

## 'Operation Prahar-2' Against Wanted Criminals From Feb 10: Punjab DGP

Chandigarh, Feb 8: The Punjab Police will launch "Operation Prahar-2", a statewide drive against wanted criminals from Monday, said Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav here on Sunday.

The 72-hour operation focuses on wanted criminals and will start from Monday, Yadav said. Our purpose is to make Punjab safe and secure by giving a sense of security to common people, the DGP said while speaking to reporters here.

He said 12,000 officers, who will be part of 2,000 teams, will be deployed under this operation.

"Our aim is to make Punjab crime and gangster-free. There is zero tolerance for crime and organised crime," Yadav said.

Earlier on January 20, the



Punjab Police had launched Operation Prahar, a statewide drive to dismantle the entire ecosystem of organised crime.

Highlighting the outcome of last month's operation, Yadav said to date, 5,290 people have been arrested, and 2,972 have taken into

preventive custody.

On the ongoing drive under "Yudh Nashian Virudh" (war against drugs), the DGP said that as many as 34,000 FIRs have been registered since March 2025, and 45,000 arrests have been made, which include 3,000 big suppliers and 65 hawala

operators. Heroin recovery stands at 2,150 kg to date, he said. Police have given detailed instructions regarding operational preparedness, Yadav said.

Senior officers will visit the scene of the crime and will personally be in the fields and supervise checkings, patrolling and will make maximum utilisation of manpower in core duties of policing, the DGP said.

In every district, fixed checkpoints will be established for round-the-clock checking of vehicles, especially two-wheelers, he said.

"We have also issued SOP (standard operating procedure) that if any incident takes place, what should be the response to that. In this, we are putting a lot of focus on the use of wireless networks," he said. (Agencies)

## 2 held in digital arrest scam linked to 190 complaints, over Rs 100 cr fraud uncovered: Delhi Police

**NEW DELHI, FEB 8:** The Delhi Police has arrested two men in connection with a digital arrest scam linked to at least 190 cyber fraud complaints and suspected proceeds of over Rs 100 crore, police said on Sunday.

The accused, identified as Anish Singh and Mani Singh, were arrested after a woman filed a complaint that she was subjected to psychological intimidation for nearly two months and coerced into transferring Rs 40 lakh under the guise of a fake cybercrime investigation.

"The victim was kept under digital arrest between October 15 and December 12, last year. During this period, she was threatened with arrest, legal action and social disgrace by fraudsters impersonating senior

police officers," the officer said.

The complainant, a homemaker, was initially contacted by a caller posing as an IPS officer from Mumbai Cyber Crime, who falsely accused her of involvement in criminal activities using her Aadhaar credentials. The call was later transferred to a woman claiming to be a police officer, who used video and audio calls to show forged FIRs and arrest warrants, the officer said.

Police added that the accused warned the victim that her husband and son would also be implicated in criminal cases if she did not cooperate. She was instructed not to speak to anyone and was forced to report daily to the fraudsters to confirm her silence. "Under sustained fear

and psychological pressure, the victim transferred Rs 40 lakh in multiple transactions. Even after receiving the money, the fraudsters continued to control her by giving false assurances of verification and refund, prolonging her mental distress," he said.

An e-FIR was registered at the Crime Branch after the victim finally reported the matter, and an investigation was taken up.

The police team reconstructed digital trails despite attempts by the accused to erase evidence. They traced several suspicious bank accounts and UPI IDs linked to shell entities operating across multiple states.

"One such account, held in the name of a private limited company, was found to be registered in west Delhi's

New Mahavir Nagar and emerged as a key link. Anish Singh and Mani Singh are joint directors of the firm," the officer added.

Transaction analysis revealed layered fund movement, and data from the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal showed 190 complaints involving over Rs 100 crore linked to the account, indicating organised and habitual use for cyber fraud.

During interrogation, the accused were arrested, and they revealed that eight bank accounts were opened in the company's name to siphon funds.

Police said both were using fake SIM cards and forged documents and had been previously arrested by Faridabad Police in a similar case. Further investigation is underway. (PTI)

## Triumphs and tragedies: The extraordinary journey of EIR, eastern India's first railway

**NEW DELHI, FEB 8:** On August 15, 1854, a five-coach train pulled by a British-made locomotive left Howrah at 8:30 am for Hooghly without any fanfare — signalling an engineering triumph and the beginning of eastern India's first railway.

However, this historic milestone achieved by the then-East Indian Railway (EIR), whose massive network would eventually reach Delhi by the 1860s, was preceded by a series of unfortunate events that delayed its arrival on the country's landscape and in people's consciousness.

A new book on the birth and evolution of the EIR and the East India Railway Company that established it, based on multiple 19th-century-era accounts drawn from a range of archives, has endeavoured to offer an "unbiased narrative" of this railway and the men who built it, brick by brick and steel by steel.

"Before the inaugural run, the EIR had already stirred public curiosity in Bengal with its first locomotive-only trial on June 29, 1854, from Howrah to Pandooah, followed by an experimental run on July 6, which included an engine pulling a single coach on the same route," P K Mishra, author of 'Rails Through Raj: The East Indian Railway (1841-1861)', says.

Mishra, a senior officer in the Indian Railways and a staunch advocate for heritage preservation, in an interview with PTI, said the seeds of EIR were sown before the arrival of railways in India in 1853, with the establishment of the East Indian Railway Company on June 1, 1845, as a joint stock company based in London with an office in Calcutta (now Kolkata).

However, "mountains of colonial bureaucracy" that had to be moved before the company was set up, and "delay" in the acquisition of lands and logistical issues, perhaps led to the Great Indian Peninsula Railway (GIPR) "stealing a march" on EIR, in being the first railways of India, the author writes in the book.

India's first-ever rail passenger service began on April 16, 1853, when the train ran from Bombay (now Mumbai) to Thane.

The "sluggish progress" of EIR in the Bengal presidency drew hostile comments from local newspapers and public commentators, and the "Calcutta press blamed the EIR and its promoters for the delay, some even calling it a 'chimerical project'," Mishra writes, with references to archival documents.

He cites a critical report in 'Delhi Gazette' published on May 13, 1854, on the delay, which reads, "The opening of the said Railway was intended to come off on the Queen's birthday, but this is now of course, put off", and goes on to criticise Lord Dalhousie, the then-governor general of India.

In the chapter 'EIR: The Inaugural Journey (1854)', Mishra writes, "By early 1854, the tracks between Calcutta and Hooghly lay gleaming and silent — complete, yet idle," adding, "The line, bridges were all ready but locomotives had yet to arrive."

The first set of locomotives reached Calcutta onboard the ship 'Kedgerie', which had sailed from England via Australia, and unloading "such colossal iron beasts" at Howrah, which lacked proper facilities then, was a "triumph of improvisation", he adds.

Adding a tragic turn to these dramatic events unfolding then for the EIR

(which evolved into the Indian government-run Eastern Railway, set up in 1952, after Independence) was a calamity that struck in the Bay of Bengal.

The EIR had commissioned the ship 'Goodwin' to transport "first-class carriages and rolling stock from London" for the inaugural run, but as she neared the Bengal coast, she ran aground on an infamous sandbank, and despite rescue attempts, the ship could not be saved, Mishra said.

"But the loss did not stop progress. John Hodgson, EIR's locomotive engineer, resolved to rebuild. With blueprints gone to the sea floor, he designed new carriages from memory and sketches, commissioning the prominent coach builders — Messrs. Stewart & Co. and Seton & Co. — to construct what had been lost," he writes.

And then the moment of reckoning came, when on the morning of August 15, 1854, the train left from what was a modest temporary shed at Howrah then (unlike the station edifice today), and reached Hooghly in 91 minutes, covering 24 miles.

For the maiden run, "about 3,000 applications came up, 10 times the capacity of the train", Mishra said.

On February 3, 1855, the Howrah-Raneegunj section was opened with a grand ceremony, with Lord Dalhousie himself present at the Howrah station to witness the historic moment.

The success of EIR not only made the East India Company take notice, but triggered the imagination of ordinary people too, spawning a popular "steet ballad in Bangla" celebrating the arrival of the train.

The meticulously researched, nearly 340-page book with chronologically

arranged chapters — each name prefixed with 'EIR' æ runs like a train journey, with every chapter akin to a halt along the tracks.

In the first chapter, 'EIR: Birth Pangs (1841-44)', Mishra, nearing 60, shines a spotlight on some of the men who were instrumental in translating the idea into an institution, especially railway pioneer Rowland Macdonald Stephenson, who arrived in Calcutta in 1840s, fired by a desire to bring the railway to India.

For the East India Company, "Stephenson's proposal to launch railways across the Indian plains sounded fanciful, even delusional," Mishra writes.

"Journalism played a seminal role in bringing railways to India, I would say. Stephenson, under the pseudonym 'Ferrum' (Latin for iron), penned editorials to 'The Englishman', extolling not just the commercial, but the military and administrative virtues of the railway," he said.

For his research for the book, he primarily referred to the repositories at the Calcutta University Library, West Bengal State Archives, Asiatic Society and the British Library in Kolkata, besides archives of the Indian Railways in Delhi and elsewhere, and various online resources, Misra said.

"For me, accessing even a scanned copy of George Turnbull's diary, from a resource abroad, was a prized moment. He was the chief engineer who made the EIR a force to be reckoned with."

"When the Calcutta-Benares line was completed in 1862 with the Soane Bridge being a crowning engineering triumph, a grand durbar was held at Benares (now Varanasi) on February 7, 1863, to celebrate EIR's success," he said. (PTI)

**LUCKNOW, FEB 8:** A 70-year-old retired bank employee in Lucknow was held under a six-hour "digital arrest" by cyber fraudsters posing as CBI officers in January but was saved from losing his savings because of timely reporting and swift police action.

Inderjeet Singh, a resident of Sindhunagar in Krishna Nagar area, was alone at home when he received a call around 2 pm from unknown persons claiming to be officials of the Central Bureau of Investigation, according to officials.

The callers kept him psychologically confined and under pressure, a tactic increasingly used by cyber criminals. However, when Singh stopped responding to repeated calls from his family, they alerted the Krishna Nagar police. Prompt intervention ensured that no financial transaction took place, and a potential fraud was averted.

In another case, alert staff of the Bank of Maharashtra prevented a Rs 35 lakh "digital arrest" fraud targeting a retired Lucknow Municipal Corporation official, Chhedi-lal Patel, on February 6, when he was at the bank, when cyber commen struck him.

Thugs posing as "ATS officers" kept him on a nearly 90-minute call and even initiated a fake WhatsApp video "hearing", citing a Pahalgam terror probe to intimidate him. Noticing his distress, bank employees intervened, confronted the callers and ensured no transaction was made, thereby averting a major financial loss.

Police officials say the case underlines the importance of acting within the "golden hour" — a strategy that has significantly improved Uttar Pradesh's performance in tackling cyber fraud.



According to the latest data from the Union Home Ministry's National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, UP received 29,715 cyber fraud complaints in January 2026 involving losses of Rs 138 crore.

Of this, Rs 48.45 crore was secured by placing liens on suspected bank accounts, translating into a lien (frozen/seized) percentage of about 35 per cent. The state has now climbed to the third position among states and Union territories in terms of freezing defrauded money, a sharp rise from its 24th rank last year.

Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu topped the list with a lien percentage of 62.44 per cent, followed by Haryana at 35.72 per cent. Telangana recorded 26.69 per cent, Maharashtra 22 per cent and Tamil Nadu 14 per cent.

In an interaction with PTI, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (DGP) Rajeev Krishna attributed the turnaround to faster reporting by victims and improved coordination between police cyber cells, banks and payment gateways.

"The awareness among people has to be on two counts. First, don't become a victim of cyber frauds and second, if by any chance you are a victim, immediately report the matter at the local

police station or the central helpline number 1930," he said.

"The golden hour of reporting online crime is crucial. The earlier it is reported, the greater the chances of holding the money and getting it recovered. Don't wait long; report cyber crimes in the first hour itself," the DGP added.

He explained that a lien refers to temporarily freezing money in bank accounts linked to fraudulent transactions, preventing withdrawal or transfer until legal procedures are completed and thereby improving recovery prospects.

Krishna said sustained awareness campaigns and capacity-building measures have strengthened the state's cyber response.

"Every police station has dedicated staff for the cyber cell who are trained for the job. People are not required to run here and there," he said.

Police have conducted around 500 awareness campaigns in recent days, reaching 1,000 to 1,500 people at various levels in each programme with the participation of cyber experts. "I have personally participated in 14 such meetings," the DGP said.

Soon after assuming office in July 2025, Krishna had inaugurated a 30-seater cyber

helpline call centre in Lucknow, in addition to the existing 20-seat facility.

"This more than doubled our capacity. Earlier, we could handle around 4,000 calls per day; now we can receive around 9,000 calls daily," the DGP told PTI about capacity development in the state.

Highlighting the need for specialised training, Krishna said newly recruited personnel and upcoming batches are receiving advanced training beyond conventional policing.

"I have a firm conviction that training differentiates the quality of professionals and improves human resources," he stressed.

According to the Uttar Pradesh Police, Rs 325.25 crore had been frozen or put under lien till the end of 2025 through the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) and helpline number 1930.

During the same period, police facilitated the blocking of 77,621 mobile numbers and 17,692 IMEI numbers as part of action against cyber criminals.

On the investigation and legal front, 87,850 cyber-crime cases had been registered in the state between 2017 and December 15, 2025. Of these, 75,272 cases were disposed of, with action taken against 53,639 accused persons.

Police have also recovered Rs 382.25 crore from accounts siphoned off through cyber fraud in these cases.

As per NCRB 2023 data, Uttar Pradesh recorded a conviction rate of 87.8 per cent in cybercrime cases, nearly double the national average, and reported the highest number of arrests in cyber offences in the country. (PTI)

## Delhi court orders probe into Ashish Sood's defamation charge against AAP's Parveen

**NEW DELHI, FEB 8:** A Delhi court has directed the police to conduct an investigation into allegations made by Delhi minister Ashish Sood against AAP candidate Parveen Kumar of circulating false, misleading and defamatory information on social media during the 2025 Delhi Assembly elections.

Judicial Magistrate First Class, Harjot Singh Aujla, who was hearing an application moved by the minister, said that the "aspects cannot be effectively examined without police investigation".

In an order dated February 6, the court said, "The nature of allegations involves identification of the origin of messages, verification of digital content, examination of electronic devices, tracing of circulation and determining the specific role of the accused and other unknown persons. Such aspects cannot be effectively examined without police investigation".

The court noted that the complaint pertained to the dissemination of misinformation and false propaganda through social media and digital platforms during the election process and ordered the investigation.

"The allegations relate to electoral integrity and alleged interference with the democratic process, which have serious ramifications. The complainant (Ashish Sood) cannot reasonably be expected to collect technical and digital evidence on his own, and police assistance is necessary for a fair and effective investigation," the magistrate said.

Delhi Home, Power and Education Minister Ashish Sood had alleged that Parveen Kumar circulated defamatory content against him and his family on digital platforms.

The court noted that an Action Taken Report (ATR) was filed by the police, stating that, upon scrutiny, a prima facie offence under section 175



(false statement in connection with an election) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was made out, which is a non-cognizable offence.

It then allowed the petition filed by the Delhi minister and directed the police to conduct a fair, impartial and expeditious investigation in the matter and to file a status report before the court on April 21, 2026. PTI SKM HIG Delhi court orders probe into Ashish

Sood's defamation charge against AAP's Parveen Kumar

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