

Madhuri's perspective

Madhuri Dixit says actors today are not just movie stars but also Twitter stars and Instagram stars

LEISURE | P2

Fresh clashes in Syria

Death toll from two days of clashes between security forces and Assad loyalists, and revenge killings that followed rises to more than 600

INTERNATIONAL | P10

SpiceJet in soup

SpiceJet is facing fresh round of troubles as three Ireland-based aircraft lessors and a former pilot file insolvency pleas in NCLT

BUSINESS | P11

Summit clash today

India will have to rise above traditional bugbear NZ to reclaim the Champions Trophy after 12 years Sunday

SPORTS | P12

KOSHAL'S HISTORICAL BLUNDER TO BE PART OF ODISHA, SAYS BJP MLA, SPARKS ROW

Bhubaneswar, March 8: It was a historical blunder for Koshal to become a part of Odisha in 1936 as the region has remained neglected, senior BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra said Saturday.

Addressing a government function in Sambalpur where financial assistance was disbursed under the Subhadra Yojana, Mishra said Odisha was formed with the merger of three regions -- Utkal that comprised the coastal region, Kalinga in the south, and Koshal in the west.

"The merger of Koshal during the formation of Odisha was a mistake. We have been neglected," said Mishra, the MLA of Sambalpur -- the biggest city in the region.

"People of this region participated in the movement for merger with Odisha. But that was our biggest mistake," he added.

The Opposition BJD was quick to latch on to the opportunity to corner the BJP over Mishra's statement.

Seeking a clarification from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said the BJP MLA's statement was harmful to Odisha's unity.

This is a manifestation of the BJP's divisive approach, he claimed.

"As the state will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2036, we cannot let such destructive rhetoric gain ground in our political discourse," Mohanty said. The state BJP was not immediately available for comment.



CATCH ME IF YOU CAN: Emergency services personnel try to rescue a barefoot man with a Palestine flag after he climbed up Elizabeth Tower, which houses Big Ben at the Palace of Westminster in London, Saturday. Westminster Bridge and a nearby bridge were closed, and several emergency services vehicles were at the scene as crowds looked on from behind a police cordon. Officials said tours of the Houses of Parliament were cancelled Saturday because of the incident, which came amid a flurry of pro-Palestine protests launched across the country this weekend

AP/PTI PHOTO

Israeli tourist among 2 women gangraped

Co-traveller from Odisha killed, 2 others assaulted

Little over a year after the brutal gangrape of a 28-year-old Spanish travel vlogger by seven local youth at Jharkhand's Dumka, a similar incident reported from Karnataka's Hampi on International Women's Day brought the spotlight yet again on how unsafe women are in India. This time, an Israeli traveller and a local homestay owner became victims of gangrape while they were stargazing late into night on the bank of Tungabhadra Canal. Three male tourists who were present with them were assaulted and thrown into the canal leading to death of Bibhas, a traveller hailing from Odisha, due to drowning. Such heinous crimes against foreign tourists are also putting India to shame on the global stage as a highly unsafe country for women

L Arasiddi, Superintendent of Police of Koppal.

According to him, the arrested accused have been identified as Mallesh and Chetan Sai. Both aged 21 years hail from Sai Nagara in Gangavathi town and work as masons.

The incident occurred around 11pm Thursday. After dinner, a 29-year-old homestay operator, along with the Israeli tourist and three male tourists, was sitting by the left bank of the Tungabhadra Canal near Sanapur Lake, playing the guitar, enjoying music, and stargazing, police said.

Among the male tourists, one was from the United States, while the others were from Odisha and Maharashtra, police said.

According to police, in her complaint, the homestay operator alleged that while they were stargazing and playing music, three men who came on a motorcycle approached them, asking where they could get petrol. When she informed them that there were no petrol pumps nearby and suggested they get it from Sanapur, the accused demanded ₹100.

Since the homestay operator did not know them, she told them they had no money. When the men repeatedly insisted, Bibhas gave them ₹20. After that, the three men allegedly started arguing and threatened to bash their heads with stones, the complainant stated in the FIR.

When the group refused to give them more money, the

accused, who spoke Kannada and Telugu, started abusing them. They then allegedly raped the homestay operator and the Israeli tourist and pushed the three male tourists into the canal, a senior police officer said.

Two of the accused beat the homestay operator, while the third aggressively pushed the three male tourists into the canal. The three accused also hit the homestay operator, leaving her seriously injured, the FIR further stated.

The accused dragged her to the side of the canal, where one of them strangled her and removed her clothes. Two of them beat and raped her. They also snatched her bag, stealing two mobile phones and ₹9,500 in cash, according to the FIR.

Similarly, one of them dragged the Israeli tourist and raped her. The accused fled on a motorcycle after the assault, the complainant alleged.

Of the three male tourists two sustained injuries and Bibhas went missing, whose body was recovered Saturday morning, police added.

Speaking to OrissaPOST, SP Arasiddi said the body was handed over to Bijay Kumar Nayak, Bibhas's father, Saturday afternoon. The deceased was a resident of Daringbadi area in Kandhamal district.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered at Gangavathi Rural Police Station under sections of BNS, police said. The two women are undergoing treatment at a hospital, they added.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



How would I know what our government is planning? You should ask President Trump!

CM disburses 2nd instalment to 1.18cr women

Unrest in Manipur over free movement directive

Berhampur, March 8: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday disbursed over ₹5,000 crore for 1.18 crore women beneficiaries of the state's flagship Subhadra Yojana coinciding with the International Women's Day.

Majhi disbursed the second instalment of the scheme at a special event held at Ambapua in Berhampur city.

An amount of ₹5,000 each was credited to the bank accounts of 1.18 crore women, who have already received a similar amount as the first instalment in five different phases over the past seven months.

The scheme was launched by

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday in Odisha September 17, 2024. The government had Thursday disbursed



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his birthday in Odisha September 17, 2024. The government had Thursday disbursed

group of 21 to 60 years are eligible as the beneficiaries of the Subhadra Yojana, which envisages providing financial assistance of ₹50,000 over five years (2024-25 to 2028-29) to make them financially independent and self-reliant.

The state government will spend over ₹55,825 crore on the scheme in five years. The government has already allocated ₹10,145 crore for the 2025-26 fiscal.

The third instalment of the Subhadra Yojana will also be credited directly to women beneficiaries during the upcoming Raksha Bandhan festival.

Imphal, March 8: A protester was killed while over 40 others, including women and policemen, were injured in clashes between Kuki demonstrators and security forces in different parts of Manipur's Kangpokpi district Saturday, officials said.

The deceased has been identified as Lalgouthang Singit. The 30-year-old received bullet injuries during the clashes at Keithelmaibi and died on the way to hospital, police said.

Clashes erupted between demonstrators and security forces in the Kuki-dominated district after police fired tear gas to disperse them, as they opposed Union Home Minister Amit Shah's directive allowing free movement across the state.

The situation worsened when protesters set fire to private vehicles and attempted to stop a state transport bus traveling from Imphal to Senapati district.

At least 16 protesters sustained different types of injuries during the clashes with security forces at Gamgiphai, Motbung and Keithelmaibi, police said, adding they have been admitted to the nearby public health centre for treatment. Unofficial figures, however, put the number of civilian injuries at more than 23. In a statement, Manipur Police said at least 27 security personnel were injured during clashes with protesters in the district and that there were incidents of firing from among the demonstrators forcing them to retaliate.

The protest was also directed against a peace march by the Federation of Civil Society (FOCS), a Meitei organisation. The march, involving over 10 vehicles, was halted by security forces at Sekmai before it could reach Kangpokpi district.

A purported video released by Kuki-Zo village volunteers group from an undisclosed location said it was against the government of India's decision regarding free movement and demanded a separate administration. The authenticity of the video could not be corroborated.

Opposing the free movement initiative, the Kuki Zo Council has imposed an indefinite shutdown in all Kuki-Zo areas from Saturday midnight, a statement said.

WORLD'S FIRST COMMERCIAL SPACE SURVEILLANCE SATELLITE COMMISSIONED

Space just ran out of hiding spots: Digantara

New Delhi, March 8: The world's first commercial space surveillance satellite, capable of tracking objects as small as 5 centimetres orbiting the Earth, was commissioned Saturday as it captured images over South America, the Bangalore-based start-up Digantara said.

Digantara had launched the space surveillance satellite SCOT (Space Camera for Object Tracking) January 14 aboard SpaceX's Transporter-12 rocket. The satellite started operations Saturday.

"Space just ran out of hiding spots," the start-up said in a post on X.

In a statement, the com-



pany said the SCOT satellite achieved first light Saturday and its inaugural image while passing over South America -- a breathtaking view of Earth's limb, with the city of Buenos Aires glowing against the planet's curvature.

"SCOT's first image is more than a technical milestone; it's a symbol of our team's resilience and unwavering commitment to safeguarding Earth's orbits for generations to come," said Digantara CEO Anirudh Sharma.

The satellite is designed to track and monitor objects as small as 5 centimetres, with a high revisit rate for frequent and precise observations of orbital activity.

As space becomes increasingly congested, this capability is essential for mitigating collision risks and promoting sustainable space operations by providing accurate and dependable data to satellite operators and regulatory bodies.

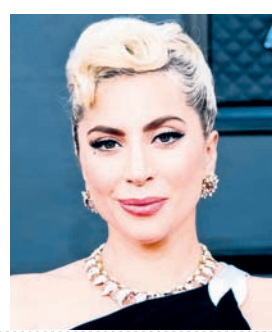
SCOT has been deployed in a sun-synchronous orbit that allows it to track objects in Low Earth Orbit with more efficiency than existing sensors, which are restricted by fields of view, weather conditions and geographic limitations.

US private lunar lander tips over on Moon, ends mission

NEW YORK: The mission of US company Intuitive Machines' lunar lander Athena has come to an early end because the lander tipped over while touching down on the Moon, and its battery quickly drained, the company said. According to NASA, the uncrewed lander landed at a region near the Moon's South Pole at about 11:30am Eastern Time Thursday, more than 400 metres from its intended landing site. Intuitive Machines said images collected later confirmed the lander was on its side, preventing it from fully operating NASA's lunar drill and other instruments before its batteries were depleted. Last year, Intuitive Machines made history when its first lunar lander, Odysseus, made a soft touchdown on the lunar surface.



leisure



LADY GAGA REVEALS HER BIGGEST FEAR

Singer-actress Lady Gaga has revealed her biggest fear, which is being alone. The pop star, who is one of the best-selling artists of all time, shared that she felt isolated in the early years of her music career.

BRITNEY FELT 'ABUSED' AMID CONSERVATORSHIP

Pop icon Britney Spears has opened up about her controversial conservatorship. Recently, the 43-year-old pop star has taken to social media to discuss her conservatorship, she felt 'controlled' and 'abused'.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
The stars today may play some tricks, which may land you in some sort of problem. But by mid-day, things will calm down and you will forget it. Ganesha says that in the evening, you will be calm and pensive which is an excellent thing.

TAURUS
You will want to be in control today and this could lead to verbal skirmish and resentment, says Ganesha. Some task might baffle you enough to drive you to your wit's end this afternoon. It would be best to sit together and thrash out individual differences in the larger interest of the family, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI
The first half of the day should see you fresh and rosy with enthusiasm. You will be able to channel your energies in the right direction today. You will be able to pursue projects which really interest you. You will likely spend your lunch time in the company of friends and family. Overall, a productive and satisfying day awaits, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will savour a tasty meal. You will go out for dinner with your friends or family. It may so happen that you will take out time from your hectic schedule to prepare tasty food and invite friends and relatives. Your nature of helping others will make you popular and you will benefit from it, says Ganesha.

LEO
Do not underscore your influence and importance today, says Ganesha. You hold the key to many doors, and hence, your ability to influence people is at its strongest today. In business, this means that you have a major role to play in new deals. But remember that you merely hold the keys, you cannot predict what lies behind each door.

VIRGO
Watch your step, warns Ganesha. Trouble is lurking just round the corner and waiting to waylay you. At work, you will find yourself in a high-spirited mood and will be helpful to your colleagues. You might end the day in the company of family members recollecting the happy days you have spent in each other's company.

LIBRA
An extended family is a boon, especially when it comes to charting out some success. Okay, maybe it's not Don Corleone calling the shots in your favour, but expect to get a favourable base from your relatives for the same. Bring your luck with you to work, and keep smiling.

SCORPIO
Today, you may be at your creative best and encourage various forms of arts. If the passion grows, you may even consider taking lessons in classical music or dance. Love is in the air during the evening. Ganesha foresees a romantic dinner and drive with your beloved.

SAGITTARIUS
Self-righteousness, and a sense of duty set the mood for the day today. You'll be a miserly scrooge in the afternoon. But later in the day, expect dinner with your sweetheart to be extravagant and blissful.

CAPRICORN
You mark dates on calendar to sneak away for a small vacation near by, but because of the heavy workload, you always have to cancel the plans. You don't need to plan, in fact, you can take an impromptu vacation, feels Ganesha. Take one now! Get a roadmap and drive away from the hassle of the city.

AQUARIUS
Who doesn't like to have a heavier pocket? You will be pleased to have little extra cash in your wallet. Also, you will pay attention to your financial planning and position, says Ganesha.

PISCES
You need to be extremely careful when planning out your activities for the day, says Ganesha. For the slightest mistake could bring all your efforts to naught. Treading carefully and cautiously is advisable, when it comes to work-related matters, to avoid falling into traps.

Deepika's inspirations

Mumbai: Widely regarded as the queen of Bollywood, Deepika Padukone is a diva who carries a distinct persona - whether on or off screen. Over the years, fans have witnessed her incredible growth and transformation into a woman admired by the world. While Deepika has been an inspiration to many women in various ways, it was the women on screen who inspired her to step into the world of entertainment.

When asked what inspired her to get into acting and how all of this began, Deepika Padukone replied by saying, "You know, I think for me just as a young girl growing up, I grew up in a family full of sportsmen and athletes, and we didn't watch very many movies but few movies that we watched in a year, every time we went into the cinema, I'd look at these amazing women and be inspired by them and sort of knew somewhere deep down inside as a child that, that is something I would be doing one day."

She went on to add, "I don't know how, I have no idea how I was going to go about it, but, I felt like that's where I belonged. And, so I started my career as a model first, that was my real passion and then I got discovered by Farah Khan, one of the few Indian directors, female directors and Ya, I debuted in 2017. And there's been no looking back since."



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY Adah shares quirky message

Mumbai: Actress Adah Sharma shared a hilarious wish on Women's Day.

When asked what message she would like to give fellow women, she replied in her usual quirky way saying, "Men are like the mobile phone. Women are like the network in it. Without them, the phone can't do much. So all you women, remember that! Know that you are that important."

On the professional front, Adah will next be seen in Mahesh Bhatt's *Tumko Meri Kasam*, alongside Anupam Kher and Ishwak Singh.

The recently released trailer of the film showed Adah and Anupam Kher delving into the sensitive and often taboo topics surrounding IVF and fertility. The film talks about the challenges and societal stigmas that couples face when dealing with fertility issues.

Dropping the trailer on her IG, Adah wrote, "#VikramBhatt's #TumkoMeriKasam Only IN CINEMAS 21st March He made a Promise to his love, A murder could destroy it! A battle to protect love, a war to save legacy, #Tum-



koMeriKasamTrailer Out Now." *Tumko Meri Kasam* is loosely based on the life of Dr. Ajay Murdia, the founder of the well-known Indira IVF chain.

Women in my life are my biggest blessings: Sanju



Mumbai: Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt has wished a Happy Women's Day to his loved ones, including his late mother, Nargis, his wife, Maanyata, his daughters, Trishala and Iqra, and his sisters, Priya and Namrata. Sanjay took to his Instagram, where he

shared the pictures of the women in his life. The first was a picture of him with his mother Nargis, then a picture with his wife Maanyata, followed by images of his daughter Trishala and Iqra.

He also posted photographs striking a pose with his sisters Priya and Namarata.

For the caption, he wrote: "The women in my life are my biggest blessings. Their love, care, and strength mean everything to me. Happy Women's Day to my loves"

International Women's Day is celebrated annually as a focal point in the women's rights movement. International Women's Day gives focus to issues such as gender equality, reproductive rights, and violence and abuse against women.

On the professional front, Sanjay is set to star in the upcoming action-horror comedy *The Bhootnii*, which is scheduled for release April 18.



'I've lived my life well after marriage'

Jaipur: As part of IIFA's Silver Jubilee celebrations, a special event was held on the eve of International Women's Day in Jaipur.

Titled *The Journey of Women in Cinema*, the event featured a thought-provoking conversation with Bollywood icon Madhuri Dixit and Oscar-winning producer Guneet Monga.

The discussion was hosted by IIFA Vice-President Noreen Khan.

During the conversation, the *Tezzab* actress shared her thoughts on her personal and professional journey.

She said, "I have lived my life well after marriage. My partner is very supportive, and living with family is like a dream. I have also had the opportunity to play some incredible roles in my career."

Speaking about her choices in films, she reflected on *Mrityudand*, an art film that remains a landmark in her career.

"When I chose to do *Mrityudand*, people discouraged me, saying it wasn't the right move for my career. But I went ahead with it, and the film turned out to be a significant milestone."

On the growing influence of social media, she added, "Today, actors are not just movie stars but also Twitter stars, Instagram stars, and social media influencers. I enjoy creating reels and engaging with my audience in new ways."

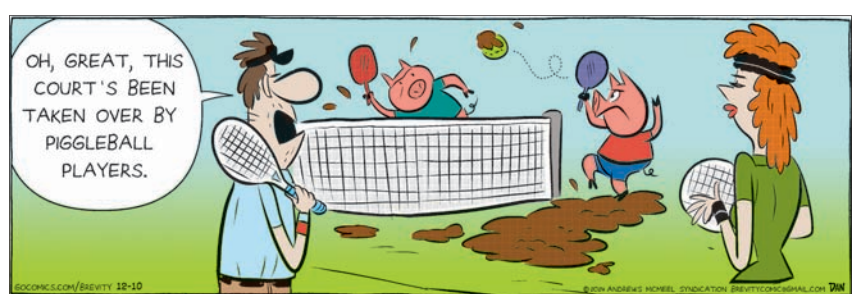
PEANUTS



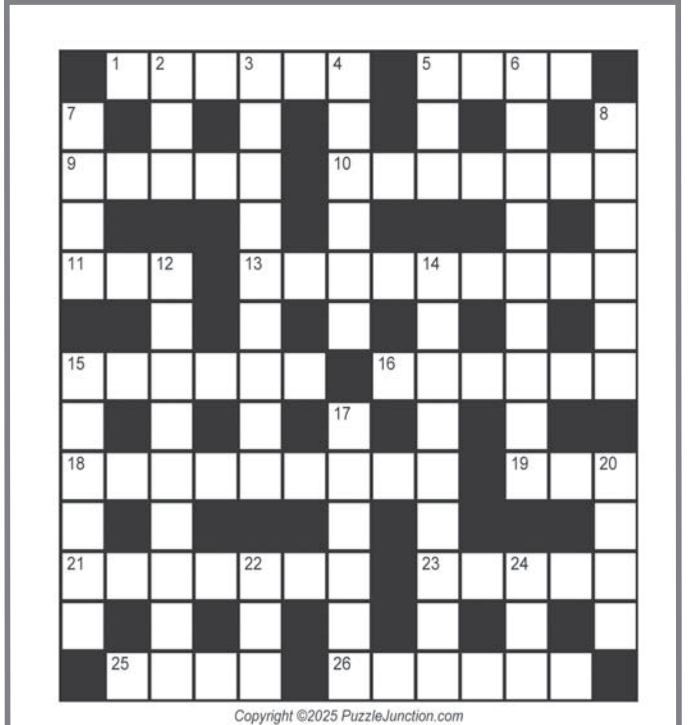
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



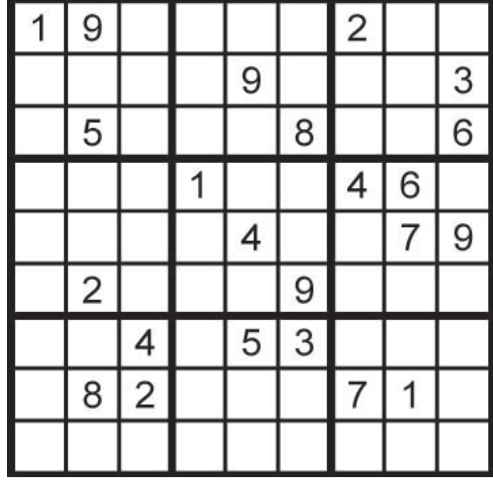
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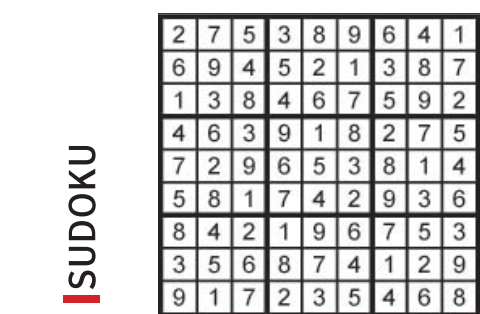
- Across**
- 1 It's found on a nose
 - 5 London district
 - 9 Detached
 - 10 Kismet
 - 11 Moray, e.g.
 - 13 Peace officer
 - 15 Fling
 - 16 Attack as false
 - 18 Put in a trace
 - 19 Pelvic arch
 - 21 Ancient stone tool
 - 23 Traffic director
 - 25 Anthem
 - 26 Catnap
 - 6 Grooming aid
 - 7 Flower holder
 - 8 Fire-breathing dragon
 - 12 Biography (4,5)
 - 14 Type of zone
 - 15 Stone fruit
 - 17 Leotards
 - 20 First to move in chess, usually
 - 22 Roadhouse
 - 24 Decay
- Down**
- 2 Aussie hopper, for short
 - 3 Faulty
 - 4 Novelist's need
 - 5 Plea at sea

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

downtown

Subhadra has become a revolution: CM



PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 8: Subhadra Yojana has become a revolution in Odisha and it will empower as well as uplift women, instilling new hope and confidence in them, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Saturday.

While releasing the second instalment of the scheme to 1,00,64,000 beneficiaries during an event organised at Ambapua in Ganjam district on the occasion of International Women's Day, Majhi emphasised that the new government, in just nine months, has paved the way for financial freedom for over one crore women in the state.

"All mothers have received ₹10,000 in two instalments," he said, describing the day as the happiest and most glorious in his tenure as the Chief Minister.

Criticising the previous BJD government for merely raising slogans about women's empowerment over the past 24 years, Majhi said, "We decided to implement the historic Subhadra Yojana within 24 minutes of coming to power. The good news is that it started working within three months, and today, in just nine months, more

than one crore women have received the second instalment."

Lashing out at the BJD for criticising his government, Majhi remarked, "What you could not achieve in 24 years, we have accomplished in just nine months."

He further stated, "Our detractors forget that even a child must spend nine months in the mother's womb before being born. There are still four days left for our government to complete nine months in office."

Sending a strong message to those who commit violence and misconduct against women, the Chief Minister asserted that such criminals have no place in a civilised society and they belong within the four walls of a jail.

"I have already issued strict instructions to departmental officers to ensure this is enforced," he said.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the Lakhpati Didi scheme, which aims to make women financially independent, stating that the target is to create three crore 'lakhpati didis' (women earning at least one lakh rupees) across the country.

Odisha, Majhi said, has secured second place in India

in implementing the Lakhpati Didi scheme. "So far, we have created five lakh lakhpati didis, and by 2027, we will ensure that at least 25 lakh women in Odisha achieve this status," he added.

The Chief Minister also launched development projects worth over ₹638 crore in Ganjam district.

On the occasion, Deputy Chief Minister Pravati Parida stated that Subhadra Yojana has now benefited more than one crore women.

"Our government has honoured its commitment. We promised to empower women, and we have delivered within just eight months," Parida said.

'Women shape country's future with their wisdom'

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Saturday said that women shape the future of the country with their strength, wisdom and determination. Majhi said this on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

Taking to X, Majhi said, "Women are the backbone of our society, shaping our future with their strength, wisdom, and determination. On #InternationalWomensDay, let's celebrate the unwavering spirit, resilience, and achievements of women across #Odisha and beyond. Let us all pledge to build a more inclusive, equitable, and progressive society where every woman can dream, achieve, and lead."

Similarly, BJD president and Leader of Opposition Naveen Patnaik, in a post on X, said, "#WomenEmpowerment has always remained at the centre of all our initiatives and #Odisha is a pioneer in empowering women through initiatives like #MissionShakti, #MAMATA and #GenderBudget. On #WomensDay, let's celebrate women's leadership everywhere and ensure a greater role of women in society and the highest decision-making bodies."

Vaishnav hails Subhadra milestone

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav Saturday shared his thoughts on the one crore beneficiary milestone achieved by the state government's flagship women empowerment initiative, Subhadra Yojana. Taking to X, Vaishnav acknowledged the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in launching the scheme and the commitment of the Odisha government in ensuring its success. "The number of beneficiaries of the Subhadra Yojana, launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi, to empower and make the mothers and sisters of Odisha self-reliant, has crossed one crore. The state government's resolve towards women empowerment in Odisha is now moving towards reality. Thank you, Hon'ble Prime Minister @narendramodi, Chief Minister @MohanMODisha, and Deputy Chief Minister @PravatiPOdisha, for this," Vaishnav said.

Cong observes 'Protest Day'

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 8: The Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) Saturday observed the International Women's Day as Protest Day, alleging that the condition of women in the state was dismal.

The party's women leaders, led by OPCC chief Bhakta Charan Das, staged a sit-in at the Master Canteen Square here and alleged that the state government "had failed to do justice for women."

Besides Das, party MLA Tara-prasad Bahinipati, several former PCC chiefs, and senior leaders participated in the dharna as a mark of solidarity towards the agitating women members.

Alleging that the women of Odisha are subjected to humiliation and exploitation under the 'double engine' government, Das said as many as "1,600 cases of crimes against women have been registered in the state and 54 gang-rapes have taken place after the BJP

came to power in the state, which is a cause of concern."

"Atrocities against women have crossed all limits under the 'Narendra-Mohan' government. But the state government is sitting idle and helpless," he alleged, adding that "the BJP was hitting the streets whenever a crime against woman took place when the BJD was in power. However, now the saffron party is silent."

Describing the situation as "unfortunate," the OPCC president said, "A ninth standard student of a state-run Ashram School in Keonjhar, the CM's home district, has become pregnant, while a class X girl delivered a baby in Chitranakonda area of Malkangiri."

"In Dhenkanal, a woman was gang-raped by seven men for a long time, while a class X girl became pregnant in Jajpur. In Cuttack, a minor girl was raped in a brick kiln, while a tribal girl was raped in Laxmipur," he claimed.

Driver held for attacking employer

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 8: The Airport police Saturday arrested a 36-year-old man for allegedly assaulting his employer over non-payment of outstanding salary.

The accused, Rakesh Maharath, a native of Boudha, had been working as a driver for the complainant, Swarnalata Behera, for the past few months, said Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) Rabindranath Meher.

Meher said the incident occurred March 7 afternoon when Rakesh, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, arrived at Swarnalata's residence at Kargil slums and created a ruckus over salary payment issues. He demanded his remaining dues settled. When Swarnalata insisted that his wages had already been paid, Rakesh turned violent.

"In a fit of rage, Rakesh picked up an iron bar and attacked Swarnalata and her children. While Swarnalata sustained serious injuries, her children were partially injured in the attack. Before fleeing the spot, Rakesh also smashed Swarnalata's mobile phone," Meher said.

During investigation, police learnt that Swarnalata had cleared Rakesh's dues several days ago. Rakesh was subsequently arrested from his residence in the same neighbourhood, Saturday.

After 33 years, Olive Ridley turtles return to Ekakula for mass nesting



AGENCIES

Kendrapara, March 8: Endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles have returned to Ekakula in large numbers for mass nesting after a gap of 33 years.

According to Manas Kumar Das, Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) in charge of Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, the last recorded mass nesting at Ekakula occurred during the 1992-93 turtle season.

In the past 48 hours alone, approximately 1,69,348 female Olive Ridley turtles have laid eggs at Ekakula. Around 3,000 Olive Ridley tur-

tlés arrived at Ekakula for nesting March 6, while the number surged to 1,66,348 female turtles March 7.

During the ongoing turtle season, a total of 4.34 lakh female Olive Ridley turtles have laid eggs at Nasi-2 and Ekakula beaches within the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary over the last three days (March 5 to 7), according to Forest officials.

While 2,64,657 turtles nested at Nasi-2 beach, 1,69,348 turtles nested at Ekakula. Although Ekakula beach stretches for eight kilometres, the turtles have utilised only three kilometre of the beach for nesting. Experts predict a record

number of turtles may arrive this season, as mass nesting is expected to continue for another three to four days.

The previous record was set in 2023 when an estimated 5,12,175 Olive Ridley turtles came ashore at Nasi-2 beach within the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, laying eggs over four days, beginning March 9, Das added.

However, Forest officials express concerns that Olive Ridley turtles may skip mass nesting at Gahirmatha in the future due to the shrinking Nasi-2 beach, which is gradually eroding due to constant sea action.

The return of Olive Ridley turtles to Ekakula after three decades indicates that these turtles prefer to lay eggs at the same beaches where they nested in the past.

Favourable environmental conditions and suitable beach structures play a crucial role in their nesting behaviour. To protect the turtle eggs from predators, Forest personnel have intensified patrolling and conservation efforts at both Ekakula and Nasi-2 beaches.

MUSICAL EVENT

Artists perform at the concluding day of '13th annual festival of Sufiana and other devotional music' organised by Odia Language, Literature & Culture department and Bhubaneswar Music Circle at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Saturday



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State govt procures 70L MT paddy from 15.65L growers

₹15,613 crore disbursed as MSP and ₹5,430 crore as Input Assistance to farmers



Rabi paddy procurement to begin May 1; farmer registration starts this month. 92% of beneficiaries complete e-KYC; efforts underway to cover remaining farmers

Bhubaneswar, March 8: The state government has successfully procured 70 lakh metric tonne of paddy from around 15.65 lakh farmers during the ongoing Kharif season, marking a significant achievement in the state's agricultural sector.

The procurement drive has ensured direct financial benefits to farmers, with ₹15,613 crore already transferred to their accounts as Minimum Support Price (MSP). Additionally, ₹5,430 crore has been disbursed as Input Assistance to support agricultural activities.

poration managing director Shubham Saxena, focused on assessing the procurement process and planning for the upcoming Rabi season.

Officials confirmed that the procurement process for the Rabi season will commence May 1 and continue until June 30. To ensure a smooth procurement experience, the government will begin farmer registrations this month.

Additionally, discussions were held on supplying the remaining rice stock from the procured paddy to the Food

Corporation of India (FCI). A major focus of the meeting was the e-KYC process for farmers availing procurement benefits. So far, 92 per cent of beneficiaries have completed e-KYC, and efforts are being made to facilitate internet access at fair price shops (FPSs) in remote areas with weak connectivity. Moreover, authorities are working on gathering details of 30.84 lakh beneficiaries yet to complete the e-KYC process.



WOMEN'S CELEBRATION: Dharitri and Orissa POST Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy and women employees of the dailies take part in the International Women's Day celebration on the newspapers' office premises in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

'Giliriphula' demand on rise in Keonjhar

Forest produce gains popularity, providing livelihood to tribal families despite challenges

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 8: The demand for 'Giliriphula,' a vibrant forest flower used in traditional delicacies, is rising in Keonjhar due to its unique taste and natural availability. Collected from forests, these flowers are sold by tribal communities in local markets and are also popular among tourists.

The trade provides a vital livelihood to tribal families, but middlemen reportedly earn higher profits by selling them outside the district at inflated prices. In urban areas, the flowers are sold for R 10-Rs20 per cone, while in other districts, traders make two to three times more.



in local cuisine, increasing its demand both in Keonjhar and

beyond. Some traders have begun exporting them for higher profits. Besides flowers, tribal communities rely on forest products like fruits, nuts, roots, and medicinal plants for sustenance. They also practice 'podu' (shifting) cultivation during the monsoon.

Guv urges stronger trade ties between Odisha, AP

Bhubaneswar: Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati has called for enhanced trade and investment collaboration between Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, citing their shared economic strengths. Speaking at an interaction between the Vizagapatnam and Utkal Chambers of Commerce at Raj Bhavan, he highlighted Odisha's rich natural resources and Andhra Pradesh's maritime economy as complementary assets for regional growth.

Forest fire worsens, spreads to 13 more areas in Ganjam



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, March 8: The raging forest fire in the North Ghumsar division of Ganjam district continues to spread, showing no signs of abating. Despite ongoing efforts, the fire has extended to 13 additional locations, including Galeri, Tarsing, and Mujagada forest ranges, according to satellite data released Saturday.

tes (fire protection committees), are working tirelessly to douse the flames. However, their efforts are hampered by a shortage of vehicles and manpower. Reports suggest that some vehicles designated for wildlife protection and firefighting are occasionally misused for private purposes by influential officials. As the crisis worsens, locating available vehicles for emergency response has become increasingly difficult, leading to frustration among fire personnel.

of forest land. Vehicles are essential not only for firefighting but also for transporting personnel, equipment, food, and water to remote locations. Environmentalists have raised concerns over the sudden outbreak of wildfires and the struggle to bring them under control. Thick smoke has engulfed large parts of the northern Ghumsar forest, even affecting the outskirts of Bhanjanagar town.

Elderly on pilgrimage to Varanasi, Ayodhya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 8: Eight hundred elderly people from Odisha left for Ayodhya and Varanasi in UP on a special train Saturday for a state-sponsored pilgrimage. Deputy Chief Minister Pravaati Parida flagged off the train at the Berhampur station.

City Apollo Hosp felicitates women



RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 8: Apollo Hospitals, Bhubaneswar honoured the contributions of women in healthcare and beyond on the occasion of International Women's Day (IWD) here Saturday.

only benefits the hospital but also strengthens families and communities." Joining on the occasion, educationist and social activist Amiyabala Parida inspired the gathering with her resilience and commitment to social causes.

Weather table with columns for Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, BBSR, CTC.

CLASSIFIED LOST

I Suraj Kumar Agrawal, S/o. Late Paban Kumar Agrawal, R/o. Village/ PS. - Junagarh, Dist. - Kalahandi have purchased Land of Mouza - Matigaon vide registered sale deed No.10891500139/2015, Registered Sale Deed No. 1197200908 and 11972200907/2022. Above all the registered sale dead has been lost somewhere on 07.02.2025 while I was traveling from my home to SBI, Junagarh main branch for loan purpose. In spite of my thorough search I could not trace out the same.

Teen prevents seven child marriages, empowers 600 girls

After resisting her own forced marriage, 18-year-old Lily Kandagari promoting education in Rayagada's Ramanaguda block, as she continues to raise awareness on self-reliance

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rayagada, March 8: Despite the belief that sons and daughters should be treated equally, many girls still lack freedom in their own families. In tribal and underprivileged areas, particularly in villages with limited access to education, parents often marry off their daughters at a young age, denying them the opportunity to study.

olescent girls and influenced several parents to reconsider early marriages. She has personally intervened to prevent at least seven child marriages in nearby villages and has become an example for others to emulate. In 2022, Lily's family pressured her into marriage, finalising a proposal against her will. They even performed her engagement. However, she resisted and reported the matter to local administration, and, with the support of Anganwadi workers, successfully stopped her own wedding. Determined to continue her education, she convinced her family but faced



financial difficulties as her family who were not well-off denied to fund for education. To fund her studies, Lily took up work in women's empowerment programmes in Gunupur

and used her earnings to continue her education. Currently, she wishes to become a teacher and pursue a Plus III course in Gunupur, while also supporting her family. She remains firm in

her goal of becoming a teacher and has vowed to marry only after achieving her dreams. After her father's untimely death, Lily's mother has been working as a daily labourer to support the family. Lily uses the money she earns to fund both her education and household expenses. Her mother, recognising Lily's determination, says she now believes there is no difference between sons and daughters.

areas receive guidance from Anganwadi centers on saying no to child marriage. Inspired by these sessions, Lily took the initiative to lead awareness campaigns and has devoted selflessly to the cause. She has managed to include, seven more friends in this effort to prevent child marriage. In cases where stopping a marriage becomes particularly difficult, they collaborate with Anganwadi and ASHA workers to intervene. Lily acknowledges that sometimes they face criticism, while at other times, they receive praise for their efforts.

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JOIN THE INDIAN ARMED FORCES AS AN AGNIVEER



| Selection Criteria | Army | Navy | Air Force | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|--|---|----|--|---------------------------|---------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-------|---|------|----------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------|--------------|-----------------|---------|---|-----------|------------|-----------------------|----------|---|----------|---------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------------|---|--|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---------|-----|---|---------|-----|---|---------|-----|------------------------------|---------|--|
| Education Qualification | <p>Agniveer (General Duty) (All Arms) & Agniveer (General Duty) (Women Military Police) - Class 10th/ Matric pass with 45% marks in aggregate of five basic subjects and min 33% marks in each of those five subjects. For boards following grading system, grades commensurate to percentages, as above, will be considered.</p> <p>Note: Candidates with valid Light Motor Vehicle (LMV) Driving Licence will be given preference for Driver requirements.</p> <p>Agniveer (Technical) (All Arms) - 10+2/ Intermediate Exam pass in Science with Physics, Chemistry, Maths and English with minimum 50% marks in aggregate and 40% in each subject.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>10+2/ Intermediate Exam pass in Science with Physics, Chemistry, Maths and English from any recognised State Education Board or Central Education Board to include NIOS and ITI course of minimum one year in required field with NSQF level 4 or above.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>10th/ Matric pass with 50% in aggregate and minimum 40% in English, Maths and Science with 02 years of Technical training from ITI or two/ three years Diploma from recognised educational institutes including Polytechnics in specified streams (Mechanic Motor Vehicle, Mechanic Diesel, Electronic Mechanic, Technician Power Electronic System, Electrician, Fitter, Instrument Mechanic, Draughtsman (all types), Surveyor, Geo Informatics Assistant, Information and Communication Technology System Maintenance, Information Technology, Mechanic cum Operator Electric Communication System, Vessel Navigator, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Auto Mobile Engineering, Computer Science/ Computer Engineering, Instrumentation Technology) as promulgated in Indian Army recruitment notification.</p> <p>Agniveer (Clerk/ Store Keeper Technical) - 10+2/ Intermediate Exam Pass in any stream (Arts, Commerce, Science) with 60% marks in aggregate and minimum 50% in each subject. Securing 50% in English and Maths/ Accounts/ Book Keeping in Class 12th is mandatory.</p> <p>Agniveer Tradesman 10th Pass (All Arms) - Simple 10th Pass (No stipulation in aggregate percentage but should have scored 33% in five basic subjects).</p> <p>Agniveer Tradesman 8th Pass (All Arms) - Simple 8th pass (No stipulation in aggregate percentage but should have scored 33% in five basic subjects).</p> | <p>Agniveer (Senior Secondary Recruit) - Qualified in 10+2 with Mathematics and Physics from Boards of School Education recognised by Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, with minimum 50% marks in aggregate.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Passed Three years Diploma Course in Engineering (Mechanical/ Electrical/ Automobiles/ Computer Science/ Instrumentation Technology/ Information Technology) from Central, State and UT recognised Polytechnic Institute with 50% marks in aggregate.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Passed Two years Vocational Course with Non-vocational subject viz, Physics and Mathematics from Education Boards recognised by Central, State and UT with 50% marks in aggregate.</p> <p>Agniveer (Matric Recruit) - Passed Matriculation/ 10th or equivalent with minimum pass marks from any Govt recognised School/ Board.</p> <p>Agniveer (Matric Recruit Musician) - Passed Matriculation/ 10th or equivalent with minimum pass marks from any Govt recognised School/ Board.</p> | <p>Science Subjects - Candidates should have passed Intermediate/ 10+2/Equivalent examination with Mathematics, Physics and English from Education Boards recognised by Central, State and UT with minimum 50% marks in aggregate and 50% marks in English.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Passed Three years Diploma Course in Engineering (Mechanical/ Electrical/ Electronics/ Automobile/ Computer Science/ Instrumental Technology/ Information Technology) from Central, State and UT recognised Polytechnic Institute with 50% marks in aggregate and 50% marks in English in Diploma Course (or in Intermediate/ Matriculation, if English is not a subject in Diploma Course).</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Passed Two years Vocational Course with non-vocational subjects viz. Physics and Mathematics from Education Boards recognised by Central, State and UT with 50% marks in aggregate and 50% marks in English in Vocational Course (or in Intermediate/ Matriculation, If English is not a subject in Vocational Course).</p> <p>Other than Science Subjects- Passed Intermediate/10+2/ Equivalent examination in any streams/ subjects from Education Boards recognised by Central, State and UT with minimum 50% marks in aggregate and 50% marks in English.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Passed two years Vocational Course from Education Boards recognised by Central, State and UT with minimum 50% marks in aggregate and 50% marks in English in Vocational Course (or in Intermediate/ Matriculation if English is not a subject in Vocational Course).</p> <p>Note 1. Candidates eligible for Science Subjects examination (Including Intermediate/ 10+2/ three years diploma course in engineering or two years vocational course with non-vocational subject of Physics and Maths) are also eligible for Other than Science Subjects and would be given an option of appearing in both Science Subjects and Other than Science Subjects examination in one sitting while filling up the online registration form.</p> <p>Note 2. Education Boards recognised by Central, State and UT as on date of registration shall only be considered.</p> <p>Note 3. Exact aggregate Percentage of marks before decimal as written in the marks sheet of 10+2/ Intermediate/ Equivalent Examination/ Three years Diploma Course/ Two Years Vocational Course OR calculated as per the rules of concerned Education Boards/ Polytechnic Institute shall only be considered (For example 49.99% should be taken as 49% and not to be rounded off to 50%)</p> <p>Agniveervayu (Musician) - Passed Matriculation/ 10th or equivalent with minimum pass marks from any Govt recognised School/ Board.</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Gender | Men & Women (Only for Military Police) | Men & Women | Men & Women | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Height | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ser</th> <th>Regions</th> <th>Min Ht (in Cms)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td rowspan="2">1</td> <td>Female (General) Garhwali, Gorkhas, Ladakhis, Tribals of recognised tribal areas, NE Region (Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam)</td> <td>162</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Male Western Himalayan – Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab Hills (Area South and West of the Inter State and Border between Himachal Pradesh and Punjab and North and East of Road Mukerian Hoshiarpur, Garh Shankar and Ropar, Garhwal and Kumaon (UK)) Eastern Himalayan – Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam and Hill Region of West Bengal (Darjeeling Distt) Western Plains – Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh (Meerut and Agra Div) Eastern Plains – Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha Central Plains – Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Dadar, Nagar, Haveli, Daman & Diu Southern Plains – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa and Puducherry, A&N islands Clerk/ SKT</td> <td>158</td> </tr> <tr> <td rowspan="10">2</td> <td>Areas with Relaxation in Height</td> <td>Min Ht for Males (in Cms)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ladakhi</td> <td>157</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gorkhas (both Nepalese and Indian)</td> <td>157</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Candidates from Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep Group including Minicoy</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>(i) Settlers</td> <td>165</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(ii) Locals</td> <td>155</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tribals of recognised tribal areas</td> <td>162</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1.6 Km Run</td> <td>9 feet ditch</td> <td>Zig-Zag balance</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-I</td> <td>Group-II</td> <td>Group-III</td> <td>Group-IV</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-I</td> <td>Group-II</td> <td>Group-III</td> <td>Group-IV</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-I</td> <td>Group-II</td> <td>Group-III</td> <td>Group-IV</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Ser | Regions | Min Ht (in Cms) | 1 | Female (General) Garhwali, Gorkhas, Ladakhis, Tribals of recognised tribal areas, NE Region (Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam) | 162 | Male Western Himalayan – Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab Hills (Area South and West of the Inter State and Border between Himachal Pradesh and Punjab and North and East of Road Mukerian Hoshiarpur, Garh Shankar and Ropar, Garhwal and Kumaon (UK)) Eastern Himalayan – Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam and Hill Region of West Bengal (Darjeeling Distt) Western Plains – Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh (Meerut and Agra Div) Eastern Plains – Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha Central Plains – Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Dadar, Nagar, Haveli, Daman & Diu Southern Plains – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa and Puducherry, A&N islands Clerk/ SKT | 158 | 2 | Areas with Relaxation in Height | Min Ht for Males (in Cms) | Ladakhi | 157 | Gorkhas (both Nepalese and Indian) | 157 | Candidates from Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep Group including Minicoy | | (i) Settlers | 165 | (ii) Locals | 155 | Tribals of recognised tribal areas | 162 | 1.6 Km Run | 9 feet ditch | Zig-Zag balance | Group-I | Group-II | Group-III | Group-IV | Group-I | Group-II | Group-III | Group-IV | Group-I | Group-II | Group-III | Group-IV | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Ser</th> <th>Category</th> <th>Minimum height</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(a)</td> <td>Tribal from Ladakh</td> <td>155 cms</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(b)</td> <td>A&N Islands, Lakshadweep & Minicoy (Locals)</td> <td>155 cms</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(c)</td> <td>Gorkha, Nepali, Assamese, Garhwali, Kumaoni and Uttarakhand</td> <td>152 cms</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(d)</td> <td>Bhutan, Sikkim and NE region</td> <td>152 cms</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Ser | Category | Minimum height | (a) | Tribal from Ladakh | 155 cms | (b) | A&N Islands, Lakshadweep & Minicoy (Locals) | 155 cms | (c) | Gorkha, Nepali, Assamese, Garhwali, Kumaoni and Uttarakhand | 152 cms | (d) | Bhutan, Sikkim and NE region | 152 cms | <p>Minimum height standard is 157 cms. However, relaxation in height is permissible to candidates holding domicile of areas as mentioned below and talented sports candidates:</p> <p>152 cms for Agniveervayu male, 162 cms for Agniveervayu (Musician male).</p> <p>152 cms for female [Agnv/Agv (Musician)]. For candidates belonging to North East or hilly regions of Uttarakhand, a lower minimum height of 147 cm will be accepted. In case of candidates from Lakshadweep, the minimum height will be 150 cm.</p> <p>Note. "Female candidates" availing height relaxation for being domicile of North East/ hilly regions of Uttarakhand/ Lakshadweep are to submit their domicile certificate with endorsement of domicile status at the time of Phase-II testing. Further, candidates from hilly regions of Uttarakhand must have specific endorsement of hilly region in their domicile certificate.</p> |
| | Ser | Regions | Min Ht (in Cms) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Female (General) Garhwali, Gorkhas, Ladakhis, Tribals of recognised tribal areas, NE Region (Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam) | 162 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male Western Himalayan – Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab Hills (Area South and West of the Inter State and Border between Himachal Pradesh and Punjab and North and East of Road Mukerian Hoshiarpur, Garh Shankar and Ropar, Garhwal and Kumaon (UK)) Eastern Himalayan – Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam and Hill Region of West Bengal (Darjeeling Distt) Western Plains – Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh (Meerut and Agra Div) Eastern Plains – Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha Central Plains – Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujrat, Maharashtra, Dadar, Nagar, Haveli, Daman & Diu Southern Plains – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa and Puducherry, A&N islands Clerk/ SKT | 158 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | Ladakhi | 157 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Gorkhas (both Nepalese and Indian) | 157 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Candidates from Andaman and Nicobar Island, Lakshadweep Group including Minicoy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | (i) Settlers | 165 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | (ii) Locals | 155 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Tribals of recognised tribal areas | 162 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1.6 Km Run | 9 feet ditch | Zig-Zag balance | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Group-I | Group-II | Group-III | Group-IV | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Ser | Category | Minimum height | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (a) | Tribal from Ladakh | 155 cms | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (b) | A&N Islands, Lakshadweep & Minicoy (Locals) | 155 cms | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (c) | Gorkha, Nepali, Assamese, Garhwali, Kumaoni and Uttarakhand | 152 cms | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (d) | Bhutan, Sikkim and NE region | 152 cms | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Selection Procedure | <p>Stage I – Online test CEE (Common Entrance Examination)</p> <p>Stage II Physical Fitness test, Physical Measurement Test and Medical Examination</p> | <p>Stage I – Online test INET (Indian Navy Entrance Test)</p> <p>Stage II Physical Fitness test, Written Examination & Recruitment Medical</p> | <p>Stage I – Online test STAR (Scheduled Test for Agniveervayu Recruitment)</p> <p>Stage II Physical Fitness Test – I & II, Adaptability Test- I & II and Medical Examination</p> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Physical Fitness Standard | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>1.6 Km Run</th> <th>Beam (Pull Ups)</th> <th>9 feet ditch</th> <th>Zig-Zag balance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>06 min 30 sec</td> <td>20</td> <td>15</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>08 min</td> <td>15</td> <td>10</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Note: Candidates appearing for Agniveer Tech and Agniveer Office Assistant/ SKT only need to qualify in all tests.</p> <p>Female</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Time</th> <th>10 Feet Long Jump</th> <th>3 Feet High Jump</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Group-I</td> <td>Up to 7 Min 30 Secs</td> <td>Need to Qualify</td> <td>Need to Qualify</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-II</td> <td>Up to 8 Min</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Gender | 1.6 Km Run | Beam (Pull Ups) | 9 feet ditch | Zig-Zag balance | Male | 06 min 30 sec | 20 | 15 | 15 | Female | 08 min | 15 | 10 | 10 | Group | Time | 10 Feet Long Jump | 3 Feet High Jump | Group-I | Up to 7 Min 30 Secs | Need to Qualify | Need to Qualify | Group-II | Up to 8 Min | | | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>1.6 Km Run</th> <th>Squats (Uthak Bathak)</th> <th>Push-ups</th> <th>Bent Knee Sit-ups</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>07 Min</td> <td>20 (01 Min)</td> <td>10 (01 Min)</td> <td>10 (01 Min)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>08 Min</td> <td>15 (01 Min)</td> <td>--</td> <td>10 (01 Min and 30 secs)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | Gender | 1.6 Km Run | Squats (Uthak Bathak) | Push-ups | Bent Knee Sit-ups | Male | 07 Min | 20 (01 Min) | 10 (01 Min) | 10 (01 Min) | Female | 08 Min | 15 (01 Min) | -- | 10 (01 Min and 30 secs) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Female | 08 min | 15 | 10 | 10 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Female | 08 Min | 15 (01 Min) | -- | 10 (01 Min and 30 secs) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | 17½ – 21 years Note (For Women Military Police in Indian Army only) – Upper age limit will be relaxed up to 30 years of age in respect of widow of defence personnel who died in harness. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Duration of Service | Four years | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Enrolment in Regular Cadre | On completion of four years of service, based on organisation's requirements and policies promulgated by the respective services. Agniveers will be offered an opportunity to apply for permanent enrolment in the Armed Forces. These applications will be considered in a centralised manner based on objective criteria including performance during their four-year engagement period and up to 25% of each specific batch of Agniveers will be enrolled in Indian Armed Forces for further re-engagement in regular cadre. Agniveers will not have any right to be selected for further enrolment in to the Govt of India. Selection of the Agniveers for further enrolment, if any, shall be at the discretion of the Govt of India. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Marital Status and Pregnancy | Only unmarried Indian male and female candidates are eligible for enrolment as Agniveer. Candidates will have to give a certificate of being 'unmarried' at the time of enrolment. Agniveers shall not be permitted to marry during their entire tenure of four years in the respective services. A candidate shall be dismissed from service if he/ she marries during his/ her tenure or is found to be already married despite giving certificate of being unmarried. Female candidates additionally shall be required to undertake not to get pregnant during the engagement period. Such women Agniveer on becoming Low Medical Category (LMC) due to pregnancy shall be liable to be discharged from service. Pregnancy will debar the women Agniveer for selection into regular cadre. Note (For Women Military Police in Indian Army only) - Women who are widowed, divorced or legally separated are also eligible provided they do not leave any children. Widows of Defence Personnel are eligible with children if they have not remarried. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Medical Standards | Candidates will be required to undergo medical examination as prescribed by the respective Services. More details available on websites of the respective Services. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Pay, Allowances, Allied Benefits and Agniveer Corpus Fund (Seva Nidhi Package) | <p>Agniveers enrolled under this scheme will be paid an Agniveer package of Rs. 30,000/- per month with a fixed yearly increment. In addition, Risk and Hardship allowances, Dress and Travel allowances will be paid. Perks such as ration, clothing, accommodation and Leave Travel Concession (LTC) shall also be provided as per the existing rules. Agniveers shall be given a one-time Seva Nidhi package comprising their monthly contribution along with matching contribution by the Government on completion of their engagement period, as indicated below:-</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Customised Package (Monthly)</th> <th>In Hand (70%)</th> <th>Contribution to Agniveer Corpus Fund (30%)</th> <th>Contribution to Corpus Fund by GoI</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="5" style="text-align:center">All Figures in ₹ (Monthly Contribution)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1st Year</td> <td>30000</td> <td>21000</td> <td>9000</td> <td>9000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2nd Year</td> <td>33000</td> <td>23100</td> <td>9900</td> <td>9900</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3rd Year</td> <td>36500</td> <td>25550</td> <td>10950</td> <td>10950</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4th Year</td> <td>40000</td> <td>28000</td> <td>12000</td> <td>12000</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Total Contribution in Agniveer Corpus Fund after four years</td> <td colspan="3">Rs. 5.02 lakh</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Exit after 4th year</td> <td colspan="3">Approximately Rs. 10.04 Lakhs as Seva Nidhi Package (absolute amount excluding interest)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | | Year | Customised Package (Monthly) | In Hand (70%) | Contribution to Agniveer Corpus Fund (30%) | Contribution to Corpus Fund by GoI | All Figures in ₹ (Monthly Contribution) | | | | | 1 st Year | 30000 | 21000 | 9000 | 9000 | 2 nd Year | 33000 | 23100 | 9900 | 9900 | 3 rd Year | 36500 | 25550 | 10950 | 10950 | 4 th Year | 40000 | 28000 | 12000 | 12000 | Total Contribution in Agniveer Corpus Fund after four years | | Rs. 5.02 lakh | | | Exit after 4 th year | | Approximately Rs. 10.04 Lakhs as Seva Nidhi Package (absolute amount excluding interest) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| 1 st Year | 30000 | 21000 | 9000 | 9000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 nd Year | 33000 | 23100 | 9900 | 9900 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 rd Year | 36500 | 25550 | 10950 | 10950 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 th Year | 40000 | 28000 | 12000 | 12000 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| Life Insurance Cover | Agniveer will be provided non-contributory Life Insurance Cover of Rs. 48 Lakh for the duration of their engagement period. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Death Compensation | In addition to insurance cover of Rs. 48 Lakh, one- time ex-gratia of Rs. 44 Lakh for death attributable to service, will be provided to the NOK. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Disability Compensation | One-time ex-gratia of Rs. 44/25/15 Lakh based on % of disability (100%/75%/50%) shall be applicable to Agniveers. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Leave | 30 days leave per year shall be applicable for Agniveers. Additionally, sick leave would be applicable based on medical advice of competent medical authority. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Medical and CSD Facilities | For the duration of their engagement period in the Indian Armed Forces, Agniveers will be entitled for medical facility at Service hospital as well as CSD provisions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

CBC 107011/13/0035/2425



We are always surrounded by the things of which we think.

THE MOTHER

Created Problems

Some problems humanity has created together and must tackle together. Some problems are created locally. Climate change is something that the world has to solve as a whole. If half the world lessens its emissions while the other half increases them, climate change will not be solved. The earth's atmosphere and the oceans bind humanity.

Local problems are created because of an imbalance in power and the desire to stir up trouble. Ukraine is one such example and Gaza is another. It is hard to understand why apartheid, ethnic cleansing and indeed genocide are acceptable in the world of 2025.

Then there are other problems that might not even be thought of as problems at all but punitive solutions emanating from them are still inflicted on the world. One such solution that we are dealing with is regarding the problem of the United States' trade deficit and the desire to level it out through tariffs. These are required, according to the American president, because the system is grossly unfair to the US and other nations have been "ripping us off," in his words. Have they? If they have this ripping off has been mostly to their detriment.

The average per person GDP of the world is \$13,000, according to the World Bank. Most countries are considerably lower than that. These include India (\$2500), Indonesia (\$4800), Iran (\$4400), Iraq (\$5500), Thailand (\$7100) and Vietnam (\$4200). Sub-Saharan Africa, which has a population a little smaller than India's, is at \$1600. Of our fellow BRICS members, Brazil is \$10,200, Russia \$13,800, South Africa \$6000 and China is at \$12,600.

A few countries have a per person GDP considerably higher than the global average. The Euro area average is \$45,000 with Germany at \$54,000, France at \$44,000 and Italy at \$39,000. The UK is similar to France. The United States of America is at \$82,000, meaning it is more than six times the global average and more than 30 times India's per person GDP. The US is by far the wealthiest large nation. Its position has made the dollar the world's reserve currency, meaning most trade globally happens in US dollars, and it is the most attractive destination for the world's talented people. Its population growth is bolstered by this migration and its corporate and academic elites are studied with those who were born abroad. Its future is assured because of this enormous corps of talent. US per person GDP has doubled since 2004, which is incredible given how high the base already was. This has not been the case for Europe and the Euro area's per person GDP has stagnated since 2004. Of course there is the problem of inequality in the US, as there is elsewhere, but that is an issue for the US to sort out internally, and not inflict it on a world that is much poorer than the average American.

This weekend, Donald Trump said about us that: "India charges us massive tariffs. Massive. You can't even sell anything in India... They have agreed, by the way; they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done."

Whatever position one has on free trade, it is hard to blame India and its government for trying to protect the interests of its people and to advance its economy. In a nation where a billion people cannot buy anything discretionary and must spend all their earnings on survival, what is there to buy from advanced nations?

Economists suggest that the US trade deficit is a reflection of the country's budget deficit. The US government spends more than it earns and so it has to borrow. In 2024, this deficit was \$1.8 trillion. This borrowing means capital inflows into the US, raising the demand for the dollar and keeping it strong. The strong dollar in turn makes it difficult for the US to export its products and easier to import, which explains the deficit in the trade balance. If the US were to balance its budget and borrow less, according to this "twin deficits" theory, it would not have a trade deficit as wide as it does. This is not going to happen, especially when Trump is going to continue and deepen tax cuts that will reduce his government's income.

Mexico has a per person GDP of \$13,790, meaning it is around the global average. Canada is \$53,000, meaning about \$30,000 per person per year lower than the US. It is not easy to make out the case as Trump is trying to do that these countries are engaging with the US on trade in bad faith. If they were the numbers would not be what they are. It is strange that someone is making the case that they are ripping the US off.

Take a look at the markets around the world and we see the turbulence that has been deliberately created by one man in a powerful nation.

Some problems we have to hunker down and face and resolve as a species, and there are enough of these, and these are problems of sufficient difficulty, to require our full attention. And then we have these ones that are being gratuitously thrust on us, ones that we did not have till a few weeks or months ago, but are now keeping a large part of the world occupied.

WISDOM CORNER

Truth, like gold, is to be obtained not by its growth, but by washing away from it all that is not gold

LEO TOLSTOY

Hope is important because it can make the present moment less difficult to bear. If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear a hardship today

THICH NHAT HANH

Do your little bit of good where you are; it is those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world

DESMOND TUTU

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1765: Following a vigorous press campaign by French philosopher Voltaire, a court acquitted the Huguenot merchant Jean Calas, who had been executed for allegedly murdering his son; the case greatly strengthened the movement for criminal law reform and religious toleration in France.

1831: The French Foreign Legion, whose unofficial motto is "Legio patria nostra" ("The legion is our fatherland"), was founded by King Louis-Philippe as an aid in controlling French colonial possessions in Africa.

1959: The Barbie doll goes on sale. The American toy company Mattel claims that more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold so far, with about 3 dolls being sold every second.



Palwasha Hassan & Shafiqah Khaalwak

AFGHAN WOMEN HAVE LONG HAD TO FIND IMAGINATIVE WAYS TO RESIST AND CIRCUMVENT HARSH REPRESSION

This year's International Women's Day was marked by a sense of foreboding, even despair. Progress on women's rights and representation is stalling; the number of women in parliaments grew last year at the lowest rate in a generation, and the global financing gap for gender initiatives remains wide. At a time of widespread democratic backsliding – and with US President Donald Trump freezing foreign aid, including for gender initiatives – the prospects for improvement appear bleak.

No one understands the consequences of such setbacks better than women and girls in Afghanistan, where some of the world's most severe gender-based rights violations are occurring. And yet, Afghan women also offer compelling reasons for hope and powerful motivation – especially for those of us who enjoy rights, freedoms, and opportunities they do not – to keep fighting.

Afghan women have long had to find imaginative ways to resist and circumvent harsh repression. In the late 1990s, as the Taliban consolidated control of the country and imposed regressive policies, women established underground schools, community centers, and health clinics. Since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, Afghan women have renewed such initiatives. For example, they have set up secret schools, which girls – who are now prohibited from education past the sixth grade – can attend in person or online. Where such classes are not accessible, mothers often educate their daughters at home, using their phones or tablets to access the necessary materials.

Forbidden from speaking outside their homes, women



If the Taliban seek to deny women a seat at the table, as they have so far, the international community must push back. Afghanistan's future, and the region's stability, depends on it

have used social media and the press to tell their stories. Unable to protest peacefully without facing violence from the authorities, women have embraced creative forms of resistance, depicting their experiences and demanding change in poetry, paintings, and film. Sahra Mani's moving documentary, Bread & Roses, which provides a glimpse into Afghan women's efforts to resist Taliban repression, has earned international acclaim.

We are from Afghanistan, but we were fortunate to have the opportunity to restart our lives in a new country, where we can advocate for our sisters back home without fear for our personal safety. But the heroines of Bread & Roses, and countless other Afghan women activists, face mortal danger every day. It is thus imperative that we do not stop at listening to their stories. Admiring their courage or sympathizing with their plight means little if we do nothing to keep them on the global agenda. That is why, at the upcoming United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), we will be calling on the international

community to take three critical steps to support Afghan women.

First, Afghan refugees must have credible and timely options for safe and permanent resettlement. When the Taliban returned to power, hundreds of thousands of refugees – including Afghan nationals who had worked with American or NATO forces during the war – fled to neighboring Pakistan, where they applied for their promised US visas. Many have waited for years for their chance at resettlement, often facing arbitrary detention and harassment in the meantime.

Far from accelerating this process, Trump has suspended the US Refugee Admissions Program. This has put Afghans at elevated risk of deportation – tantamount to a death sentence for many – by the Pakistani government, which has expressed frustration at the lengthy relocation timeframes. A credible pathway to permanent resettlement in safe locations must be established as soon as possible.

Second, the international community must give Afghan women the resources they

need to effect change within Afghanistan. Afghan women have the vision, tenacity, experience, and commitment needed to make a difference. But, since the Taliban's return to power, donors have been afraid to support them. Far more financing must be provided to Afghan women-led programs, including those facilitating dialogue between Afghan women at home and in exile.

Finally, women – and civil society more broadly – must be included in any political dialogue or peace process related to Afghanistan. If the Taliban seek to deny women a seat at the table, as they have so far, the international community must push back. Afghanistan's future, and the region's stability, depends on it.

This year's CSW meeting will mark the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the world's most progressive blueprint for advancing women's rights. When it was created three decades ago, the women involved were filled with hope that the fight for gender equality had reached a turning point. But despite progress in some areas – including women's labor force participation, political representation, and financial inclusion – the declaration's promise remains unfulfilled. Now is the time to draw on the creativity, leadership, knowhow, and courage of a new generation of women activists – not least those in Afghanistan.

Palwasha Hassan is Senior Technical and Program Director at Mina's List. Shafiqah Khaalwak is a poet, writer, and activist, who supports Mina's List with communications and advocacy

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SPECTRUM CONSERVATION

Wildlife crime laws & implementation woes

Most-wanted elephant poacher Babuli Mahalik of Narasinghpur in Odisha who killed 20 elephants in Athgarh, Boudh, Dhenkanal and Nayagarh was arrested and sent to jail by forest officials of Athgarh during 2020. After four years, his lawyer managed to get this notorious poacher released on bail. He continued his activities and recently was arrested by forest officials of Andhra Pradesh. Such incidents compel us to think whether the existing laws and regulations related to wildlife protection and conservation are sufficient to control crime against wildlife in our country.

The first wildlife protection law dates back to the 3rd century BC, when Emperor Ashoka enacted a law regarding wildlife and environmental conservation. The first codified law, the Wild Birds Protection Act, 1887 was enacted by the British. Later the British government passed the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act, 1912 which was amended in 1935. The Government of India brought a comprehensive

law, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 which provides the basic framework for ensuring the protection and well-being of wild animals and plants. This primary law has been amended from time to time when there is a need to address the provisions for better implementation.

In addition to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, other laws like Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023; Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023; Customs Act, 1962; The Indian Forest Act, 1927; The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1981; The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986; The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960; The Arms Act, 1959, are some more legal tools to check and control wildlife crimes, including illegal wildlife trade.

The major weakness in the enforcement of the Wildlife Crime Act is the sluggish movement of cases in courts. In the last five years, not more than two or three persons in India have actually received jail terms for crimes against major species like tigers, elephants, rhinos, or pangolins.

In almost all cases, traders and poachers get bail and cases in lower courts go on at a very relaxed pace.

District courts are burdened with thousands of cases which results in a delay in getting the verdict. During this time, professional wildlife traders get bail and continue their activities. Very few forest officers empowered to file wildlife court cases are trained to conduct continuous investigations and interrogations, receive evidence, frame charges and handle court cases. Over the years, prosecuting officers are transferred, while witnesses go missing or die.

Law enforcement is a complex issue. On the one hand, the forest department is tasked with protecting forests without adequate law enforcement powers, which creates problems in seizing illegally poached wild animals, even where such seizures take place, the low punishment and anticipatory bail do not help in stopping hunting.

In criminology, three basic factors constitute deterrence (i) certainty, (ii) the time it takes to award punishment,

and (iii) the true importance of punishment. In India, the conviction rate for serious offences is very low and in cases related to wildlife crime, it is still weak. Unless legal and wildlife experts sit together and address the loopholes in the above three aspects, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 will remain only on paper.

There is no "quick fix" to the problem of low conviction rate and mere changes in the law will not be enough. There is need of restructuring the investigation process which requires special training and sensitisation of law enforcement personnel. Employing experienced lawyers can effectively counsel the field staff so that the prosecuting officers can take timely steps to reduce the time taken during trial. The participation of locals is essential for proper and effective implementation of existing laws and conservation of wildlife biodiversity.

The writer is deputy conservator of forests and deputy director, investigation, Odisha Lokayukta.

Letters TO THE EDITOR

Readers of Orissa Post are most welcome to contribute letters (100 words), articles and columns (between 600-1000 words). Contributors are requested to send their contact numbers and full postal address/email ID. They may also send in their valuable comments, opinion and suggestions, preferably by email, to: edit@orissapost.com

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Diplomatic concern

Sir, This refers to "India demands action against culprits," Orissa POST, March 8. India's strong condemnation of the security breach during EAM S. Jaishankar's visit to London underscores a deeper diplomatic concern - the misuse of democratic freedoms by separatist elements abroad. The protester, who broke through the police cordon and desecrated the Indian flag, has reignited questions about the response of host nations to such incidents and the persistent challenge posed by Khalistani groups operating in the West. The External Affairs Ministry's statement emphasizing the need for host nations to uphold their diplomatic obligations reflects not only frustration but also a demand for stricter action. New Delhi's concerns are valid, as diplomatic security is a fundamental tenet of international relations. The tearing of the Indian flag was not just an act of protest but a deliberate provocation meant to challenge India's sovereignty. Such actions should not be dismissed as isolated events; they signal a persistent undercurrent of hostility that could have larger ramifications. The UK must demonstrate its commitment to safeguarding diplomatic norms, ensuring that individuals or groups advocating separatism do not exploit the country's democratic space to undermine another sovereign state.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Football story

Sir, That 40-year-old Sunil Chhetri has been "coaxed" out of retirement by Indian football team's head coach Manolo Marquez to join the team for the AFC Asian Cup 2027 qualifiers is a tribute to the great footballer's prowess but does not reflect well on the overall Indian football scenario. The Santosh Trophy that once evoked a passing interest has almost no takers even among some media correspondents. One cannot say that Indian football lacked the "headturners." Far from it but football is an 11-member team game where individual brilliance is next to nothing. That said Indian football had its moments of glory when it qualified for the FIFA World Cup way back in 1950. The legendary Syed Abdul Rahim carried the Indian football team to the victory podium in the 1951 Asian Games. The advent of Indian Super League in 2013 helped domestic players to mingle with some reasonably big international names.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA



We welcome Indian innovation and manufacturing initiatives and look forward to the success of this endeavor
ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION MINISTER

ALL-WOMEN CREW OPERATES TRAIN

An all-women crew operated the Ranchi-Tori Passenger train in Jharkhand on the occasion of International Women's Day Saturday, an official said. The team comprised the loco-pilot, assistant loco-pilot, train manager, three ticket checkers and four RPF personnel, he said



of the day note

As soon as the incident was reported, I obtained information from the relevant police, conducted a thorough investigation, and instructed them to quickly identify the culprits



SIDDARAMAIAH | KARNATAKA CM

On Women's Day in Jharkhand, the full assistance of ₹7,500 is reaching the bank accounts of the women in the state



HEMANT SOREN | JHARKHAND CM

The per capita income has increased from ₹1,00,444 in 2017-18 to ₹1,77,723 till January in 2024-25 during the BJP-led coalition regime. The GSDP also scaled up significantly during the past two years. The state has transformed itself from a top performer to a front runner under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) index



MANIK SAHA | TRIPURA CM

SHORT TAKES

Man, parents die by suicide

Surat: A 30-year-old man and his parents allegedly committed suicide in Surat in Gujarat due to financial troubles, a police official said Saturday. Harsh Sasangia and his parents Bharatbhai Sasangia (55) and Vanitaben Sasangia (50) ended their lives by consuming poison late Friday night in their flat in Amroli, Assistant Commissioner of Police DS Patel said. "The family had put up their flat for sale and a buyer had made advance payment. However, there was a loan on the flat and the bank was putting pressure due to non-repayment. The buyer, once he got to know of this loan, started seeking his advance payment back," he added.

Two killed, 13 injured as vehicle overturns

Mumbai: Two people were killed and 13 others injured after a vehicle overturned and was hit by a car on the Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Expressway Saturday morning, police said. The accident occurred at Malsawargaon in Buldhana district around 9 am when a vehicle with 15 people from Yavatmal was heading to Shirdi, an official from Sindkhed Raja police station said. He said one of the tyres of the vehicle burst, causing it to overturn, and a car rammied into it from behind.

19 nabbed over cheating in exam

Hardoi (UP): In two separate raids here, the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force arrested 19 people in connection with cheating during the class 10 English exam of the UP Board, an official said Saturday. The paper took place in the morning shift (8.30 am to 11.45 am) Friday. In the first instance, 14 people were found solving the question paper at the residence of a school principal, the official said. A Special Task Force team raided the Jagannath Singh Public Inter College at Katiyamaou village in Hardoi district.

IAF transport plane overshoots runway

Kolkata: An AN-32 transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force overshoot the runway while landing at Bagdogra airport in north Bengal, a Defence official said here Saturday. There was no casualty in the accident that occurred Friday, he said. An inquiry into the accident has been initiated by the IAF authorities, the official said.

US TARIFF ROW

Premature to talk about negotiations, says Govt



The decisions were seen as an attempt to send a signal to the Trump administration that New Delhi is open to bringing down tariffs in specific sectors

Washington is also pushing New Delhi to buy more American oil, gas and military platforms to bring down the trade deficit that stands at around USD 45 billion in India's favour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: Negotiations between India and the US for a trade deal have just begun and it would be premature to talk about its details, government sources said Saturday, hours after US President Donald Trump said India agreed to cut tariffs "way down".

It is natural for both the countries to have their interests and sensitivities and these are legitimate matters for a discussion, the sources said. Last month, India and the US announced that they would negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump in Washington DC.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal was in the US this week to hold talks on the trade deal with his American counterpart as well as the US Trade Representative and their teams. Trump's announcement on Friday that India agreed to bring tariffs "way down" was largely viewed by New Delhi as premature.

"India charges us massive tariffs, you can't even sell anything in India, it's almost restrictive...By the way, they have agreed to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody is finally exposing them for what they have done," the US president told reporters in the White House. In line with his "America First" policy, Trump this week announced reciprocal tariffs from April 2 on its partners and other na-

tions that impose higher levies on imports from the US.

The US president's tariff tussle has stoked fears of a global trade war with many countries already announcing counter-measures to deal with it. The Indian government sources said discussions on tariffs and other aspects of bilateral trade that were highlighted during Modi's visit to Washington DC last month are an ongoing process.

Obviously, there are specifics which have been mentioned on various issues as part of the negotiation, the sources said in what is being seen as New Delhi's tacit response to the US president's claim. "Since the discussions have just begun, it would be premature to talk about its details. There is also a context for each dimension, that would reflect the interests of both sides," said a source.

The sources also pointed out how discussions had taken place between India and the US for a limited trade deal during the first Trump administration. For various reasons, it did not produce an outcome, they said. India has reduced its average applied tariffs significantly for key developed countries like Australia, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland and Norway under recently concluded mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreements.

Similar negotiations are currently underway with the European Union and the UK, among other partners. The ongoing discussions with the US should be seen in this context, the sources said.



Tribal women take part in a pitcher race to celebrate 'International Women's Day' on the outskirts of Santiniketan in Birbhum district of West Bengal

Delhi govt approves ₹2,500 monthly aid

Addressing a party programme on International Women's Day at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, BJP president J P Nadda said the Delhi Cabinet has approved an allocation of ₹5,100 crore for implementing the Mahila Samridhhi Yojana and congratulated Chief Minister Rekha Gupta for it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: The BJP government in Delhi approved the Mahila Samridhhi Yojana Saturday to provide a monthly assistance of ₹2,500 each to women from poor families in the city and allocated ₹5,100 crore for the scheme.

Addressing a party programme on International Women's Day at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here, BJP president J P Nadda said the Delhi Cabinet has approved an allocation of ₹5,100 crore for implementing the Mahila Samridhhi Yojana and congratulated Chief Minister Rekha Gupta for it.

Talking to reporters on the sidelines of the programme, the chief minister said a committee headed by her has been formed to oversee the implementation of the scheme, with ministers Ashish Sood, Parvesh Verma and Kapil Mishra being the other members of the panel.

"The Cabinet meeting, attended by all the ministers on



Saturday, approved our Sankalp Patra promise made in the run-up to the (Delhi) election to provide ₹2,500 each to poor women under the Mahila Samridhhi Yojana. We have also made a budget provision of ₹5,100 crore for it," Gupta said.

The work to register the applicants under the scheme will start immediately through a portal and after intensive deliberations on the terms and conditions of the beneficiaries, she added. Gupta said it has also been decided that her government will work for the safe-

ty and prosperity of the women of Delhi. Earlier, addressing the gathering at the programme, the chief minister said the Delhi government will set up "one-stop centres" in all the districts to strengthen women safety by providing them with assistance, including police help and legal counselling.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in its "Viksit Delhi Sankalp Patra" for the Assembly polls held in February, had promised to provide ₹2,500 per month under the Mahila Samridhhi Yojana to women from poor families.

NTPC official shot dead; six detained

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hazaribagh (Jharkhand), March 8: A 42-year-old NTPC official was shot dead by two motorcycle-borne gunmen in Jharkhand's Hazaribagh district Saturday, police said.

Six people have been detained for interrogation in connection with the murder of Kumar Gaurav who was posted as deputy general manager (dispatch) at NTPC's Keredari coal mines project, Hazaribagh Superintendent of Police (SP) Arvind Kumar Singh said.

The incident happened around 9.30 AM near Fatah More under the Katkamdag Police Station limits when the gunman intercepted his car and fired at him, the SP said. At that time, Gaurav was on his way to the coal mine site from his quarters in Hazaribagh town, he said.

Singh said the driver of the car, in which Gaurav was travelling, was found missing after the incident. The SP said a special investigation team (SIT) led by Barkagaon Sub-Divisional Police Officer Pawan Kumar has been constituted to probe into the incident.

A search operation has been initiated to arrest those involved in the murder. Jharkhand BJP president and leader of opposition in the assembly Babul Marandi condemned the incident and urged the state DGP to ensure the safety of all project officials, staffers and businesses in coal mine areas.

Marandi said even after an attack on a coal trader in Ranchi on Saturday, the police did not remain alert. The BJP leader also claimed, "In Jharkhand, thousands of trucks of coal are being stolen every day from Dhanbad, Bokaro, Ramgarh, Hazaribagh, and Chatra under the protection of the government machinery, and the money amassed from such theft is being distributed from top to bottom. If this theft is not stopped, lives will continue to be lost like this."

India, Mauritius to sign several pacts

Modi is travelling to Mauritius primarily to grace the island nation's national-day celebrations as the chief guest March 12.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: India and Mauritius will sign several pacts providing for cooperation in the areas of capacity building, trade and to tackle cross-border financial crimes during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to the country from Tuesday.

Modi is travelling to Mau-



ritius primarily to grace the island nation's national-day celebrations as the chief guest March 12.

At a media briefing, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said Saturday that the two sides will sign several agreements in the fields of capacity building, bilateral trade, tackling cross-border financial crimes and promoting small and me-

dium enterprises.

The visit will enable both sides to take stock of the bilateral ties and provide orientation to engagement in the coming months and years, he said. Describing Mauritius as a close maritime neighbour, Misri said India has been privileged to be a preferred development partner for the island nation. In the last 10 years, the relationship has deepened significantly, he said.

A contingent of Indian defence forces will participate in the national-day celebrations of Mauritius, along with a ship from the Indian Navy.

ED seizes business jet at Hyderabad airport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 8: The Enforcement Directorate has seized a business jet parked at the Hyderabad airport as part of a money laundering investigation against a Hyderabad-based company and its promoters who allegedly duped numerous investors in a ₹850 crore Ponzi "scam", official sources said Saturday.

The money laundering case stems from a Cyberabad police FIR against Falcon Group (Capital Protection Force Pvt. Ltd.), its CMD Amar Deep Kumar and some others, the sources said. It is alleged that the Falcon

Group "collected" ₹1,700 crore from investors for high returns through a "fraudulent" income discounting investment scheme. ₹850 crore, out of the total funds, was re-paid leaving a total of 6,979 investors unpaid, according to the sources. Kumar, the sources said, fled the country using this jet. He or his company could not be contacted immediately for a response on the charges. Officials from the ED's Hyderabad office found that the 8-seater business jet 'N935H Hawker 800A' (owned by a company of Kumar) landed at the Rajiv Gandhi International airport located in the Shamshabad area Friday, the sources told PTI.

ICMR launches Medical Innovations Patent Mitra

The initiative aims at providing end-to-end guidance and handholding support to innovators for patent filings and technology transfer of medical innovations to industry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: Union Health Minister J P Nadda Saturday launched the Indian Council of Medical Research's (ICMR) flagship initiative 'Medical Innovations Patent Mitra' to enhance India's healthcare innovation ecosystem.

The initiative aims at providing end-to-end guidance and handholding support to innovators for patent filings and technology transfer of medical innovations to industry.

The initiative was launched at the International Sympo-

sium on Health Technology Assessment (ISHTA). This program, developed under the guidance of NITI Aayog and in partnership with the Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), is supported by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

The launch was followed by a panel discussion that brought together bureaucrats, industry leaders, investors, and public health experts to explore the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for enhancing patent filing and technology transfer in the context

of translational research and medical innovation.

Nadda said, "Medical innovation Patent Mitra is a testament of ICMR's commitment to advancing medical innovation. With the launch of this initiative, our country is taking significant lead towards supporting our innovators."

"This platform will ensure that the ground breaking work done by our scientists and researchers is protected through patents and made available to the public through seamless technology transfer. This visionary effort propels India towards attaining the goal of Viksit Bharat," the Union minister said. Dr V K Paul, Member (Health) NITI Aayog emphasised on the significance of the Patent Mitra initiative in directly contributing to the goals of Ayushman Bharat,



ensuring that innovative technologies developed in India are reached in every corner of the country.

Stressing on the need for building a self-reliant Innovation Ecosystem in the country, he stated, "India's journey towards becoming a self-reliant nation rests on our ability

to innovate within our own borders. Through Medical Innovation Patent Mitra, we are creating an environment where indigenous innovations in the biomedical field are not only encouraged but effectively protected, paving the way for a self-sustaining healthcare ecosystem."

Dr Rajiv Bahl Director General, ICMR highlighted that the initiative will bridge a crucial gap in the patenting process for medical innovations, providing expert assistance at every stage -- from patentability assessments to filing, prosecution, and maintenance of patents.

Amit Agrawal, Secretary, Department of Pharmaceuticals (DoP), expressed his enthusiasm about partnering with ICMR for this flagship initiative. He emphasised that this initiative will greatly ben-

efit innovators, start-ups, and industries.

These initiatives will complement the DoP's PRIP scheme, contributing to the transformation of India's Pharma and Med-Tech sector from a cost-driven model to one focused on innovation-based growth. The Medical Innovations Patent Mitra will support ICMR Institutes, ICMR Extramural Grantees as well as medical colleges and institutes.

It offers a comprehensive range of services, including patentability assessment, patent filing in India, and assistance with patent prosecution.

The initiative also supports technology transfer, providing handholding for the transfer of innovations to industry partners through mechanisms like the Med Tech "Mela" and paperless Expression of Interest (EoI) processes.

national

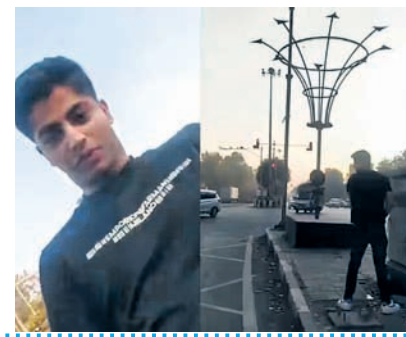


When a girl returns (home) late, her parents ask questions. But they don't do the same when a boy comes late... They should do it. In the past decade, we have given women's safety the highest priority, and in order to prevent crimes against them, we have made stricter rules and laws

NARENDRA MODI | PRIME MINISTER

MAN ALIGHTING FROM BMW, URINATING ON ROAD GOES VIRAL

One person was detained in connection with a viral video showing a youth alighting from a BMW and urinating at a traffic junction in Pune, a police official said Saturday. The incident took place in Shastrinagar area of Yerawada this morning and the video was shot by an eyewitness, he added



of the day quote

Statehood will happen. The government of India will have to fulfil its commitment. It is bound by the promise it made in Parliament when I was a member

FAROOQ ABDULLAH | NATIONAL CONFERENCE SUPREMO

The election manifesto is for five years. We will not change what the government has promised. All schemes must continue. Development and infrastructure, committed expenditure should also go on and the government is working towards it

EKNATH SHINDE | MAHA DY CM

Now, at this stage, there is one more look that I would (take) the groups (GoM) have done excellent work, but I still have taken it upon myself to, once more, completely review each of the groups' works, and then probably take it to take it to the Council to see if we can come to a final conclusion on this

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

High degree of collusivity: Army chief on Pak, China

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: In a veiled reference to China and Pakistan, Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi Saturday said there is a "high degree of collusivity," which must be accepted.

"What it means, as far as I am concerned, the two-front threat is a reality," he said in response to a question on proximity between China and Pakistan during an interactive session at the India Today Conclave here. During the session, he fielded a broad range of questions about the army's preparedness for the future, lessons from ongoing conflicts, the situation in Bangladesh, and at the Line of Actual Control and the Line of Control.

"Now, the second thing that you have brought out is collaboration or the relationship between our western neighbour and Bangladesh. "As far as I am concerned, since I have said that the epicentre of terrorism is in a particular country, they have a relationship with any of my neighbouring country, I should be looking worried, because as far as I am concerned, the terrorism route can be used from that country also, which is my major concern as of today," Gen Dwivedi said, when asked about reports suggesting growing proximity between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The General said it was "too early" to take a call on



As far as I am concerned, since I have said that the epicentre of terrorism is in a particular country, they have a relationship with any of my neighbouring country, I should be looking worried, because as far as I am concerned, the terrorism route can be used from that country also, which is my major concern as of today

GEN UPENDRA DWIVEDI | ARMY CHIEF

the role of Bangladesh, where a change in government may bring about a change in the relationship between it and India. "Because as far as I am concerned, I am very clear, the present military to military relationship is very strong. And, we exchanging note on regular basis, to avoid any kind of a misgiving," he added.

He was also asked how the Indian Army looked at the Pakistan-China equation. "What we have to understand is that... we have to be very clear that there is a high degree of collusivity, which we must accept. In terms of the virtual field, it's nearly 100 per cent; in terms of physical, I would say most of the equipment there is of Chinese origin," the Army chief said.

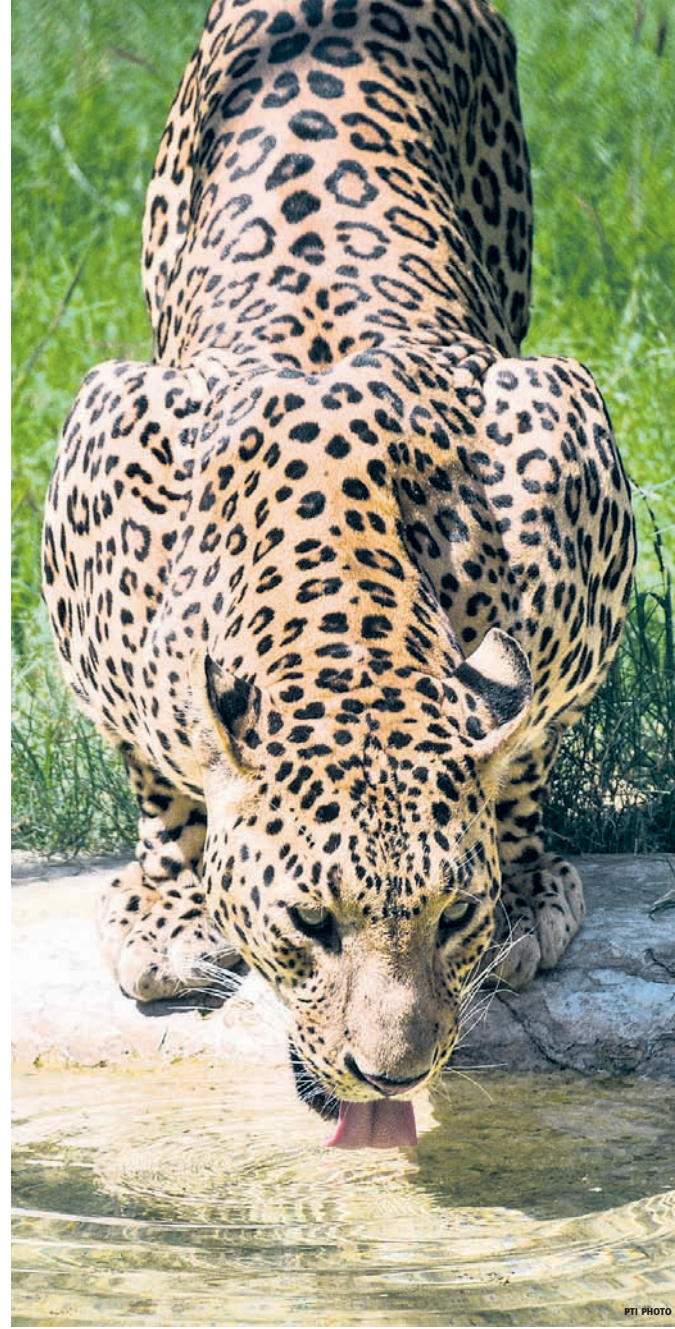
"So, this is the situation as of today, as far as collusivity is concerned. What it means, as far as I am concerned, the two-front threat ... is a reality for me," he said. In January 2021, the then Army chief Gen M M Naravane too said that when it

comes to Pakistan and China, "the threat of collusivity cannot be wished away."

General Dwivedi also spoke about the situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh since the Special Representative-level (SR-level) meeting in December 2024, following an agreement that was finalised between the two countries last year.

"I think Assassin's Mace has lived through its life. It may not be more relevant today. And, if you see, as far as the terrain of the Himalayas is concerned, the terrain plays a very favourable role as far as India is concerned.

"The second issue is, you may have superiority in anything, but what is important is at the point of application, are you able to amass that kind of resource application, strength and the impact which is required," he said. "I think that way, Indian Army is adequately poised to take care of that," he said.



A leopard queches its thirst in Sarthana Nature Park in Surat, Gujarat

Students can 'freely' celebrate Holi at NRSC Hall March 13-14: AMU

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aligarh (UP), March 8: AMU demands for allowing Holi celebration on the Aligarh Muslim University campus, its administration has decided that students can do so "freely" at the Non-Resident Students Centre Hall, an official said.

A controversy erupted a few days ago after members of a right-wing group accused the university administration of denying permission to Hindu students to organise a Holi Milan function on campus and demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention. Later, local BJP MP Satish Gautam declared that "no one can stop anyone from celebrating Holi inside the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) campus".

"If any Hindu student faces any problem in celebrating Holi on campus, I am there to help them," he had said. Student leader Akhil Kaushal had submitted an application to the AMU administration, requesting approval for a special Holi celebration at the Non-Resident Students Centre (NRSC) Hall March 9. Late Friday, the NRSC Hall provost Professor Brij Bhusan Singh told reporters that any university student could "freely" celebrate Holi at the hall March 13-14. He also said there was an AMU board examination scheduled for March 9.

"So, I think it would not be appropriate if any student comes (here) and plays Holi on that day. March 10, 11 and 12 are working days and there will be classes... March 13-14 are holidays and everyone is welcome to play Holi," Singh said.

POST OF THE DAY

HYPOCRISY EXPOSED
BJP supporters: "Congress is new Muslim league. Samajwadi is Namazwadi. DMK is pro Muslim"
Meanwhile Chandrababu Naidu: He prayed full fledge Namaz in Eid Will any sanghi open his mouth to defend this BJP allied leader?

@Amockx2022

Women achievers take over PM's social media



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: From scientists breaking new grounds to rural entrepreneurs transforming local economies, six inspiring women took over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's social media accounts on International Women's Day.

These women shared their journeys, achievements and the challenges they overcame, offering a glimpse into the power of Nari Shakti in shaping India's future. The women selected for this unique initiative represent diverse fields. Chess Grandmaster Vaishali Rameshbabu from Tamil Nadu has been making India proud on the global stage. Anita Devi, popularly known as the "Mushroom Lady of Bihar," has empowered hundreds of rural women through sustainable agriculture.

Elna Mishra, a nuclear scientist at BARC, and Shilpi Soni, a space scientist at ISRO, showcased women's contributions to cutting-edge research

and technology.

Ajaita Shah, the Founder & CEO of Frontier Markets, has enabled thousands of women to become rural entrepreneurs. Dr Anjee Agarwal, a leading accessibility advocate, has spent three decades working for inclusive infrastructure in India.

Their remarkable stories reinforce the idea that women are not just participants but pioneers in building a stronger, more inclusive India.

Prime Minister Modi, in his Women's Day message, reaffirmed his government's commitment to women's empowerment.

"We bow to our Nari Shakti on #WomensDay! Our government has always worked to empower women, reflecting in our schemes and programmes. Today, as promised, my social media properties will be taken over by women who are making a mark in diverse fields!" he posted on X before handing over his account to the women achievers.

TUNNEL COLLAPSE

Robots to be deployed from Mar 11, cadaver dogs to go inside again

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagarkurnool (Telangana), March 8: The Telangana government Saturday decided to deploy robots from March 11 for rescue operations inside the partially collapsed SLBC tunnel and also to take the cadaver dogs again to look for presence of humans.

Eight persons remained trapped inside the tunnel since February 22, after a part of it collapsed.

The government has decided to deploy robots to avoid any danger to the rescue personnel as the conditions inside the tunnel, including water and slush, posed a challenge.

"The usage of bots for the last 70 mtrs (at the accident site) was discussed with (concerned) agency and robots will be placed and tried from Tuesday onwards, in addition to all the efforts which are being undertaken now," a senior official told PTI.

The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has submitted an initial report in which, among other things, it has cautioned that rescue operations should be carried out with extreme caution and care in the last 70 metres, he said.

Digging would be taken up beyond five feet at the two points identified by HRDDs (hu-



man remains detection dogs) as workers are possibly trapped in the second layer of the now dismantled tunnel boring machine (TBM), he said.

The HRDDs would be taken inside the tunnel Sunday, he said. The canines joined the rescue operation March 7 when they were taken into the tunnel.

The regular operation of dewatering and desilting by all the agencies would continue, the official added.

State Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy, who visited the tunnel site and reviewed the ongoing rescue operation with officials of different organisations, directed authorities to take immediate steps to deploy robots for rescue work as fragments of the damaged TBM posed a danger to the rescue personnel.

The minister said the government would spend Rs 4 crore to undertake the rescue work by

utilizing the services of robot experts (of a Hyderabad-based private company).

As the fragments of the huge TBM got submerged under water, soil and stones inside the tunnel, they caused a hazard to the rescue team, an official release quoted him as saying.

Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who visited the tunnel March 2, suggested to the officials leading the rescue operation to use robots inside the tunnel if necessary, to avoid any danger to the rescue personnel. The irrigation minister, who described the tunnel collapse as a national disaster, said the government is determined to continue the rescue operation though the conditions inside the tunnel, including low levels of oxygen, high seepage of water and the sturdy parts of TBM that got drowned in water and soil, posed challenges to the operation.

Bodies of 3 missing persons found near waterfall in Kathua

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 8: Bodies of a teenager and his two relatives were recovered near a waterfall in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district Saturday, three days after they were reported missing during a marriage function at their home, officials said.

The bodies of Varun Singh (15) of Dehota, his uncle Yogesh Singh (32) and maternal uncle Darshan Singh (40) were sighted in Ishu Nallah in Malhar area by drones during a joint search operation by police and the Army late this afternoon, the officials said.

The bodies were later retrieved from the scene after a hectic effort as the area was steep, the officials said, adding preliminary investigation ruled out terrorist angle as there were no visible marks of injury on the bodies. The exact cause of their death would be known only after a postmortem, they said. The officials said Darshan's brother Brijesh was getting married and the trio had left in advance for the bride's home at Lohai Malhar in the Billawar Tehsil at around 5.30 pm on the fateful day.



Bihar Police cracks down on 'double-meaning' Bhojpuri songs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Patna, March 8: The Bihar Police have taken a strict stance against the public display of 'double-meaning' Bhojpuri songs across the state. A directive has been issued to all Inspector General of Police (IG) and Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) to prevent the playing of such songs in their respective jurisdictions.

The move is seen as part of Bihar Police's efforts to promote cultural responsibility and ensure women's dignity and safety. The order was issued by the Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) of

the Weaker Section and Crime Investigation Department.

According to the letter, these songs are frequently played at marriage functions, public events, and in public transport including buses, trucks, and three-wheelers.

They create an extremely awkward situation for female passengers and have a negative social impact. They contribute to an unhealthy atmosphere that compromises children's security and influences children negatively. They spread the wrong message in society, promoting vulgarity.

The ADGP further directed the concerned officials to pro-



hibit the playing of such songs in public spaces, events, and transportation.

Police officers have been instructed to carry out aware-

ness campaigns and take preventive measures on the ground. Under this directive, offenders will be booked under relevant sections of the Bharti-

The move is seen as part of Bihar Police's efforts to promote cultural responsibility and ensure women's dignity and safety

The order was issued by the Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) of the Weaker Section and Crime Investigation Department

ya Nyay Sahita (BNS) Act, 2023. The officials have been asked to carry out strict monitoring in public spaces and transport and impose penalties against offenders if they are caught playing such

songs. Women and various social groups have longstanding demand to crack down on these vulgar songs in public places. Despite concerns, enforcement mechanisms were weak, leading to continued public nuisance. Many buses and three-wheelers use large stereophonic sound systems to play these songs, causing discomfort to passengers, especially women and children in Bihar. The ADGP in his letter said the reduction in vulgar and offensive content in public transport creates safer and more respectful public spaces, especially for the women and children in the society.



Universities must comply with all federal antidiscrimination laws if they are going to receive federal funding. For too long, Columbia has abandoned that obligation to Jewish students studying on its campus
LINDA MCMAHON | EDUCATION SECRETARY, US

YOON RELEASED FROM PRISON

South Korea's impeached conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol was released from prison Saturday, a day after a Seoul court cancelled his arrest to allow him to stand trial for rebellion without being detained



Indian gets 40-year jail for raping 5 SK women in Australia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sydney, March 8: An Indian community leader in Australia has been sentenced to 40 years in prison, with a non-parole period of 30 years, for the "premeditated and elaborately executed" rapes of five Korean women, according to a media report.

Balesh Dhankhar, 43, sat in the docks and showed no emotion as he was sentenced in the Downing Centre District Court Friday.

Dhankhar posted fake job advertisements to lure women before drugging them in or near his home in Sydney. The former IT consultant then groped and raped the women, the Australian Associated Press reported.

He also filmed his crimes for his future sexual gratification, the report said.

In jailing Dhankhar Friday, District Court Judge Michael King said the offender's conduct was "premeditated, elaborately executed, manipulative and highly predatory" and demonstrated his desire for sexual gratification came in complete and callous disregard for each victim, he said.

"This was an egregious sequence of planned predatory conduct against five unrelated young and vulnerable women over a significant period," the report quoted the judge as saying.

All the women, aged between 21 and 27, were either unconscious or significantly impaired at the time of the abuse.

Fresh unrest rocks Syria

2 days of clashes, revenge killings in Syria leave more than 600 people dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beirut, March 8: The death toll from two days of clashes between security forces and loyalists of ousted Syrian President Bashar Assad and revenge killings that followed has risen to more than 600, a war monitoring group said Saturday, making it one of the deadliest acts of violence since Syria's conflict began 14 years ago.

The clashes, which erupted Thursday, marked a major escalation in the challenge to the new government in Damascus, three months after insurgents took authority after removing Assad from power.

The government has said that they were responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence.



Associated Press about killings during which gunmen shot Alawites, the majority of them men, in the streets or at the gates of their homes. Many homes of Alawites were looted and then set on fire in different areas, two residents of Syria's coastal region told the AP from their hideouts.

They asked that their names not be made public out of fear of being killed by gunmen, adding that thousands of people have fled to nearby mountains for safety.

RESIDENTS SPEAK OF ATROCITIES IN ONE TOWN

Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. One resident said that the gunmen prevented residents for hours from removing the bodies of five of their neighbours killed Friday at close range.

Ali Sheha, a 57-year-old resident of Baniyas who fled with his family and neigh-

bours hours after the violence broke out Friday, said that at least 20 of his neighbours and colleagues in one neighbourhood of Baniyas where Alawites lived, were killed, some of them in their shops, or in their homes. Sheha called the attacks "revenge killings" of the Alawite minority for the crimes committed by Assad's government. Other residents said the gunmen included foreign fighters, and militants from neighbouring villages and towns.

"It was very very bad. Bodies were on the streets," as he was

fleeing, Sheha said, speaking by phone from nearly 20 kilometres away from the city. He said the gunmen were gathering less than 100 metres from his apartment building, firing randomly at homes and residents and in at least one incident he knows of, asked residents for their IDs to check their religion and their sect before killing them. He said the gunmen also burned some homes and stole cars and robbed homes.

DEATH TOLL HAS TRIPLED

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitor, said that 428 Alawites have been killed in revenge attacks in addition to 120 pro-Assad fighters and 89 from security forces. The Observatory's chief Rami Abdulrahman said that revenge killings stopped early Saturday.

"This was one of the biggest massacres during the Syrian conflict," Abdulrahman said about the killings of Alawite civilians. The previous figure given by the group was more than 200 dead. No official figures have been released.

A funeral was held Saturday afternoon for four Syrian security force members in the northwestern village of Al-Janoudiya after they were killed in the clashes along Syria's coast. Scores of people attended the funeral.

of the day quote

In accordance with Islamic law and the culture and traditions of Afghan society, the fundamental rights of Afghan women have been secured



ZABIHULLAH MUJAHID | THE TALIBAN'S CHIEF SPOKESMAN

Today we are talking about the need for a half-million army in Poland



DONALD TUSK | PRIME MINISTER, POLAND

We certainly hope that it would spur more trade and investment and education and technology related activities, and most of all, we know that it will be an important step in a deeper partnership with the United Kingdom



S JAISHANKAR | EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER, INDIA

SHORT TAKES

Indian among 7 held for church for fraud

Kathmandu: Seven persons, including an Indian national, were arrested from a church in Nepal for allegedly defrauding people under the guise of faith healing, officials said Saturday. The incident took place at Kailali district of Far-West Nepal recently. Among those arrested is Karan BK, the coordinator of Anugrah Nepali Church at Tikapur in the district, police said. According to Assistant Chief District Officer Kiran Joshi, the suspects were detained on charges of fraud, having allegedly amassed over NPR 600,000 by promising to cure diseases through prayer meetings held March 5 and 6. One of the arrested individuals has been identified as an Indian national, Bajinder Singh, she said.

2 dogs kidnapped for \$1mn ransom freed

Zurich: Swiss police said Saturday they had solved a kidnapping involving two dogs and a demand for ransom of 1 million Swiss francs (about \$1.135 million). Zurich police said that two Bolonka dogs were stolen from the home of a 59-year-old man in Schlieren near Zurich last week, while the dog owner was away. When the man returned, the dogs were gone and he found a letter demanding money to release the small dogs. Instead of paying the ransom, the man, who was not identified by name in line with Swiss privacy rules, called the police. In the course of the investigation, police Thursday arrested a 30-year-old Norwegian man at Zurich Airport who police said was strongly suspected of being involved in the theft.

China extends repay period for Pakistan

Islamabad: China extended the repayment period of Pakistan's \$2 billion loan by one year, easing pressure of the International Monetary Fund on the dollar-deficit country. The loan was originally due for repayment March 24, but China has agreed to extend the deadline, providing Pakistan with crucial financial relief. Geo News quoted the Ministry of Finance as confirming the roll over by China, adding that this extension comes as Pakistan faces economic challenges, including pressure on foreign exchange reserves. Around 92 per cent of Pakistan's external debt is owed by three major sources, including multilateral and bilateral creditors as well as through international bonds. The move, announced on the

SNIPPETS

Myanmar's military leader announces dates for election

Bangkok: Four years after seizing power from the elected administration, the head of the military government declared Myanmar will hold a general election within 10 months, state-run media reported Saturday. Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing said Friday the election will take place either in December or January 2026 at the latest, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper. He announced the dates in a press conference while on an official visit to Belarus, one of the few allies of Myanmar's military government, saying that 53 political parties have already submitted their lists to participate in the election. However, Min Aung did not mention exact election dates. The announcement comes as Myanmar is roiled by a civil war in which the army has been forced onto the defensive against pro-democracy militants as well as ethnic militias seeking autonomy in much of the country.



Pak asks Afghan Citizen Card holders to leave by March 31

Islamabad: The Pakistan government has set March 31 as the deadline for Afghan Citizen Card (ACCs) holders to leave Pakistan voluntarily as part of a plan to repatriate all illegal foreigners, according to an official document. The document, purportedly leaked to the media Friday night, indicated that the ACC holders staying in Islamabad and Rawalpindi would be moved out and sent back to Afghanistan as part of a multiphase relocation plan for Afghan migrants, including those awaiting resettlement in third countries. The decision comes amidst deteriorating ties between Islamabad and Kabul over the issue of terrorism and it may impact over 800,000 documented Afghan refugees holding Afghan Citizen Cards and are included in the category of documented refugees, contrary to hundreds and thousands of undocumented ones. It stated that the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Programme (IFRP) has been implemented since November 1, 2023 and in "continuation to the government's decision to repatriate all illegal foreigners, the national leadership has now decided to also repatriate ACC holders".



CHINA HITS BACK AT CANADA WITH FRESH AGRICULTURE TARIFFS

REUTERS

Beijing, March 8: China announced tariffs on over \$2.6 billion worth of Canadian agricultural and food products Saturday, retaliating against levies Ottawa introduced in October and opening a new front in a trade war largely driven by US President Donald Trump's tariff threats.

The levies, announced by the commerce ministry and scheduled to take effect March 20, match the 100% and 25% import duties Canada slapped on China-made electric vehicles and steel and aluminium products just over four months ago.

By excluding canola, which is also known as rapeseed, and was one of Canada's top exports to the world's No.1 agricultural importer prior to China investigating it for anti-dumping last year, Beijing may be keeping the door open for trade talks.

But the tariffs also serve as a warning shot, analysts say, with the Trump administration having signalled it could ease 25% import levies the White House is threatening Canada and Mexico with if they apply the same extra 20% duty he has slapped on Chinese goods over fentanyl flows.

Trump says India agreed to cut tariffs way down

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York/Washington, March 8: US President Donald Trump said India has agreed to cut its tariffs "way down" as he reiterated his claim that the country charges America massive tariffs that make it difficult to sell products there.

"Our country, from an economic standpoint and financial standpoint and a trade standpoint, has been absolutely ripped off by almost every country in the world," Trump said in remarks from the Oval Office Friday.

"Canada, Mexico and then you just go right down the line. India charges us massive tariffs, massive, you can't even sell anything into India. It's almost, it's almost restrictive. It is restrictive. We do very little business inside," he said.

"They've agreed, by the way, they want to cut their tariffs way down now because somebody's finally exposing them for what they've done. And the same thing with China, same thing with a lot of other countries, and the EU has been a terrible abuser of this country," Trump added.

Trump's comments came following Commerce Minister



Our country, from an economic standpoint and financial standpoint and a trade standpoint, has been absolutely ripped off by almost every country in the world
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

Piyush Goyal's visit to the US for trade talks with his counterpart Howard Lutnick.

This was the third time this week that Trump has criticised the high tariffs charged by India.

Trump said Thursday, India is a very high-tariff nation and reiterated that reciprocal tariffs on countries that impose levies on American goods will kick in April 2.

In his address to the joint session of Congress Tuesday, the first of his second term in the White House, Trump criticised the high tariffs charged by India and other countries and termed them as "very unfair".

Addressing lawmakers from the US Capitol, Trump an-

nounced that reciprocal tariffs will kick in next month.

In the past, Trump has called India a "tariff king" and a "big abuser".

Last month, during a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the White House, Trump said that India has "been very strong on tariffs".

"I don't blame them, necessarily, but it's a different way of doing business. It's very hard to sell into India because they have trade barriers, very strong tariffs," he had said.

India Friday said it is looking at deepening trade ties with the US including by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers under a bilateral trade agreement.

Italy approves draft law targeting femicide with life imprisonment

While the centre-left opposition welcomed the move, it stressed that the new law only tackles the criminal aspect of the problem, while leaving economic and cultural divides unaddressed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, March 8: The Italian government approved a draft law that for the first time introduces the legal definition of femicide in the country's criminal law and punishes it with life imprisonment. The move, announced on the

eve of International Women's Day Saturday, aims at tackling a shocking string of killings and violence targeting women in Italy through strengthening measures against gender-based crimes like stalking and revenge porn.

The proposal, agreed on late Friday, still needs to go through parliament and must be approved by both chambers to become law.

"This is an extremely significant bill, which introduces the crime of femicide in our legal system as an autonomous crime, punishing it with life imprisonment," said conservative Premier Giorgia Meloni, who strongly backed the initiative.

"It introduces aggravating circumstances and increases sentences for crimes including personal mistreatment,



This is an extremely significant bill, which introduces the crime of femicide in our legal system as an autonomous crime, punishing it with life imprisonment
GIORGIA MELONI | PRIME MINISTER, ITALY

stalking, sexual violence and revenge porn," she said in a statement.

While the centre-left opposition welcomed the move, it stressed that the new law only tackles the criminal aspect of the problem, while leaving eco-

economic and cultural divides unaddressed. Recently, femicide has emerged as a systemic problem deeply entrenched in Italy's patriarchal culture, with some violent

incidents renewing debate on gender-based crimes.

Particularly striking was the killing of Giulia Cecchetti, the 22-year-old university student brutally stabbed by her former boyfriend Filippo Turetta in November 2023. Last December, Turetta was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Recent studies show that, while killings have been declining in the Mediterranean country, the rate of femicides tends to be stable or only slightly decrease, while remaining strictly linked to the family or the "emotional sphere" of the victims.

Official data by the Italian Interior ministry recorded 113

femicides in 2024, of which 99 committed by relatives, partners or ex-partners.

Women rights organisation Non Una di Meno — which every year organises rallies across Italian cities and a one-day strike to mark International Women's Day — was very critical about the draft legislation.

"It's a propaganda move," said activist Serena Fredda, while marching with thousands of people in the centre of Rome. "This is a government that tends to multiply crimes and forgets that, despite the increase in penalties, there is no real deterrence."

Fredda noted that "femicide is only the tip of the iceberg: we must work to eliminate discrimination that hit women from school to work."

ONE LAST STEP TO GLORY

Men in Blue look to rise above spunky Black Caps, emotional bubble around Rohit, Kohli



HEAD-TO-HEAD CLASH

- India and New Zealand have clashed four times in ICC knockout matches, with the Blackcaps holding a dominant 3-1 edge over the Men in Blue. Their encounters include the 2000 Champions Trophy final, the 2019 and 2023 World Cup semifinals, and the 2021 World Test Championship final
- India's only success came in their most recent meeting, the 2023 World Cup semifinal

New Zealand claimed their maiden ICC title by defeating India in the 2000 Champions Trophy final, chasing down 265, powered by Chris Cairns's match-winning century. They repeated history in 2021, beating India in the World Test Championship (WTC) final to secure their second and most recent ICC event

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dubai, March 8: Successful in keeping opponents and vitriol at bay so far, India will have to rise above traditional bugbear New Zealand and a rigmarole of emotions surrounding stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma to reclaim the Champions Trophy after 12 years here Sunday.

India has always found the resilient Kiwis a tall mountain to surmount, as the latter hold a 10-6 lead over their Asian rivals across all the ICC tournaments.

Curated further, New Zealand have a 3-1 edge over India in the ICC knockout matches. It's a disturbing loop for them.

A section of the cricketing world has been vilifying them for the whole of last fortnight for having an unfair advantage because of their extended stay in Dubai.

Now, this argument will not have much merit to it because the Kiwis have already tasted the conditions here. India might still entertain a greater sense of comfort going into the title match, courtesy a spin quartet that showed enough nous to exploit a sluggish DICS deck.

In all probability, India will retain the four spinners and

two pacers combination for the championship match.

THE SPIN BATTLE

Varun Chakravarthy and Kuldeep Yadav, the right-hand and left-hand wrist-spinners, have bamboozled the opponents like illusionists.

But Ravindra Jadeja and Axar Patel have been the metro-nomes in this Indian bowling unit, tying down the batters in a matrix of accuracy and boredom while leading them to self-destruction. If the final is indeed going to be played on the surface that is used for the game between India and Pakistan, then those four bowlers can put New Zealand in a spin, literally. Their biggest hopes of countering these Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse will be Kane Williamson and Rachin Ravindra, the most competent batters against slow bowlers in their line-up.

However, Kiwis will also be quietly confident that their own set of spinners — skipper Mitchell Santner, Michael Bracewell, Ravindra and Glenn Phillips — can do a similar job here.

The Kiwi spinners had performed the act of destruction

India eye record third Champions Trophy

Rohit's side on verge of second straight ICC trophy

against India last year, albeit in a Test series and an encore will be welcomed as they are in search of their first ICC ODI title since 2000.

Incidentally, they had beaten India in the final of the Knockouts tournament in Kenya by four wickets 25 years ago.

FINAL STOP FOR RoKo TRAIN

But India will not want that to happen at their expense, and would like to add another ICC trophy to their cabinet after winning the last year's T20 World Cup.

Both Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma had a massive role to play in that run, culminating in a glorious Barbados night.

Now, the distance to the final stop for them is getting shorter by the day.

THE SQUAD

INDIA: Rohit Sharma (c), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul, Rishabh Pant, Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Mohd. Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ravindra Jadeja, Varun Chakravarthy.

NEW ZEALAND: Mitchell Santner (c), Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Will O'Rourke, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Nathan Smith, Kane Williamson, Will Young, Jacob Duffy.

Still, we don't know for sure whether this is the last act of Kohli and Rohit after serving Indian cricket for over a decade and half with distinction.

If it is indeed so, then they will be eager to go out in a blaze of glory.

Rohit seems to be content with making those cute little 20s and 30s for some time now, and he will have to do an immediate course correction and look to stay longer at the crease.

It will reduce the burden on the middle-order batters, who have been doing the heavy lifting thus far.

The concern surrounding injured Matt Henry might also of-

fer him some relief as the New Zealand pacer has troubled him a lot in the past with his ability to find movement and bounce even on the most docile tracks.

But that fortuitous occurrence apart, Rohit will have to find a way to make a meatier contribution.

Kohli has been doing that. His last five innings have produced a hundred and two fifties, reminiscent of a past when he lorded over opponents nonchalantly.

TIME FOR SECOND-LINE TO DELIVER

While knocks of substance from Kohli and Rohit will add gravitas to the occasion, India would not want to leave it to the veterans alone. They will eye a fine effort from vice-captain Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya.

Gill and Shreyas had their moments, while Rahul and Pandya joined them with backend cameos against Australia in the semifinals.

Now, it's time for India to gather all these elements together once more to crown an emphatic campaign. After all, fairytales are an intrinsic part of the Arabian lands.

No discussion on Rohit, Kohli's retirement: Gill

DUBAI: Speculation is rife on the ODI future of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli after the Champions Trophy but vice captain Shubman Gill Saturday said the Indian dressing room is not discussing retirement of the two modern-day greats. Kohli and Rohit are still batting strong in the format but it is being discussed in cricketing circle that if India wins the Champions Trophy, both the batters or at least one can call time on his career. "There is no talk about retirement in the dressing room, now," Gill said during the pre-match press conference ahead of the Champions Trophy final against New Zealand Sunday. Gill feels privileged to be a part of "best batting line-up" but said the depth in their order allows the top three to express themselves freely. Gill, India's most prolific 50-over batter in the last two years, said. On the match front, Gill is aware of the huge pressure on them to win the trophy but exuded confidence that they will come up trumps unlike 2023 ODI World Cup which they lost to Australia. "We are all excited for the final. Last time we could not win the 50 over World Cup but we are determined to win this time," he said. The prolific ODI batter believes that the team that handles pressure on big day will win the blue riband trophy.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hockey stars share inspiring journeys

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 8: On the occasion of International Women's Day, Indian women's hockey team captain Salima Tete, drag-flick specialist Deepika and midfielder Lalremsiami reflected on the power of women in sports, their personal journeys, and the significance of women's empowerment in today's world.

Their thoughts echo the resilience, determination, and grit that have not only defined their sporting careers but also contributed to the ongoing growth of women in sports across India.

Salima Tete has had a remarkable journey from a small village in Jharkhand to the international stage. Speaking on the empowerment of women, she said, "Coming from a humble background, I know what it means to push boundaries and fight against societal norms. I started playing with wooden sticks, but that never stopped me from dreaming big. Hockey gave me the confidence to face challenges head-on and believe in my abilities. Today, I feel proud to lead a team that inspires countless young girls to take up sports and pursue



their dreams."

She further added, "Women's empowerment is about creating opportunities, and we as athletes are living proof that with determination, women can achieve anything, no matter where they come from."

Deepika, who hails from Hisar, Haryana, also shared her story of perseverance and growth. "When I first picked up a hockey stick on my way to wrestling practice in 2012, I never imagined I'd be here today. My family, especially my father, supported me through thick and thin, even when people around us doubted my choice to pursue hockey," she said.

Reflecting on women's empowerment, Deepika remarked, "It's crucial for women to believe in their own strength.

We face many obstacles, but it's our approach that defines our path. We have to remain focused, work hard, and never underestimate our power to break barriers. It may take time, but in the end, every goal is achievable with determination and motivation."

Lalremsiami, the first female Olympian from Mizoram, shared her experiences of breaking through barriers and becoming a role model for girls in her state. "Coming from Mizoram and making it to the Olympics was a proud moment, not just for me, but for my community. It wasn't an easy road - language barriers and adapting to new environments were challenging, but hockey was always the bridge that connected everything for me," she shared.

'WO=MAN' written on men's jerseys

Paris: Every player in the top two divisions of men's soccer in France will have "WO=MAN" written on the back of their jerseys instead of their names this weekend. The French league initiative, centered around International Women's Day on Saturday, started Friday with Toulouse's home game against Monaco, which finished 1-1. The initiative was continuing Saturday and Sunday with the other teams in Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 as part of the league's fight against sexism. "The message resonates as a strong statement," the LFP said in a statement. "Highlighting the importance of gender equality, not only on the field, but also in the stands." LED panels around the pitches will display "WO=MAN" at all games and official match balls have the motto written on them.



At 25, late bloomer Aravindh makes years of toil count

After winning Prague Masters Friday, the grandmaster stands at number 14 in live world rankings and fourth in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 8: At 25, Aravindh Chithambaram is a late bloomer when compared to teenaged sensations like D Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa who are ruling the global chess circuit right now but the manner in which he maneuvered the odds in his life through 64 squares, he seems a resilient king in the making.

His Prague Masters triumph has made the chess fraternity warm up to the Madurai born Aravindh, who lost his father when he was only three. The mother worked as an LIC agent, and was brave enough to take a punt on his life by shifting base from Madurai to Chennai, which is India's unofficial chess capital.

The years of sacrifice and hard work is finally paying dividends. The iconic Vellamal



School, which is the alma mater of World Champion Gukesh, now has another international player of repute to boast about. After all Aravindh is Gukesh's senior.

The victory at Prague has earned him a wild card to the prestigious Grand Chess Tour in Poland.

"I have been getting invitations during the course of the tournament and Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz (event) is one of them," Aravindh informed.

Normally, a top-20 slot in the world rankings guarantees at least a few invitations at top tournaments but before Prague, Aravindh had confirmed his participation in the Sharjah Masters and the Biel International, the events slated in May and July respectively.