Civil War. Historically speaking, tariffs were a primary revenue source for the federal government — the United States made it possible to levy income taxes for the first time when a relevant constitutional amendment was ratified just before World War I.

During the two world wars, the U.S. government became gargantuan, to the extent that tariffs' portion of federal budget resources decreased greatly in relative terms. Especially after the establishment of the post-World War II system for promoting free and multilateral trade under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the role of tariffs receded considerably.

Nonetheless, tariffs remained as a strategic tool for the U.S. government in terms of both budget revenue and trade policy. This was proven when Joe Biden's administration succeeded the first Trump administration without any fundamental change in tariff policy.

In February 2018, the Trump administration unleashed a salvo of tariffs on imported goods, with levies of 30-50 per cent on imported large washing machines and solar panels. Additional tariffs on steel and aluminum were imposed on certain countries in March 2018, and in June of that year they were expanded to the European Union, Canada and Mexico. Also in June 2018, Trump surprised the world by announcing plans to slap an additional 25 per cent tariff on \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods.

The tariff policy of Biden's administration was no different from that of its predecessor. In May 2024, Biden announced plans to double tariffs on Chinese solar cells and triple them on Chinese lithium-ion batteries for electric vehicles, as a measure to rival Trump in drawing labour union support.

Trump's imposition of the additional tariffs described above was not based on legislation newly passed by the U.S. Congress. He applied provisions of such existing trade laws as Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 and Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which authorize measures including the issuance of trade-related executive orders based on investigations by the U.S. Trade Representative's office, the Department of Commerce and the International Trade Commission. This process strongly reflects the United States' tradition of flexibly applying its Constitution as a protectionist nation.

What makes it difficult to understand Trump's economic policies is his tactic to dramatize, like an actor, his intellectual negotiations as a businessperson. This approach can be described as a remnant of the isolationist past of the U.S. that is deeply rooted in the undercurrents of the political and business spheres; this is patriotic nationalism that is unwilling to correspond with changes in the times.

In 2017, shortly after taking the oath, Trump announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, calling the TPP a potential disaster for the U.S. economy and the backbone of the national sovereignty of the United States. Trump warned that the trade agreement would result in dividing the global economy.

However, the national sovereignty of the United States has already begun weakening within itself — from a different direction. Those gigantic companies with global operations in the cutting-edge fields of information and communications technology are now wielding overwhelming political power in areas beyond individual nations' sovereignty. As a result, they now are highly influential in those realms that governments used to exclusively control and administer.

For example, cryptocurrency — which has become possible thanks to information and communications technology — poses a threat to the currency-issuing authority of the U.S. federal government. Further, communication of data, including classified information related to national security, is reliant on undersea cable networks operated by private-sector companies.

As shown by the appointment of billionaire Elon Musk to lead the newly created Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), the CEOs of some global mega companies have now secured increasingly great sway in U.S. politics. Musk has said he is neither Democrat nor Republican and called himself "socially liberal and fiscally conservative." In a nutshell, that means that he has chosen to hold an important government position so he



can control the government at will as a business tycoon.

Meanwhile, the trade war between the United States and China has the potential to profoundly change the "dollar-based order" in the medium to long term. Even though the Chinese economy is reportedly stagnant, the weakening of the dollar's status as the world's key currency is likely to be the greatest factor threatening the United States' position in the world.

China and Russia appear inclined to increase the shares of their own currencies, instead of the dollar, in foreign exchange settlements, as a way of countering U.S. economic sanctions against them. Considering the risk for them of losing trade and investment due to the difficulty of accessing dollars, it would be natural for them to seek the establishment of a non-dollar denominated international settlement network.

Countries that opt to move toward strengthening the existing dollar-dominated international settlement network from the viewpoint of security enhancement are likely to keep the supremacy of the United States and that of the dollar intact. If Washington tightens economic sanctions against China and Russia, even countries friendly to the United States may begin looking for alternatives to the U.S. currency to avert risks.

A close check of currency shares in foreign exchange transactions

makes it possible to see one aspect of the issue. According to the Bank of International Settlements' Triennial Survey of global foreign exchange turnover, the U.S. dollar's share remained the largest in 2022, followed by the euro, the Japanese yen and the British pound, in that order. But the Chinese yuan came in fifth with a global share of 3.5 per cent as of 2022, compared with 0.2 per cent in 2007, or one year prior to the 2008 financial crisis.

While the United States and other major developed countries have been reducing reliance on trade with China, more attention should be paid to the fact that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been strengthening two-way trade relations with China.

The world's economic order is faced with fundamental problems, which are beyond what the unilateralist Trump imagines. People like us tend to criticize them for their "appearance of frivolity" or "lack of virtue." We should not forget the importance of assessing their policies from a medium to long-term perspective, putting emotional opinion aside.

Instead of merely criticizing Trump as an "actor," we need to carefully scrutinize how his trade policy will affect the world's trade structure and economic order.

The Japan News/ANN.

## OCCASIONAL NOTE

IT is idle to speculate on what might have happened had Mr. Gilligan won the toss in any of the previous test matches, but one may be excused for cherishing the opinion that the rubber would as yet have been undecided instead of already lost. This belief is strengthened by the news of the splendid start made by the M. C. C. in the match now in progress at Melbourne. With the score at 382 for five wickets at lunch on the second day, England has laid the foundations of an impressive, if not a winning total, and for this happy state of affairs, she is once more mainly indebted to Herbert Sutcliffe who, by scoring his fourth century in the present series of tests and amassing a record number of runs, has proved himself quite one of the outstanding batsmen of all time. With the exception of Chapman none of the first six batsmen has failed, and with Hendren and Whysall well-set and care-free, the Australian bowlers were faced with a gloomy prospect when play was resumed after lunch.

## NEWS ITEMS

## MORE FLOODS IN ENGLAND MANY VESSELS IN DISTRESS

(BRITISH OFFICIAL WIRELESS.) LEAFIELD (OXFORD), FEB. 13.

LAST night's gale, which at times reached a velocity of 68 miles an hour, was accompanied by heavy rain, and gauges in the London area recorded a fall of three-quarters of an inch. Reports from many parts of the country state that large areas are again under water, and as rain has continued intermittently during the day it is feared that considerable damage will result from flooding. Owing to damage to the overhead wires and to the flooding of underground cables, inland telephone and telegraph communication has suffered considerable interference, and some of the Continental lines are also down.

In the English Channel, where the gale still continues, the Continental boat services are being maintained under difficult conditions, but many vessels are taking shelter in harbour. Motor launches were in much request to tow small vessels in distress into sheltered waters.

The steamer Ardgavel, bound from Rotterdam to Greenock, was reported drifting unmanageable off the Lizard late last night. Two drifters went to the assistance of the vessel and attempted to take her in tow, but the hawsers parted in the violent seas. A Falmouth tug arrived when the steamer was in a dangerous position and towed her to Falmouth after several hours' buffeting. The rudder of the Ardgavel was broken.

The landslide due to heavy rain and floods at Middlewood, in Cheshire, caused considerable dislocation of railway traffic this morning between Buxton and Manchester.

## BRITAIN & THE PROTOCOL

## MR. CHAMBERLAIN & PACT RUMOURS

(BRITISH OFFICIAL WIRELESS.) LEAFIELD, (OXFORD), FEB. 13.

FOR some time past, and in various ways, the Government has been, giving most careful attention to the Geneva Protocol. That document, as the foreign Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain, stated yesterday in the House of Commons, "raises the whole question of disarmament, and therefore of alliances." It is obvious, therefore, that the whole series of current problems requires to be surveyed both broadly and in detail.

A special sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence was appointed some time ago in this connexion, and is understood to have prepared various memoranda for the consideration of the Government. Meanwhile consultations between the Home and Dominion Governments continue by cable, as the result of which the British Government are in possession of considerable data bearing upon the effect which the provision of the Protocol would have upon the particular interests of the respective Dominions. It is of primary importance that an Imperial policy should be evolved upon what is a question affecting all parts of the world.

Mr. Chamberlain's statement also set at rest various rumours by its denial of the report that negotiations for a separate pact had been begun with any other country. The Foreign Secretary, moreover, gave a pledge that the Government would not commit Britain to the Protocol or to any French obligation of a comparable character without the consent of Parliament—an undertaking greeted with general approval.

## DIFFICULTIES OF MR. MACDONALD

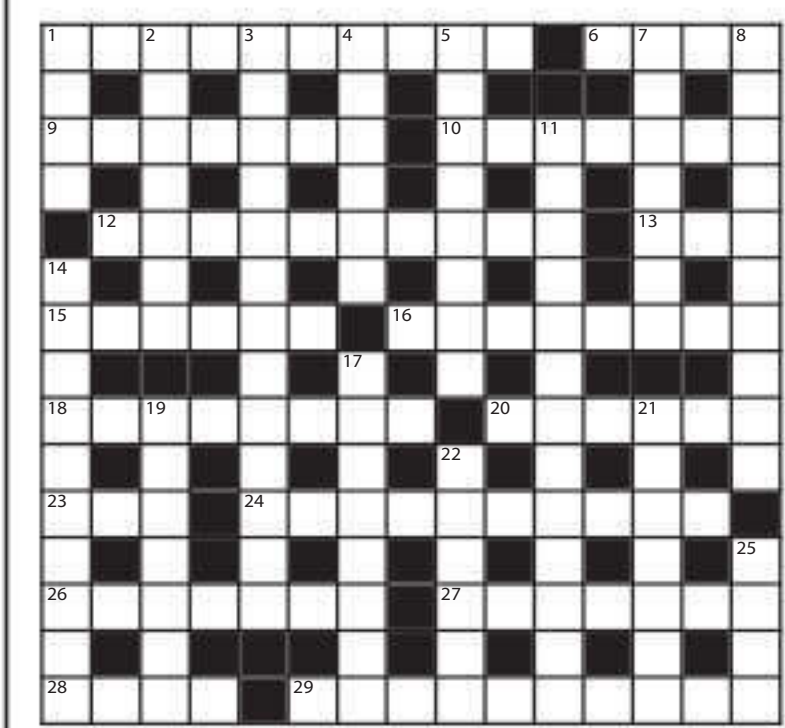
EXTREMISTS IN THE LABOUR PARTY

(“TIMES” SPECIAL SERVICE.) LONDON, FEB. 14.

MR. Ramsay MacDonald, on his return from Jamaica, is finding the leadership of the Labour party no easy matter. The political correspondent of The Times says he is confronted by the fact that the party still contains a group of “irreconcilables” over which he has little or no control. Numerically this group is small, but vocally it easily drowns the great majority of the party, who are beginning to grow restless owing to the continued refusal of the minority to respect any point of view but their own.

## CROSSWORD

NO-293049



### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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

### ACROSS

- Carol collects stuff for a bit (10)
- Period of time eating milk-soaked bread? On the contrary (4)
- Spy mother with vacuum perhaps? (7)
- Tickle a playful feline (7)
- Lift chemical in two quart bottle (10)
- Britain's favourite drink is essentially hot water (3)
- Distinction of Nevada city when unoccupied (6)

- Rocky islands in both directions (8)
- Group of left-wingers getting diarrhoea (3,5)
- Fear I must abandon growing situation in Bordeaux? (6)
- Drain noodle juice (3)
- Mostly pleased with Cup a Soup or fruit puree (5,5)
- While arsing around, cuddles Sharon? (7)
- Range of colours displayed by female friend? (7)

- Piece of Megane exhaust found in Clio, perhaps (4)
- Pervert already sat in a perverted manner (4,6)
- Down  
1 Head-hunter ignores Alabama for a bit (4)
- A row, not the first, in public sale (7)
- RAF crew are almost then involved in land battle (6,7)
- Stomach lining, note, can be thrown up (6)

- Stimulant found in 1 bed in 9 (8)
- Washer women at home stopping behind after setback (4-3)
- Tart on romantic rendezvous admitting to sin in small flat (4-1-5)
- Go off with Greek character to get bullets, oddly, and transform difficult situation (4,3,6)
- 1 rib Smiths fans - it's a local custom (10)

- A whim to replace Conservative with fascist, ultimately with unpleasant consequences (2,1,5)
- Prince wearing sexier pants runs out (7)
- Seismologist's unfinished biscuit beginning to rot (7)
- Insect eaten by aggressive spider (6)
- Fed up with bottom of straggly beard (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



Russia suspended its participation in the New START treaty during the Biden administration

epaper.thestatesman.com



# BNP, Jamaat on collision course

Timing of national elections, proportional representation divide the longtime allies

AGENCIES  
THE DAILY STAR/ANN,  
DHAKA, 14 FEBRUARY

The BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami now seem to be poles apart over when the local and parliamentary elections should be held and the proportional representation system in the House.

The fact that their relationship is strained became clear as day last week when the parties took opposing stances on the timing of the polls and on proportional representation.

Yesterday, both parties made statements that hint at new political dynamics ahead of the 13th national polls.

After a Jamaat delegation called on Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the Nirbachon Bhaban yesterday morning, its Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar told reporters that the party demanded that the

national election be held after completing reforms to the state institutions relevant to the electoral process.

He claimed the people want local government polls before the national election and that his party is with the people. He said they also demanded proportional representation in the House.

An hour later, asked about the Jamaat's stance, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said, "We are against proportional representation. We will not support proportional representation in any way because people are not accustomed to it."

Proportional representation is an electoral system in which the distribution of seats corresponds with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party. For example, if a party gets 40 percent of the total votes, the system will allow it to get 40 percent of the seats in parliament.

In Bangladesh, the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system



is practised, in which the candidate receiving the highest number of votes in a constituency wins a seat in parliament.

The Electoral Reform Commission has proposed having an upper and a lower house. It recommended a proportional representation system for the upper house.

It also cited a strong disagreement among political parties regarding the proportional representation system.

Fakhru yesterday said that holding local polls before the national election would push the country further into

instability.

"The sooner the [national] election is held, the easier politics will become. The people will return to a stable situation," he said at a press briefing at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

He said the election is crucial for two reasons. "Firstly, for restoring stability, and secondly, for improving governance in the country, which is currently facing significant challenges."

Fakhru also expressed concerns over the state of education at universities and colleges, saying, "It is very difficult to address these

issues without an elected government."

Yesterday, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, now in Dubai, said the national election could be held in December this year.

Late last year, he had hinted the polls could be in late 2025 or mid 2026, after which the crack in BNP-Jamaat relationship started becoming more visible.

The BNP and its allies had been saying they want the national election with minimal reforms done so that the elected government can carry out all other reforms. They have also been pushing for the polls to be held in the middle of this year.

The Jamaat has been demanding polls after necessary reforms and without any hurry.

When Yunus on January 8 said they were simultaneously preparing for national and local body elections, it pushed the parties even further apart.

## Bangladesh: Dictating terms to Yunus govt, student outfit sets deadline to ban Awami League



AGENCIES  
DHAKA, 14 FEBRUARY

Student Against Discrimination (SAD), the group behind the nationwide protest and violence in Bangladesh in July and August 2024 leading to the fall of government led by former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, is now aggressively demanding a ban on Awami League.

On Thursday, the student leaders renewed their demand to ban Hasina's party, this time demanding the action within 24 hours, local media reported.

The development comes

at a time when the United Nations has clearly recommended the interim government in Bangladesh against banning any political party for the sake of a multiparty democracy.

"Refrain from political party bans that would undermine a return to a genuine multiparty democracy and effectively disenfranchise a large part of the Bangladeshi electorate," said a fact-finding report published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

In October, the interim government led by Chief

Adviser Muhammad Yunus had banned Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Awami League, under the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009. The ban cited BCL's alleged involvement in murder, torture, rape, and terrorism, and was seen as a precursor to banning the parent organisation.

The same interim government had lifted ban on radical Islamic party Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir immediately after the fall of Hasina government in August 2024.

In December, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin, during a meeting with election officials at the Chittagong Circuit House, said that the Awami League is allowed to participate in elections unless the government or the judiciary issues a ban against the party.

The student organisation has a reputation of resorting to violence and wields immense influence in the functioning of the current regime.

## The talks shaping Syria's new constitution will exclude Kurdish forces, organisers say

AGENCIES  
DAMASCUS, 14 FEBRUARY

The conference to chart Syria's political future will include all segments of Syrian society except for the Kurdish-led administration in the northeast and loyalists of the repressive former government of Bashar Assad, organisers said Thursday.

"This will be the first real gathering of Syrians in 75 years," said Huda al-Atassi, a former detainee and a member of the organizing committee for Syria's national dialogue conference. She read the panel's statement at a news conference in Damascus.

The conference will cover "social, political, economic and governance issues, laying the foundations for a solid future based on national consensus, justice, reform and

inclusion," she said.

In late January, Syria's former rebel factions appointed Islamist former rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa as interim president of the country after an offensive he led toppled Assad in late December. They also threw out Syria's constitution, adopted under Assad, saying a new charter would be drafted.

Most of the former insurgent factions also agreed to dissolve and join the new Syrian army and security services, but the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in northeastern Syria has so far refused to do the same.

SDF forces have been clashing with Turkish-backed groups in northern Syria, and the Kurds are concerned about losing political and cultural gains they have made since carving out their own

enclave in the northeast during the country's civil war.

Discussions are ongoing between the SDF and the government in Damascus.

Formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, al-Sharaa is the head of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which led the lightning offensive that ousted Assad. The group was once affiliated with al-Qaida but has since denounced its former ties.

In recent years, al-Sharaa has sought to cast himself as a champion of pluralism and tolerance and promised to protect the rights of women and religious minorities.

Since Assad's fall, HTS has become the de facto ruling party and has set up an interim government largely composed of officials from the local government it previously ran in rebel-held Idlib province.

## Bristling at 'Gulf of Mexico' name change on maps, Mexico says it might sue Google

AGENCIES  
MEXICO CITY, 14 FEBRUARY

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Thursday that her government wouldn't rule out filing a civil lawsuit against Google if it maintains its stance of calling the stretch of sea between northeastern Mexico and the southeastern United States the "Gulf of America."

The area, long named the Gulf of Mexico across the world, has gained age political spotlight after President Donald Trump declared he would change the Gulf's name.

Sheinbaum, in her morning news conference, said the president's decree is restricted to the "continental shelf of the United States" because Mexico still controls much of the Gulf. "We have sover-

eignty over our continental shelf," she said.

Sheinbaum said that despite the fact that her government sent a letter to Google saying that the company was "wrong" and that "the entire Gulf of Mexico cannot be called the Gulf of America," the company has insisted on maintaining the nomenclature.

It was not immediately clear where such a suit would be filed.

Google reported last month on its X account, formerly Twitter, that it maintains a "long-standing practice of applying name changes when they have been updated in official government sources."

As of Thursday, how the Gulf appeared on Google Maps was dependent on the user's location and other data.

## Construction site catches fire in South Korea, leaving at least 6 dead



AGENCIES  
SEOUL, 14 FEBRUARY

A fire broke out at a resort construction site in the South Korean city of Busan on Friday, killing at least six people, fire officials said.

About 100 workers man-

aged to evacuate the site, while another 14 were rescued by helicopter from the top of the structure, said Hong Moon-shik, chief of the Busan Gijang District Fire Department.

Hundreds of firefighters were deployed to the site and had largely extinguished the

blaze by Friday afternoon, hours after it was reported at around 10:20 a.m.

Hong said six people were found unconscious on the first floor of the structure, near where the fire was believed to have started. All six were later pronounced dead at hospitals. At least other 25 people sustained minor injuries.

He said the cause of the fire wasn't immediately clear. Television footage showed gray-black smoke and flames rising from the site and a helicopter approaching the building as part of rescue efforts.

Shortly after the blaze was reported, the country's acting president, Choi Sang-mok, instructed officials to deploy "all available personnel and equipment" to put out the fire.

## Russian crypto expert Alexander Vinnik returns to Moscow in Russia-US prisoner swap, reports say

AGENCIES  
MOSCOW, 14 FEBRUARY

Alexander Vinnik, a Russian cryptocurrency expert who faced Bitcoin fraud charges in the United States, returned to Russia on Thursday after being freed in a swap that saw Moscow release American Marc Fogel, Russian news agencies reported.

Vinnik arrived in Moscow after being released from custody in California, Russia's state *Tass* and *RIA-Novosti* news agencies reported.

They initially cited Russian aviation officials and his lawyer saying that he was flown in from Turkey, but *RIA-Novosti* later quoted Vinnik as saying that he actually



arrived in Moscow on board a U.S. government plane via Poland.

He thanked both Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump for his release.

"I'm already at home with

my family, and I can't quite believe it yet," *RIA-Novosti* quoted him as saying.

Vinnik, who operated cryptocurrency exchange BTC-e, was arrested in 2017 in Greece at the request of the U.S. on cryptocurrency fraud

charges and was later extradited to the United States where he pleaded guilty last year to conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Steve Witkoff, a special envoy for Trump, left Russia with Fogel earlier in the week and brought him to the White House, where Trump greeted him on Tuesday.

Fogel, an American history teacher who was deemed wrongfully detained by Russia, was arrested in August 2021 for possession of marijuana and was serving a 14-year prison sentence. The White House said his release was part of a diplomatic thaw that could advance negotiations to end the fighting in Ukraine.

## Armed fighters have raped scores of children in eastern Congo, UNICEF says

AGENCIES  
DAKAR, 14 FEBRUARY

The U.N. children's fund on Thursday accused armed men, likely on both sides of the conflict in eastern Congo, of raping scores of children over the past weeks as rebels expand their footprint and push government forces out.

The accusation came as the conflict in the mineral-rich region shows no signs of abating, UNICEF cited reports of the abuses, saying the offenders were apparently from among both the M23 rebels and the government forces fighting them.

"In the North and South Kivu provinces, we are receiving horrific reports of grave violations against children by parties to the conflict, including

rape and other forms of sexual violence at levels surpassing anything we have seen in recent years," UNICEF's Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement.

"One mother recounted to our staff how her six daughters, the youngest just 12 years old, were systematically raped by armed men while searching for food," Russell added.

Health facilities in the restive region reported during the week from 27 January to 2 February a total of 572 rape cases — more than a fivefold increase compared to the week before, Lianne Gutter, UNICEF's communication chief in Congo, told *The Associated Press*. Of those, 170 of those treated were children, she added.

**Iran rejects US accusation of funding, arming Yemen's Houthis:** Iran's Permanent Mission to the United Nations (UN) in New York has rejected the US accusation that Tehran is providing the Yemen-based Houthis with financial resources, arms support, and military training. ■ AGENCIES

## Thorny problems with Valentine's roses: Invasive bugs and toxic pesticides hurt Kenya's exports

AGENCIES  
ISINYA, 14 FEBRUARY

The red rose: a token of love for many, and for Kenya, a major economic sector. More than a third of Kenya's flower exports where the roses, in particular, are prized for their longevity and vase performance, the Kenyan government says.

What can't be seen within these uniformly perfect blooms is a tiny larva laid inside the rosebuds, laid by the false codling moth (*Thaumatotibia leucotreta*), which doesn't just feed on roses but can also affect fruits and vegetables.

The moth has been devastating crops across Africa. The European Union is intensifying measures to prevent its spread into Europe, classifying FCM among organisms targeted for regulation as quarantine pests, with consequences for hard-pressed Kenyan farmers.

According to the Kenya Flower Council, the detection

of a single live FCM at any developmental stage leads to the rejection of an entire flower consignment.

"They are too strict," laments Jacky Mwanzia, a marketer with Isinya Roses in Kajjido County, south of Nairobi. "Most of our shipments to the EU are quarantined, and it takes time. It is a waste because we have to meet customers' demand, so we are looking for alternative markets where these measures are not too strict, as we lose about 30 per cent of our revenue."

Nationally, the flower industry employs half a million people, according to a Central Bank of Kenya 2021 report, and is estimated by the National Bureau of Statistics to be worth over \$800 million. Roses make up about 66 per cent of cut flower exports, at an estimated value of about \$300 million.

The Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) reports that since 2020, EU sampling of Kenyan roses



has increased from 5 to 25 per cent, leading to more frequent quarantines and shipment rejections.

Despite existing stringent protocols, the EU is expected to enforce even tougher restrictions in the coming months. Due to ongoing non-compliance by exporters, the EU will impose special requirements applicable to Kenyan cut roses, reports the Committee Linking Entrepreneur-

ship, Agriculture, and Development, a French-based network of companies that engages in sustainable agriculture. These new rules take effect on 26 April 2025.

Kenya's warm climate and soils are ideal for growing roses but also favour pests, so pesticides are routinely used to minimise losses. A 2020 study by the Route To Food Initiative of the Nairobi branch of the Heinrich Boell

Foundation, a non-profit, found that 75 per cent of pesticides used in Kenya are highly hazardous. Nearly half are banned in the EU but are still used in Kenya largely due to lower regulatory standards.

Farmers who want to export to the EU have to stay within the bloc's pesticide regulations while also trying to control FCM populations. It can be a tricky balancing

act.

"The EU has a strict zero tolerance on caterpillars and on several chemicals that, given the current weather conditions, we must use. Otherwise, we cannot meet our production targets," says Anantha Kumar, marketing manager at Isinya Roses. The company is a major local employer, with a workforce of up to 1,000 people, depending on seasonal demand.

As a result, the company is now eyeing other markets with less stringent regulations. "The Middle East market is ready to accept our products, and it is really growing," Kumar says.

In spite of the challenges, the growers at Isinya Roses are not ready to abandon the European market just yet. They are trying natural pest control methods, including releasing beneficial insects, companion planting, using pheromone traps, and applying natural fertilisers and composting instead of chemical fertilisers.

**RESCHEDULING OF TWO TRAINS**  
For Track and S&T Maintenance work in various sections over Howrah division, Traffic Block will be necessary on **16.02.2025 (Sunday)** during day time. Consequently, the following trains will be rescheduled on **16.02.2025 (Sunday):** (i) **53009 Katwa - Azimganj Passenger** will be rescheduled at 12.15 hrs. instead of 12.00 hrs. from Katwa. (ii) **37749 Bandel-Katwa Local** will be rescheduled at 12.45 hrs. instead of 12.15 hrs. from Bandel. **Special Note:** Special or late running trains & any further newly introduced train/parcel train/TOD during block period, if any, will be suitably controlled/diverted enroute. Passengers are requested to follow the public address system at stations. Inconvenience is regretted.  
Divisional Railway Manager, Howrah  
**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
Follow us at: @EasternRailway @easternrailwayheadquarter

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION REGARDING ENERGIZATION**  
**Line of Budge Budge Lower Yard**  
Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed sections of the undemoted section of **Eastern Railway** that the 25000 volt, 50 Hz., A.C. overhead traction wires will be energized on or after **01.03.2025**. On & from **01.03.2025** the overhead traction line shall be always treated as live and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line.  
**Section: (1)** Electrification of Existing un-wired line of Budge Budge Lower Yard at Budge Budge from Loc. No. 26/1A, Ch.26/12.50 (from Sealdah) to Loc. No. 27/8, Ch.27/394.00 (from Sealdah) [5.022 TKM] of Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway for public carriage of goods and passenger traffic (Electrified Section). **(2)** Electrification of Existing un-wired line of Budge Budge Lower Yard to FCI at Budge Budge from Loc. No. 26/8, Ch.26/197.00 (from Sealdah) to Loc. No. 27/FCI/8, Ch.27/425.50 (from Sealdah) [1.151 TKM] of Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway for public carriage of goods and passenger traffic (Electrified Section).  
**Date of Energization : 01.03.2025**  
**"WARNING TO ROAD USERS"**  
It is notified for the information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 KV A.C. electric traction over the above mentioned sections of **Sealdah Division of Eastern Railway**, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear height of **4.78 m** above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire (contact wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 m above the Rail level at level crossings. Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances. **The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows:** (i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as to the railway line. (ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself. (iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.  
Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/Traction Distribution, Sealdah  
**EASTERN RAILWAY**  
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THUMBNAILS

**Invesco India Business Cycle Fund:** Invesco Mutual Fund on Friday launched its new fund Invesco India Business Cycle Fund (an open ended equity scheme following business cycles based investing theme). The new fund seeks to generate long-term capital appreciation by investing in equity and equity related instruments with a focus on riding business cycles through dynamic allocation between various sectors and stocks at different stages of business cycles in the economy.

**Mahindra Manulife Value Fund:** Mahindra Manulife Mutual Fund introduced the Mahindra Manulife Value Fund, an open-ended equity scheme designed for investors seeking long-term growth through a value investing approach. The Fund aims to identify and invest in fundamentally strong yet undervalued companies, unlocking their potential for sustainable returns. The Fund aims to generate long-term capital appreciation by investing in a diversified portfolio of equity and equity-related instruments of fundamentally strong yet undervalued companies.

## WPI inflation eases to 2.31pc in Jan amid decline in food prices

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

The wholesale price index (WPI) inflation eased to 2.31 per cent in January down from 2.37 per cent in December 2024, according to data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry on Friday.

Food article prices declined but there was a rising costs in the manufacturing of food products and textiles.

Data from the ministry said the positive rate of inflation in January, 2025 is primarily due to increase in prices of manufacture of food products, food articles, other manufacturing, non-food articles and manufacture of textiles etc.

The index for Primary Articles decreased by 2.01 per cent in January. Price of food articles (-3.62 per cent) decreased in January, 2025 as compared to December, 2024.



The Price of crude petroleum & natural gas (6.34 per cent), non-food articles (0.66 per cent) and minerals (0.22 per cent) increased in January, 2025 as compared to December, 2024.

WPI Food Index fell to 7.47 percent in January 2025, compared to 8.89 per cent last month, suggesting a slight easing in food price pressures.

Fuel prices declined by 2.78 percent in January, compared to a 3.79 per cent drop in December. Manufacturing



approach to strengthen bilateral trade across the goods and services sector. There is a renewed commitment to making greenfield investments in high-value industries in each other's countries."

He shared that the leaders also unveiled plans to finalise a new 10-year framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership, running from 2025 to 2035.

"The leaders announced plans to finalise a new 10-year framework for the US-India Major Defence Partnership in the 21st century. This is a framework that will run from 2025 to 2035. They

also agreed to move forward on ongoing defence procurement negotiations for a number of platforms, including land and air systems and coproduction agreements. There was also an agreement to initiate discussions on the reciprocal defence procurement agreement," Misri said.

During the meet, the leaders recognised that this level of ambition would require new, fair-trade terms, the leaders announced plans to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of

2025.

They committed to designate senior representatives to advance these negotiations and to ensure that the trade relationship fully reflects the aspirations of the COM-PACT.

To advance this innovative, wide-ranging BTA, the U.S. and India will take an integrated approach to strengthen and deepen bilateral trade across the goods and services sector, and will work towards increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and deepening supply chain integration.

Further, the US President welcomed India's recent measures to lower tariffs on U.S. products of interest in the areas of bourbon, motorcycles, ICT products and metals, as well as measures to enhance market access for U.S. agricultural products, like alfalfa hay and duck meat, and medical devices.

India also expressed appreciation for U.S. measures taken to enhance exports of Indian mangoes and pomegranates to the United States.

The two sides will also work together to increase trade in agricultural goods.

## Market falls for 8th session for first time in two years



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Benchmark indices fell for an eighth straight session for the first time in two years on Friday.

At close, Sensex was down 199 points or 0.3 per cent at 75,939, and the Nifty was down 102 points or 0.4 per cent at 22,929. About 642 shares advanced, 3,200 shares declined, and 73 shares were unchanged.

The downfall was amid the fears of relentless FII selling and weak Q3 earnings.

Notably, the Nifty is currently 13 per cent below its all-time high, while Sensex has declined 12 per cent from its peak.

BSE Midcap and BSE Smallcap indices nosediving nearly over 3 per cent each. The smallcap index is down around 21 per cent from

its December record high, while midcaps are 19.5 per cent below their peak closing level in September.

Significantly, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies dropped below Rs 400 lakh crore for the first time since June 2024.

Among the sectors, all 13 major indices were in the red, with Nifty Energy, Media, PSU Bank, and Pharma taking the hardest hits, each falling 2-3 per cent.

Pharma stocks came under selling pressure amid reciprocal tariff threats from the US.

On Nifty 50, the biggest losers were Bharat Electronics, Adani Enterprises, Trent, Adani Ports, and Sun Pharma, tumbling 3-4 per cent. Britannia, ICICI Bank, Nestle, Infosys, and TCS emerged as the top gainers, edging up 0.7-1 per cent.

Among the individual

performers, Hindalco Industries posted a 2 per cent gain propelling its shares to Rs 615, a positive shift stemming from company's Q3FY25 performance.

Maruti Suzuki India's shares saw a 1 per cent appreciation, reaching Rs 12,780 after the international brokerage firm HSBC reiterating its "buy" recommendation.

United Breweries' stock initially demonstrated significant upward movement, climbing as high as 6.6 per cent to Rs 2,166.

On the losing side was the shares of ITILtd declining by 5 per cent followed by the release of company's Q3FY25 results.

NATCO Pharma's shares experienced a further 10 per cent decline, extending the previous day's 20 per cent drop.

Manappuram Finance's shares fell 5 per cent, reaching Rs 183. This significant drop was triggered by the company's weaker-than-expected Q3FY25 results.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) have been net sellers in Indian equities amid global economic uncertainty and a strengthening US Dollar.

The fall of Sensex and Nifty was amid the fears of relentless FII selling and weak Q3 earnings.

## RBI penalises Shriram Finance and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) imposed monetary penalty on Shriram Finance and Ujjivan Small Finance Bank, amounting to Rs 5.80 lakh and Rs 6.70 lakh, respectively.

The penalty was over for non-compliance with regulatory guidelines after a thorough review by the central bank.

RBI said that following a supervisory review, it identified multiple instances of non-compliance with its directives, and a notice was issued to Shriram Finance, seeking an explanation as to why a penalty should not be imposed for its regulatory lapses.

After reviewing the company's response, additional submissions, and oral representations during a personal



hearing, RBI found that the company had failed to implement a system for the periodic

review of risk categorization of accounts.

Additionally, certain agree-

ments with Direct Sales Agents (DSAs) lacked a mandatory clause granting RBI the right

to inspect their books and accounts. The company was also found to have failed in sharing information regarding the Relationship Segment of corporates with Credit Information Companies for the financial year 2022-23.

RBI also assessed the Ujjivan Small Finance Bank's financial position as of 31 March, 2023, and shared that show-cause notice was issued regarding regulatory non-compliance.

It upheld the charge that the bank had failed to issue loan agreements to certain borrowers at the time of loan sanction or disbursement.

RBI clarified that the penalties were imposed solely for deficiencies in regulatory compliance and do not question the validity of any transactions or agreements entered into by the entities with their customers.

## BSNL bounces back into profit for first time since 2007

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

State-owned telecom major Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) on Friday reported a profit of Rs 262 crore in the third quarter of the current financial year, marking its first return to profitability since 2007.

This milestone reflects the company's focus on innovation, aggressive network expansion, cost optimisation, and customer-centric service improvements, the BSNL said in a statement.

BSNL chairman and managing director A. Ravi Kant J. Ravi, said: "We expect revenue growth to improve further, exceeding 20% by the end of the financial year. Revenue from Mobility, FTTH, and



Leased Lines has increased by 15 per cent, 18 per cent, and 14 per cent, respectively, over Q3 of the previous year.

Additionally, BSNL has successfully reduced its finance cost and overall expenditure, leading to a decline in losses by over Rs 1,800 crore compared to last year, he pointed out.

The government's support through strategic revival initiatives, including spectrum allocation, and capital infusion

have played a key role in bolstering our operations, Ravi said.

He said that BSNL has introduced new innovations such as National WiFi Roaming, BiTV-Free Entertainment for all mobile customers, and IFTV for all FTTH customers.

The continuous focus on quality of service and service assurance has further strengthened customer trust and reinforced the BSNL's position as a leading telecom

service provider in India, Ravi said.

"This Rs 262 crore profit underscores the BSNL's resurgence and long-term sustainability. As we continue on this growth trajectory, we remain committed to delivering higher value to our shareholders, expanding market opportunities, and driving innovation," he added.

The BSNL posted a robust double-digit growth across also its services with mobility services revenue growing by 15 per cent during the October-December quarter, Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) revenue increasing by 18 per cent and leased line services revenue clocking a 14 per cent jump over the same quarter of the previous year.

The BSNL has been aggressively

expanding its network with an accelerated 4G rollout and fiber-optic infrastructure upgrades.

It has also strengthened connectivity across urban and rural areas and introduced customer-centric digital innovations with national WiFi roaming for seamless internet access across networks, the BSNL chief added.

This financial turnaround underscores BSNL's commitment to providing high-quality, affordable telecom services while driving India's digital growth. The company remains dedicated to enhancing service delivery, expanding its customer base, and contributing to the Digital India and Atmanirbhar Bharat vision, according to a company statement.

## Asian Paints to sell Indonesia business for ₹48 crore, at a ₹90 crore loss

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
MUMBAI, 14 FEBRUARY



Mumbai-headquartered Asian Paints officially announced in a regulatory filing on Friday that it has decided to divest its business operations in Indonesia.

The company's wholly-owned subsidiary company called Asian Paints International Pvt Ltd, Singapore (APIPL), has entered into a share purchase agreement to sell off its entire stake in its Indonesian operations to Berger Paints Singapore Pte Limited, Singapore (BPSPL).

Asian Paints stated that the deal, which is valued at Singapore Dollars (SGD) 7.5 million (approximately Rs

48 crore), is expected to be closed on or before 31 March, 2025.

APIPL had set up two wholly-owned entities, namely PT Asian Paints Indonesia and PT Asian Paints Colour Indonesia, nine years ago, in order to tap business opportunities in Indonesia. However, the company stated that its business in Indonesia remained sub-scale and immaterial to the company's overall international operations, despite several strategic

steps to enhance their scale.

"Based on the strategic review of all its businesses, APIPL has decided to divest its operations in Indonesia. The divestment is expected to lead to a recognition of loss of about Rs 90 crores in the consolidated financials of the company, subject to necessary adjustments at the closing of the transaction," according to the Asian Paints statement.

Asian Paints Managing Director & CEO, Amit Syngle, stated: "This announced divestment of our operations in Indonesia will enable us to focus on priority markets of Middle East and South Asia and strengthen our international portfolio".

## Global e-commerce market expected to hit \$11 trillion by 2028

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

The global e-commerce market is on track for significant growth and is expected to reach \$11 trillion by 2028, a report said on Friday.

The expansion is being fuelled by rapid technological advancements, improved delivery services, and rising internet penetration worldwide.

The report by GlobalData, a leading data and analytics firm, predicts that e-commerce transactions will grow at a

compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 11.1 per cent between 2023 and 2028.

The US continues to dominate the sector, while companies worldwide are focusing on innovation, data-driven strategies, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) compliance to stay competitive in the evolving market.

"Consumers are also concerned with the social and governance factors of ESG," Aisha U-K Umaru, Strategic Intelligence Analyst at GlobalData said.

Umaru added that it remains high on the agenda for e-commerce companies, both to comply with relevant regulations and to meet consumer demands.

Companies must now ensure compliance with environmental regulations to avoid legal risks, the report said.

"Terms like 'carbon neutral' and 'environmentally friendly' are being closely monitored, making it crucial for e-commerce firms to align with global sustainability guidelines.

## SEBI rejects US businessman Gaekwad's bid for competing offer in Religare stake sale

AGENCIES  
MUMBAI, 14 FEBRUARY

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Friday rejected a request from US-based businessman Danny Gaekwad to make a competing offer for a majority stake in Religare Enterprises Limited.

Gaekwad had proposed an offer that was 17 per cent higher than the Rs 235-per-share bid made by the Burman family of Dabur for a 26 per

cent stake in the company.

His offer aimed to acquire a 55 per cent stake in Religare. However, the Burman family, responding to Gaekwad's bid, stated that his proposal was not formal as he had only sought SEBI's permission to make the offer.

They also pointed out that he was already late in entering the bidding process.

Earlier, on 28 January, SEBI had returned Gaekwad's letter seeking permission for a competing open offer,



stating that it did not qualify as an exemption under securities law regulations.

Despite facing legal battles in the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court, Gaekwad approached SEBI and the

Reserve Bank of India again for approval.

The Supreme Court had even directed SEBI to expedite its decision.

SEBI's whole-time member, Ashwani Bhatia, in his latest order, once again rejected Gaekwad's request.

"It is noted that although the price offered by Applicant in the proposed competing open offer is Rs. 275 per equity share, (a premium of Rs.40 per equity share over the offer made by the Burman

Group), the Applicant has failed to demonstrate his ability to meet the financial obligation for making the competing open offer," the order read.

He stated that allowing such an exemption would not be in the best interests of Religare's shareholders.

Bhatia added that a competing offer, which is not backed by financial capability, would disrupt market dynamics and erode investor confidence.













# FIH Pro League 2024-25: Indian hockey team gearing up for litmus test at home ground

With all the big guns of world hockey in the fray, the hosts are expected to face a tough task in front of their home crowd

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 14 FEBRUARY

The Indian men's hockey team, currently ranked fifth in the world, is all set to kickstart their highly anticipated FIH Pro League 2024-25 campaign at the iconic Kalinga Hockey Stadium in here.

Led by Khel Ratna awardee Harmanpreet Singh, the Indian squad will open their campaign with two thrilling matches against World No. 7 Spain on February 15 and 16, followed by intense clashes against World No. 4 Germany on February 18 and 19.

India's campaign will open at home, thus offering a prime opportunity for the team to showcase their recent momentum. Following their encounters with Germany, India will take on Ireland on 21 and 22 February, before facing the formidable World No. 2 England on 24 and 25 February.

With their bronze medal triumph at the 2024 Paris Olympics, the Harmanpreet Singh-led side has proven their mettle on the international stage. The team was last seen in action during a two-match Test series at home against Germany in October, where India bounced back from a 2-0 defeat in the first game to defeat the visitors 5-3 in the second. Though Germany won the series via shootout, the competitive performances added confidence to India's preparations for the FIH Pro League.

Earlier, India showcased their prowess by successfully defending their title at the Asian Champions Trophy in September, winning all their matches and cementing their position as one of Asia's



strongest teams.

Harmanpreet will be joined by vice-captain Hardik Singh as they lead a well-balanced squad filled with both experience and youthful talent. Senior players such as Manpreet Singh, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Sumit, Sanjay, Jugraj Singh, and Vivek Sagar Prasad will form the backbone of the team, while emerging stars like Arajjeet Singh Hundal, Angad Bir Singh, and Arshdeep Singh bring fresh energy and skill

to the lineup. "The team is fresh from some fantastic performances in the recently concluded Hockey India League. I am particularly happy to have seen Jugraj winning the top scorer award and this only means well for the Indian team as we have more firepower in our dragflick," expressed Harmanpreet on the eve of their opening encounter.

With a mix of seasoned campaigners and promising youngsters, India will be eager

to make a strong start and challenge some of the world's top teams in the tournament. Moreover, after finishing seventh in the last year's edition of the FIH Pro League, India will be determined to make a strong comeback this season. The team will aim to deliver an improved performance and clinching the top spot, a feat that carries the added reward of automatic qualification for the 2026 World Cup.

He further elaborated,

"This is an important year for us and Pro League truly marks the start of our new Olympic cycle and the international season. It's an important year for us with World Cup qualification (Asia Cup 2025) coming up and Pro League gives us a great opportunity to test where we stand. We are upbeat about our campaign, Spain, Germany and England are strong teams and will take it match-by-match."

Shedding light on the high-

stake competition, chief coach Craig Fulton said, "The next few days will be more like the Olympic Games, with back-to-back matches which is why we have chosen a bigger squad. Since we are starting our campaign here, performance will be on our mind more than ranking points. The other teams are coming here already having played a few matches in Europe, so our focus will be on doing well and winning matches."

## Delhi Open: Poonacha-Lock storm into doubles final



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 14 FEBRUARY

India's Niki Kaliyanda Poonacha and Zimbabwe's Courtney John Lock reached the final of the Delhi Open 2025 doubles event, defeating third seeds Jay Clarke and Johannes Ingildsen 6-2, 7(7)-6(1) at the DLTA Complex on Friday.

The second-seeded pair dominated the opening set before Clarke and Ingildsen mounted a challenge in the second, forcing a tiebreaker. However, Poonacha and Lock held firm to close out the match in an hour and 24 minutes.

Organised by the All India Tennis Association and the Delhi Lawn Tennis Association, the Delhi Open 2025 is an ATP Challenger 75 tournament played on hard courts with USD 100,000 as prize money on offer.

The winner of the singles tournament also rakes in 75 crucial ATP points.

Poonacha and Lock will now compete for the title against the unseeded Japanese pair, Masamichi Imamura and Rio Noguchi, who staged an impressive comeback win against Hynek Barton and Vit Kopriwa.

After losing the first set 1-6, Imamura and Noguchi rallied to win the second set

6-4 and then triumphed in a nail-biting 12-10 final set to secure their place in the final.

The singles quarterfinals provided plenty of action for fans, with all four matches extending beyond 90 minutes. Top seed Vit Kopriwa continued his dominant run, dispatching sixth seed Shintaro Mochizuki 6-2, 6-4 in a high-quality contest.

Meanwhile, second seed Billy Harris was pushed to the limit by Elias Ymer, eventually prevailing 6-2, 4-6, 7(7)-6(1) in a three-set battle.

Third seed Tristan Schoolkate progressed after a demanding battle against qualifier Andre Ilagan that lasted two hours and 44 minutes.

The match included tiebreakers in the opening two sets, but Schoolkate surged ahead in the final set, clinching a 6(2)-7(7), 7(7)-6(1), 6-2 victory.

Completing the semifinal lineup, Frenchman Kyrian Jacquet held off Michael Geerts, securing a 6-3, 7(7)-6(3) victory to book his spot in the last four.

Jacquet will now square up against Kopriwa in the penultimate round while second and third seeds, Harris and Schoolkate, will go head to head for a spot in the final.

## Defending champs Mohun Bagan Super Giant take on Kerala Blasters FC, aim to extend lead



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KOCHI, 14 FEBRUARY

Defending champions Mohun Bagan Super Giant will be raring to continue their impressive run of form during the ongoing season and increase their already formidable lead at the top of the Indian Super League (ISL) points table when they take on Kerala Blasters FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru in Kochi on Saturday.

While the rest of the teams are battling to secure positions in the top six and qualify for the playoffs, the Kolkata giants are hardly bothered by the rest of the competition and are comfortably on their way to successfully defending their League Shield title with their spot in the knockout phase already secure.

The Jose Molina-coached side are placed comfortably atop with 46 points from 20 games, on the back of 14 wins and four draws. However, FC Goa's four wins in their previous five encounters mean that they

have closed gap with the Mariners. The Gaurs trail them by seven points (39) in the same number of matches at the second spot, and will be raring to capitalise upon any momentary slip-up by the Kolkata-based team. Kerala Blasters FC have won three and drawn once in their previous five encounters, accumulating 24 points from 19 matches. They are placed eighth and chasing sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (31), though Kerala Blasters FC (19) have played a game lesser than the Islanders (20). The Mariners have won each of their last three ISL games against Kerala Blasters FC, including a 3-2 triumph in the reverse fixture this season, and they have a chance to register their third league double over Kerala Blasters FC after scaling this feat in 2022-23 and 2020-21.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant have an encouraging attacking record at this venue, having scored four or more goals in each of their games against

Kerala Blasters FC in Kochi. The Mariners are one of two teams that the Kerala Blasters FC are yet to defeat at home in the ISL (also Punjab FC).

Kerala's Adrian Luna (six assists this season) is one away from equaling his own record of most assists by a Kerala Blasters player in a single ISL campaign (7 in 2021-22). Luna has created 43 goal-scoring opportunities and made 35 passes per game at 80 per cent accuracy this season. Mohun Bagan Super Giant have not

given away a goal in their last four ISL matches. If they secure another clean sheet, it will be their longest-ever streak in the competition.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant have netted 39 times in ISL 2024-25, with Jamie Maclaren (8), Subhasish Bose (6), Manvir Singh (5), top-scoring for them. Their offensive consistency coupled with defensive diligence has produced the sure shot recipe for sustained success this season.

The two sides have faced off nine times in the ISL, with Mohun Bagan Super Giant winning seven games, Kerala Blasters FC claiming one victory, and one match ending in a draw.

Kerala Blasters FC interim head coach TG Punushothaman said that his side has broken down and analysed the Mariners thoroughly.

"We study the strengths and weaknesses of all opponents and we have approached this game similarly. We are ready for the match," he said.

## Chennaiyin FC, Punjab FC strive hard to sustain their challenge for playoffs in important mid-table encounter



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHENNAI, 14 FEBRUARY

Chennaiyin FC will take on Punjab FC at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Chennai in an Indian Super League (ISL) fixture on Saturday.

Punjab FC are ninth in the table with 24 points from 19 games, whereas the Marina Machans are 10th with 21 points from 20 matches. Sixth-placed Mumbai City FC (31) are seven and 10 points adrift of Punjab FC and Chennaiyin FC respectively and both sides will want to string together a series of positive outcomes to stay firmly in the hope of a top-six finish.

The Marina Machans will look to reinforce on their 3-0 victory against East Bengal FC and record consecutive wins for the first time since April 2024. Punjab FC will be targeting their first league double in ISL history after thumping Chennaiyin FC 3-2 in the reverse fixture.

Punjab FC have won each of their last two meetings against Chennaiyin FC and another victory would give them their outright longest

winning streak against any opponent in the ISL. However, their defensive lapses on the road could be a concern, as they have conceded 15 goals in nine away games this season, including just one clean sheet.

Chennaiyin FC, contrastingly, have struggled at home, remaining winless in their last four ISL matches at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai (D2 L2). The last time they went through a longer such streak was a seven-game run between October 2018 and February 2019 (D1 L6).

Despite these issues, the hosts will look to pounce upon Punjab FC's defensive concerns and put together a strong performance.

No team has permitted their opponent more big chances in ISL 2024-25 than Chennaiyin FC (46). Their opponents have scored 22 times from such opportunities, with the team managing just four clean sheets in 20 games thus far.

Having set up an assist in each of Chennaiyin FC's last two ISL matches, Irfan Yadwad could become just the second Indian player and fifth player

overall to do so in three consecutive games for the Marina Machans. Yadwad has had a productive campaign with three goals and four assists to his name thus far.

Punjab FC have had nine different players notch a goal contribution as a substitute this season, the most by any team in ISL 2024-25. It demonstrates their bench strength and the fact that they could never be drawn out of the equation in the games.

Punjab FC's Khaiminhang Lhungdim won all six of his tackles in their most recent match (1-1 draw vs Odisha FC), the highest by any Punjab FC player in a single game. He has made 17 interceptions, 30 clearances, and won 46 duels thus far in ISL 2024-25. In their three fixtures so far, Chennaiyin FC have won once, whereas Punjab FC have emerged victorious twice. Chennaiyin FC head coach Owen Coyle said that his team needs to ensure positive results towards the end of the league stages.

"We finished last year strongly and made it to the playoffs, which should be our objective this year too," he said.

Punjab FC head coach Panagiotis Dilmeris said that his objective is to take gradual steps towards getting the required results.

"We need to go step by step. Chennaiyin FC are a good team with good players and it will be a big challenge for us," he said.

Wilmar Jordan Gil, with nine goals in 2024-25, is one away from becoming the third Chennaiyin FC player to score 10+ goals in a single ISL season, after Steven Mendozza (13 in 2015) and Nerijus Valskis (15 in 2019-20). The striker has averaged a goal in every 131 minutes this season.

Punjab FC's Tekcham Abhishek Singh has won back possession six times per game this season, ranking third among Indian players. The 20-year-old has also made 39 clearances, won 77 duels, and rounded off 108 recoveries in ISL 2024-25.

Chennaiyin FC's Lukas Brambilla has brought up three goals and assists each in 18 ISL appearances this season. Brambilla has delivered 26 key passes and emerged victorious in 82 duels too.





