

Shreya's game plan
 Actor Shreya Chaudhry talks about navigating the rising influence of social media stars and star kids in the industry
 LEISURE | P2

Ceasefire deal
 The US agrees to resume military aid and intel sharing with Ukraine after Kyiv nod to support proposal for a 30-day ceasefire with Russia
 INTERNATIONAL | P10

Inflation drops
 Retail inflation slips to 7-month low of 3.61% in Feb creating space for the RBI to go for another rate cut next month
 BUSINESS | P11

Gill tops ODI rankings
 Rohit jumps two places to third in the latest ICC ODI batter rankings, while teammate Shubman Gill holds on to the top spot
 SPORTS | P12

PAK TRAIN HIJACK
21 passengers, 4 soldiers die as operation ends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi/Islamabad, March 12: Twenty-one passengers and four paramilitary soldiers were killed by militants holding hostages after seizing control of a train in Pakistan's Balochistan province, an army general said Wednesday.

Army spokesman Lt Gen Ahmad Sharif told Dunya News TV that security forces killed all 33 militants present at the scene. "The armed forces successfully concluded the operation in the (Wednesday) evening by killing all terrorists and rescuing all passengers safely," Lt Gen Sharif said. He said that 21 passengers were killed by the terrorists when they attacked the train Tuesday. He added that four paramilitary Frontier Corps soldiers were also killed in the incident.

The Jaffar Express, carrying 440 passengers in nine coaches, was going from Quetta to Peshawar when militants derailed it using explosives and hijacked it near the mountainous terrain of Gudalar and Piru Kunri in a tunnel 160 kilometres from Quetta.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack Tuesday when they said they killed six soldiers. Lt Gen Sharif said that terrorists blew up a railway track in the Bolan Pass area of Osi Pur March 11, around 1pm. He described the area as difficult terrain, where the terrorists initially used hostages, including women and children, as human shields.

The rescue operation began immediately, with participation from the Army, Air Force, Frontier Corps, and Special Services Group commandos, he said. The general warned that "the train attack has changed the rule of the game", without explaining it.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Those of you who fear being looted, killed, raped, abused, or forced to play colours, shouldn't step out of home



FUN & FROLIC: Children with disability smeared in 'gula' celebrate Holi as the festival of colours draws close, in Mumbai, Wednesday

Cybercrimes zoom three-fold in 3 yrs
DEFRAUDED AMOUNT JUMPED 21 TIMES, SAYS GOVERNMENT

India's rapid digitisation push, fuelled by affordable internet and a booming mobile payments market, has created unprecedented opportunities. However, it also has a dark side. Lack of cyber awareness among a large section of the population has inadvertently become a boon for cybercriminals. With hundreds of millions of digital transactions happening daily, scammers exploit the gaps in digital literacy to impersonate officials, launch phishing attacks, and use AI-driven tactics to deceive gullible users through digital arrests. This has led to a drastic surge in high-value cyber fraud cases, causing significant financial losses and further highlighting the need for improved awareness and security measures in the digital landscape

2022 89,925 incidents total defrauded amount ₹91.14 crore	2024 1,23,672 incidents total defrauded amount ₹1,935.51 crore
Within two months of 2025, 17,718 such cases have duped people of ₹210.21 crore	

New Delhi, March 12: The number of digital arrest scams and related cybercrimes in the country almost tripled between 2022 and 2024, with defrauded amounts skyrocketing by 21 times during the period, Rajya Sabha was informed Wednesday.

Replying to a question, Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, furnished data of digital arrest scams and related cybercrimes reported on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) in the last three years, which showed 39,925 such incidents being reported in 2022 with a total defrauded amount of ₹91.14 crore. In 2024, the number of such cases almost tripled to 1,23,672, with the total defrauded amount reported on the portal increasing by a staggering 21 times to ₹1,935.51 crore, the data showed. According to the data, within two months of 2025, 17,718 cases with a total defrauded amount of ₹210.21 crore have been reported till February 28. Cybercrime incidents reported on this portal, their conversion into FIRs and subsequent action thereon are handled by the state/

Assembly allows mobile phones
NO PHOTOGRAPHY OR VIDEO RECORDING FROM PRESS GALLERY: MIN

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Assembly Wednesday drew restrictions on carrying mobile phones to the press gallery following a boycott by journalists covering the proceedings of the House. The announcement was made by Youth Affairs Minister Suryabanshi Suraj after a meeting between Speaker Surama Padhy and the agitating journalists. Reporters of various media organisations boycotted the proceedings and staged a dharna near Mahatma Gandhi statue on Assembly premises over the issue. The minister said that there

will be no restriction on journalists to carry their mobile phones to the press gallery, but they cannot take photographs or do video recording from the press gallery. As per the decision taken in the meeting, **SCRIBES' BOYCOTT** mobile phones will remain on a silent mode in the press gallery. The Information and Public Relations department will provide adequate photos of Question Hour to media organisations. Speaker Padhy said that the Assembly will organise an orientation programme for the journalists covering the proceedings of the House.

Though there was no official notification on debarring journalists from carrying mobile phones inside the House, the security personnel deployed at the entry gates had earlier in the day prevented the reporters from carrying the gadget. The journalists said they were unable to perform their professional duties on not being allowed to carry mobile phones inside the House. The action of not allowing journalists to carry mobile phones came a day after photographs and videos of the MLAs' scuffle inside the House were used by media houses and went viral on social media. Both the opposition Congress and BJD supported the journalists.

SHORT TAKES
PM Modi unveils 'MAHASAGAR'

Port Louis: PM Narendra Modi Wednesday unveiled an ambitious vision for growth and security of the Global South in Mauritius. Following talks with his Mauritian counterpart Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Modi announced India's new vision for Global South and named it MAHASAGAR or Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions, a policy approach that came against the backdrop of China's relentless attempts to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.

Notorious criminal injured in encounter

Rourkela: A notorious criminal from Jharkhand sustained a bullet injury in an encounter with police in Rourkela city Wednesday, an officer said. On getting specific information about the movement of two notorious criminals Beyas Lakhua and Amit Topno, a police team led by IIC of Bisra police station tried to nab the duo early this morning, said Brijesh Kumar Rai, DIG (Western range). Seeing the police team, Beyas Lakhua opened fire and got injured in retaliatory firing, he said.

Tejas combat jet test-fires Astra missile

New Delhi, March 12: India's indigenously-built Tejas light combat aircraft Wednesday successfully test fired home-grown air-to-air missile Astra. The test firing of the missile was carried out off the coast of Chandipur in Odisha, according to the Defence ministry. The test-firing successfully demonstrated the direct hit of the missile on flying target, it said. All the subsystems performed accurately meeting all mission parameters and objectives, the ministry said. ASTRA missile is designed and developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It is capable of engaging targets at a range of over 100 km. The missile is equipped with advanced guidance and navigation systems that allow it to destroy targets with greater accuracy. The missile is already inducted into the Indian Air Force. The successful test-firing is a significant milestone towards the induction of LCA AF MK1A variant, the ministry said in a statement.

Eco-madness: Amazon forest felled to build road for COP30

A massive four-lane highway is being constructed to facilitate the arrival of delegates to the COP30 climate summit in Belém, Brazil, which will be attended by representatives from around the world this November. However, felling of thousands of trees to make way for the 13-km stretch of road slicing through the Amazon rainforest has sparked widespread outrage amid concerns over the environmental impact. The climate change is expected to attract over 50,000 people. The new highway, cutting through pristine tropical rainforest in the northeastern state of Pará, has left behind an ugly scar in the landscape, prompting environmentalists and locals to voice their concerns. The project, designed to ease transportation for the international summit, has reportedly led to the destruction of thousands of acres of protected forest. One of the primary objectives of the COP programme is to negotiate ways to reduce green-



house gas emissions and limit global warming. However, experts warn that the loss of forests — crucial carbon sinks — directly contradicts this goal. Forests play a vital role in absorbing CO2 from the atmosphere, and the deforestation caused by the highway's construction could undermine these efforts. Local residents and environmentalists have condemned the project, calling it a glaring double standard. Claudio Verequete, a local who depends on harvesting açai berries, spoke

out about the damage to his livelihood. "Everything was destroyed; our harvest has already been cut down. We no longer have that income to support our family," he told the BBC. "Our fear is that one day someone will come here and say, 'Here's some money. We need this area to build a gas station or a warehouse.' And then we'll have to leave. We were born and raised here in the community. Where are we going to go?"

leisure



I'M STILL SEXY AND I EMBRACE IT: HAYEK

Mexican-American actress Salma Hayek has talked about aging in Hollywood. "There was a time when I was the sexy girl, but thank God age came and gave me the ability to expand to other territories. Although I'm still sexy and I embrace it," said the 58-yr-old.

GAL GADOT'S HEALTH SCARE DUE TO BLOOD CLOT IN BRAIN

Hollywood star Gal Gadot revealed that she was 'scared to death' after a blood clot was discovered in her brain in February 2024. *The Wonder Woman* actress said: "I had a huge scare. All of a sudden, I realised what it means to be scared to death."



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are enthusiastic about mixing with people today, and you will feel like combining business and leisure. You will be encouraged to take part in group activities as you have the ability to work and have fun at the same time. Ganesha says that as a matter of fact you may emerge wiser from others' ideas.

TAURUS
This day you will be prone to be stubborn and uncompromising in your business and professional dealings and thereby inviting unnecessary problems. Ganesha urges you to guard against this tendency and conduct yourself cordially and amiably with your colleagues and clients. The day will turn out well for executives and administrators.

GEMINI
You need to break free from the shackles of your daily routine. Trying to finish all your tasks as per your schedule will give rise to unnecessary worry. To manage your time creatively is the best way to beat the stress. Talking to your elders is a good way to calm your shot nerves, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will be involved in a team effort and associated with work like inspection and examination. You will base your opinions on your friends' choices. So select good friends, says Ganesha. You will spend time with close circle.

LEO
Your decisions today will be not only be correct, but also resolute and steadfast. Your health will be fine. At the work-place, things ought to proceed as usual. However, you will concentrate more on work today. In personal relationships, some minor arguments could crop up. Take care not to let them blow up into major confrontations, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
An unusual dose of creativity will motivate you to make a trip to some exotic place and mingle with new people. You will have some experiences that will enrich you mentally and emotionally. But don't unpack yet, there may be another adventure on the cards. Ganesha says you will be very flexible and adaptable today.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will be getting good news from abroad, which will make you happy. Those of you who are searching for jobs will get good news coming your way. Ganesha says that you should not expect too much or you would feel dejected and disappointed when it is not met.

SCORPIO
Today, you are like a balloon that may burst any time. You may vent out all the sweet and bitter experiences and feel much lighter. Or it may have adverse effects on your health, says Ganesha. You prefer to stay in your cocoon, in the warmth of your near and dear ones.

SAGITTARIUS
Determined and dedicated, that's what you are when it comes to work. Well, this may even find you amidst heaps of files and loads of work. No wonder you become a workaholic. You are likely to enjoy during the latter half of the day. Have a fun-filled evening!

CAPRICORN
You firmly believe in the concept of 'health is wealth'. You have maintained a very good health so far and it will not be an issue today, also. Successful completion of current projects seem to be a distant target, however, you will finish them off. Your boss may get upset with you for not completing the work on time.

AQUARIUS
You are close to your family, and now is the time to enjoy the company of your loved ones at home. You will take them out for shopping, go with them on picnics and pamper them in every possible way, says Ganesha. Not that you made them feel special with a selfish motive, but your show of affection will work wonders for you.

PISCES
Ganesha asks you not to undertake any new project or business venture due to the alignment of the planets being unfavorable. You will do well in tasks that do not require too much creativity and innovation. Do not take sides when you are not required to and it make have heavy consequences in future. Shun any bias and prejudice you may have in being selective in your work and be objective in deciding what is good for you, suggests Ganesha.

MALAVIKA connects to tradition

CHENNAI: Actress Malavika Mohanan, who is fast emerging a top actress in several film industries across the south, has now penned a heartfelt post on why she considers the traditional ritual of 'Theyyam' special.

Taking to her timeline on Instagram, she wrote, "Theyyam' has been a mesmerizing part of my life since childhood. Visiting my hometown in Kerala every year, I've always been captivated by the vibrant displays of dance, colour, and spirituality."

"The performance isn't just a spectacle, it's a living connection to the divine, where performers embody gods and mythological figures. Their towering headgear, intricate makeup,

and energetic movements create an atmosphere that feels both otherworldly and sacred."

The actress, who posted several pictures along with the post, then went on to point out what made Theyyam special to her. "What makes Theyyam special to me is how it transcends mere performance—it's a ritual that unites the community and tells stories of our ancestors, bravery, and spirituality. It's a reminder of how culture can evolve yet remain deeply rooted in its core values."

She concluded the post, saying, "Beyond the visual beauty, Theyyam represents our identity, history, and faith, reminding me of the timeless nature of tradition."



PANCHAMAVEDA'S 21ST STATE-LEVEL DRAMA FEST: DAY I



Artists of Bhubaneswar-based Labanya Theatre performed Odia play *Bhakta Ramdas* at Bhanjakala Mandap, Wednesday. Written by Yudhishthir Sahu, the play was directed by Satya Jena. The five-day event is being organised state's prominent theatre troupe Panchamaveda in collaboration with Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department, Govt of Odisha. Eminent dramatists Dhira Mallik, Prabodh Rath, Mukunda Satpathy and troupe's working president Haren Sahoo were among the luminaries who were in attendance.

'No one's shine can dim mine'

MUMBAI: Shreya Chaudhry, who recently won the best actress award for *Bandish* Season 2 at IIFA 2025, opened up about the challenges of being compared to star kids in the entertainment industry.

In a candid conversation with this agency, Shreya talked about navigating the pressures of fame, while also addressing the rising influence of social media stars and star kids in the industry. When asked about the pressures of making her mark in an environment increasingly dominated by influencers and star kids, the actress expressed a refreshing sense of self-assurance.

Shreya shared, "I've always believed that comparisons don't help. My mom once told me that no one's shine can dim mine, and I live by that. Everyone's journey is unique, and I just focus on giving my best. As long as I'm working hard and staying true to myself, I'm happy."

Speaking about winning the IIFA award, Chaudhry stated, "It's absolutely a dream come true. I am so grateful to the entire IIFA team, the jury, everyone who voted for me, and the audience. It was a big dream of mine."



Ghamaghot to hit 45 theatres in state

BHUBANESWAR: New action movie *Ghamaghot* is set to release in 45 theaters across the state Thursday. A special premiere will be held at Brundaban Talkies in Cuttack and Maharaja Cinema in Bhubaneswar the same day, shared the makers during a presser held at the Press Club of Odisha Wednesday.

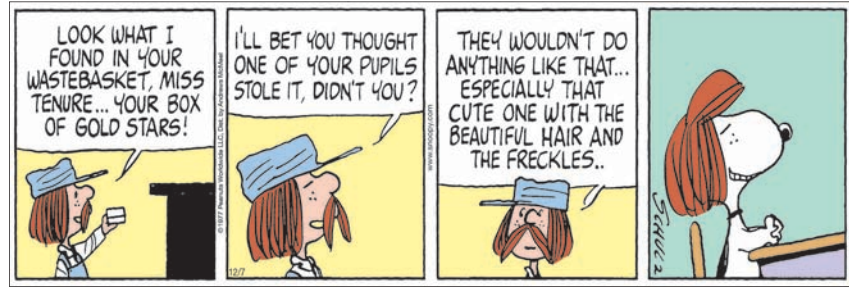
Directed by Raja D and produced by Kaushik Das under Kaustav Dreamworks Studios, the film promises to deliver high-octane action, intense drama, and a gripping storyline like never before.

Speaking to **Orissa POST**, the director said the gang war is the premise on which the plot progresses. He added, "We have shown real and raw action performed by the actors, without the use of stunt doubles or ropes. However, the safety of the cast and crew has been ensured. They were fully insured for any mishaps."

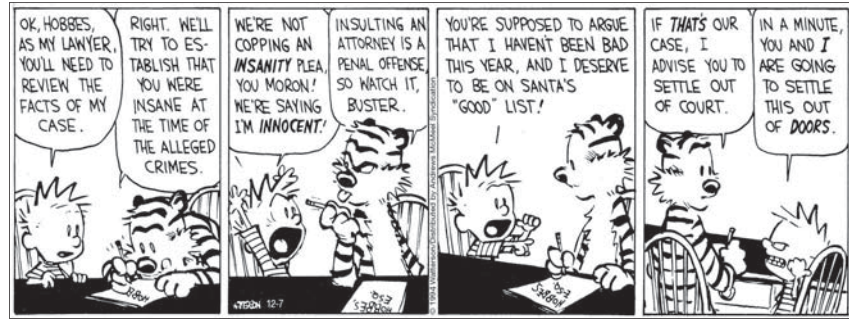
Ghamaghot features an ensemble cast, including Abhishek Panda, Deepak Parida, Biswajit Rout, Xonty, Akash Hota, Akash Rout, Sandeep Mishra, Sanoj Kumar, Goldy Das, Shakti, Rajesh Kumar Sahoo, Tapi Mishra, Aimon Pradhan, Sailendra Samantary, and Krishna Kar in pivotal roles.

Producer Das said, "In *Ghamaghot*, we are introducing a bunch of fresh talents, along with a few veterans who bring their expertise to the project."

PEANUTS



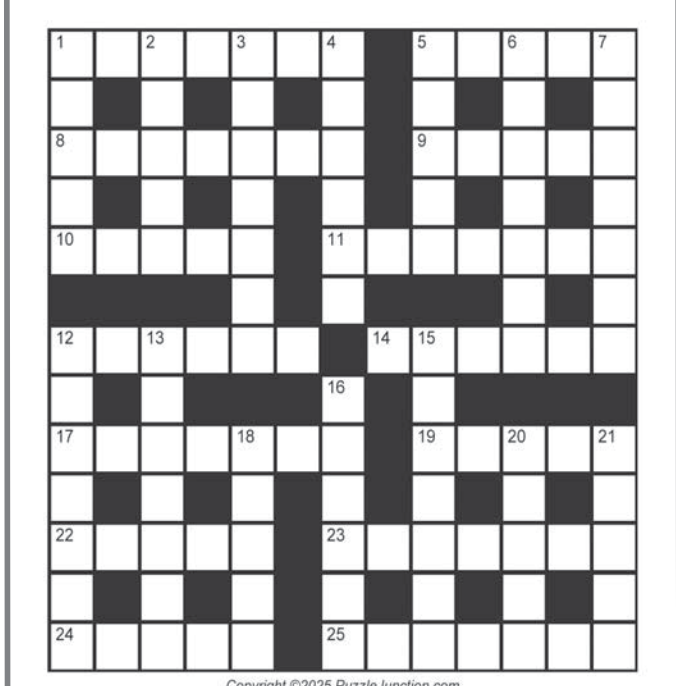
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



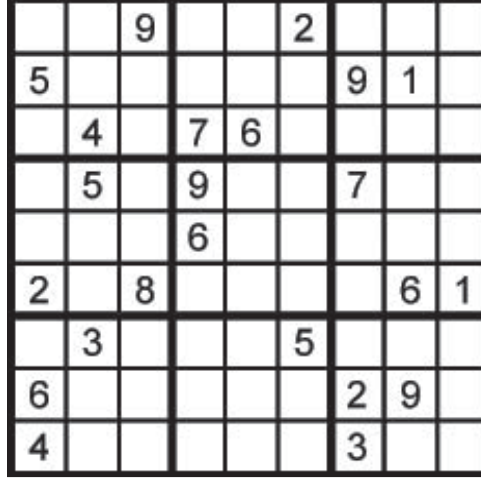
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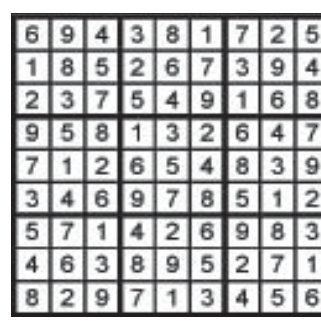
- Across
- 1 Clairvoyant
 - 5 Pigeon shelters
 - 8 Come to the top
 - 9 Major artery
 - 10 Fable writer
 - 11 Spear
 - 12 Voice box
 - 14 Basement
 - 17 Sweet treat
 - 19 Marching band instruments
 - 22 Vagabond
 - 23 Resistance to change
 - 24 Floral leaf
 - 25 Gym shoe
 - 5 Committee head
 - 6 Commotion
 - 7 Wrench
 - 12 Illuminate (5,2)
 - 13 Leftover
 - 15 Radical
 - 16 Field of vision?
 - 18 Beat back
 - 20 Dyed fabric
 - 21 One of the Fab Four
- Down
- 1 Turkish bigwig
 - 2 Tall tales
 - 3 Bowling target
 - 4 Austerlitz natives

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

NOD FOR PALASUNI BRIDGE EXPANSION

BHUBANESWAR: Keeping in view the frequent traffic congestions on the bridge over Gangua nala at Palasuni in the Capital City, the Centre has given its in-principle approval to expansion of the vital link from four-lane to six-lane. Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari approved the proposal, said Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi, who met the former in New Delhi Wednesday. Taking to X, Sarangi thanked the minister while making the announcement. The Centre has sanctioned ₹50 crore for the project.



downtown

Tweak in building bylaws for ease of doing business

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The state government has notified key amendments to Odisha Town Planning and Improvement Trust (Planning and Building Standards) Rules, 2021 and the Odisha Development Authorities (Planning and Building Standards) Rules, 2020 to facilitate the ease of doing business, official sources said, Wednesday.



The Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) department Wednesday said that these amendments will bring significant relief to standalone and flatted factories, particularly in the MSME sector and IT/ITeS enterprises in the state.

The notified amendments enhance economic freedom and ease of doing business in Odisha by removing the requirement for ground coverage, reducing parking and setback requirements, and increasing the base Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for factories and IT/ITeS enterprises," it said.

As a result, plotted and flatted factories can now achieve a footprint of over 70 per cent, flatted factories can accommodate twice the number of units as before, and IT/ITeS enterprises can undertake more constructions within fewer floors, it said.

To attract large-scale commercial development along wider roads, incentives have been introduced in the form of FAR relaxations. "Specifically, the base FAR for commercial developments

on roads with a width of 18 metres (60 feet) or more has been increased to promote large-scale commercial growth," the department said.

For all industrial buildings, restrictions on ground coverage and the requirement for purchasable FAR or Transferable Development Rights (TDR) have been completely removed. Additionally, the parking requirement for industrial buildings has been reduced from 30 per cent to 8 per cent, allowing more space for industrial construction, it added.

The latest Economic Survey recommended that enhancing economic freedom for individuals and small businesses is arguably the most important policy priority to define and bolster India's medium-term growth prospects.

It also observed that land lost per factory in Odisha due to restrictive building norms was higher than in other states and recommended suitable revisions.

"These steps align with the Economic Survey's call for revising building norms to promote ease of doing business, reduce regulatory costs, and boost job creation and economic growth," it pointed out.

Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja said these regulatory reforms will promote ease of doing business, foster innovation, facilitate the adoption of new technologies, and provide Odisha with a competitive advantage.

Ahuja added, "Odisha is focusing on transforming the relationship between regulators and businesses, shifting from being a regulator to a facilitator."

H&UD department Principal Secretary Usha Padhee highlighted that the department recognises the importance of adopting global best practices to local contexts and engaging stakeholders in participatory decision-making to build trust and address resistance.

These amendments to building regulations will significantly reduce bureaucratic hurdles, improving ease of doing business and stimulating economic activity. The land lost to building standards has been reduced by 60 per cent for MSMEs, creating greater opportunities for job generation and economic growth, the department said.

"With these reforms, Odisha will emerge as a leader in industrial land optimisation, reducing compliance burdens while ensuring robust growth opportunities for entrepreneurs, startups, and global investors," it added.



FOR A CAUSE: NCC cadets take out an awareness rally from Government Girls' High School in Puri, Wednesday

PICT: YAGNESWAR MOHANTY

Revoke Bahinipati's suspension: Oppn

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 12: Opposition Congress and BJD Wednesday demanded the immediate withdrawal of the suspension of senior member Taraprasad Bahinipati from the Assembly.

Bahinipati, a senior Congress legislator, was Tuesday suspended from the Assembly for seven days for 'misconduct and unruly behaviour' following a scuffle between members of the ruling BJP and Opposition MLAs in the House.

As soon as the Question Hour started at 10.30am Wednesday, Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Rama Chandra Kadam sought to speak on the issue through a point of order.

However, Speaker Surama Padhy did not allow him to speak during Question Hour. Soon, the Congress MLAs staged a walkout from the House and sat on a dharna near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly premises.

Later, the Speaker asked government chief whip Saroj Pradhan to meet the demonstrating

Congress members and request them to return to the House.

Earlier in the day, a delegation of BJD, led by its deputy leader in the Assembly Prasanna Acharya, met Padhy at her chamber and requested her to withdraw the suspension of Bahinipati.

"We met the Speaker and discussed Tuesday's unfortunate incident in the House. We requested the Speaker to reconsider her decision as it appears to have been taken in a hurry. The House is not only for the ruling party or the Opposition.

It is for all. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure the smooth functioning of the Assembly," Acharya later told reporters.

The BJD members also actively participated in the Question Hour even though the press gallery was vacant due to journalists' boycott of proceedings over not being allowed to carry mobile phones inside the House, while Congress members continued their sit-in demanding the withdrawal of suspension of Bahinipati.

Over 13.70L applied for ration card: Min



During the ongoing e-KYC verification process, 3,91,198 death cases have been identified till March 5, 2025 and those names have been deleted from the ration card database

The state government has removed 84,198 ineligible beneficiaries from the public distribution system

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 12: More than 13.70 lakh people in the state have registered their names to get enrolled in the ration card list, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare (FS&CW) Minister Krushna Chandra Patra informed the Assembly, Wednesday.

In a written reply to a query

by Baramba MLA Bijaya Kumar Dalabehera, the FS&CW Minister said a total of 6,76,994 applications have been registered for inclusion of 13,70,178 people in the state's ration card list.

Patra's reply, however, did not mention the time frame during which the applications were received.

"Steps are being taken to include the new applicants, who are found eligible as per the criteria set under the Odisha State Food Security (Targeted Public Distribution System) Rules, 2020 in the public distribution system (PDS)," he said.

During the ongoing e-KYC (electronic know your customer) verification process, as many as 3,91,198 death cases have been identified till March 5, 2025 and those names have been deleted from the ration card database, the Minister's reply mentioned. Similarly, the state government has removed 84,198 ineligible beneficiaries from the PDS, Patra added.

The e-KYC verification of ration cards, which was supposed to end December 31, 2024, has been extended several times. The fresh deadline is March 31, 2025.

Ayushman Bharat launch April 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana will be launched in the state April 1, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Wednesday.

The CM's statement came following a high-level meet at Lok Seva Bhawan here. The Ayushman Vay Vandana Yojana will also be launched April 1.

To mark the event, programmes will be held at all the 1,437 primary healthcare centres across the state. The state government will carry out awareness drives in this regard.

Notably, the state government had January 13 inked a pact with the Centre during an event at New Delhi to implement Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in Odisha.

According to sources, over 1.03 crore families or over 3.46 crore individuals in the state will be benefitted by Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana and Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana. A beneficiary will be given a single co-branded card for the purpose. A separate card will be given to beneficiaries of Ayushman Vay Vandana Yojana.

BJP, BJD spar over Biju Babu



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Assembly Wednesday witnessed a heated exchange of words between the Opposition BJD and the ruling BJP over alleged 'disrespect' to former chief minister Biju Patnaik on his birthday March 5.

As the treasury bench members, including Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water (PR&DW) Minister Rabi Narayan Naik, focused on the Biju Patnaik family matters, BJD members staged a walkout in protest.

The discussion was held through a notice for admissibility of an adjournment motion over the state government

changing the date of the Panchayati Raj (PR) Diwas from March 5 to April 24.

Initiating the debate, BJD deputy leader Prasanna Acharya came down heavily on the state's BJP government for changing the date of PR Diwas from March 5, Biju Patnaik's birthday, to April 24. "Though the state has been observing March 5 as the PR Diwas for 33 years, the BJP government has changed it to April 24. This shows the state government's narrow mindset," Acharya said. Describing Biju Patnaik as a statesman, Acharya said that the national flags of three nations - India, Russia and Indonesia - were wrapped on the body of

Biju Patnaik after his death. "No other leader in India had such a huge international acceptability as Biju Patnaik. Therefore, shifting the PR Diwas from his birthday to another date shows how low the BJP government hit for political gains," Acharya said.

He said subsequent governments, including Congress, in the state also observed March 5 as PR Diwas as a mark of respect to Biju Patnaik.

However, the BJP government changed this tradition which has hurt lakhs of followers and supporters of the iconic leader of Odisha, the BJD leader said. BJD MLAs like Babu Singh argued that though Biju Patnaik was a great son of the soil, declaring a holiday on his birthday is insult to other former CMs of the state.

Several BJP legislators including Babu Singh also made statements about the household affairs of Biju Patnaik, which the BJD found 'unacceptable'.

The PR&DW Minister, in his reply, alleged that the BJD government had worked against the ideology of Biju Patnaik by not holding Gram Sabha at the panchayat level. The minister said Odisha has decided to observe the PR Diwas April 24 along with other states in the country and it has no such intention to disrespect Biju Patnaik.

Cong plans Assembly gherao March 27

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Congress Wednesday decided to gherao the Assembly March 27 in protest against the recent scuffle in the House, suspension of its Jeypore MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati, atrocities against women and concerns over the state's law and order situation.

The decision came at a high-level meeting held under the chairmanship of Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das here.

The meeting was also attended by state Congress in-charge Ajay Kumar Lallu, Suresh Kumar Routray, Srikanth Kumar Jena, Niranjan Patnaik, Jarabati-Cuttack MLA Sofia Firdous and other key leaders.

"Around 85 senior leaders gathered today to discuss various issues affecting the people of the state. Our leader (Taraprasad Bahinipati) was undemocratically suspended from the House, though BJP members showed hooliganism in the Assembly. We have decided to move a censure motion in the Assembly," said the OPCC president.

He also said, "We will gherao the Assembly March 27 protesting the rise in crimes and atrocities against women in the state."

Lallu also expressed his concern over the safety of women in the state and said, "More than 36,000 women, and around 8,400 girls and youths are missing. These figures raise concern over the law and order situation in Odisha. Even the Chief Minister remains tightlipped when asked about these figures in the Assembly. We will gherao the Assembly March 27 to fight for the 'Asmita' of Odisha women."

"Discrimination against women is on the rise in the state. We also demand a toll-free number for women's safety on which complaints can be lodged immediately. We will keep raising our voice until our demands are met," said MLA Firdous.

225 ODISHA CHILDREN AWAITING ADOPTION

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 12: As many as 225 children from Odisha are among the 2,321 awaiting adoption across India, according to data presented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (W&CD) in Rajya Sabha, Wednesday.

Replying to a question in the Upper House, Minister of State for W&CD Savitri Thakur said 2,321 children are awaiting adoption across the country.

The highest of such children are in West Bengal (309), followed by Maharashtra (261), Odisha (225), Bihar (205) and Telangana (197), Thakur said.

The majority of the Prospective Adoptive Parents (PAPs) prefer to adopt younger chil-

dren (of normal health and below 6 years of age) in the designated Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System (CARINGS) portal, Thakur said.

"If there is availability of lesser number of such children in the adoption pool, the waiting period for PAP may be higher," she said in a written response.

Responding to another question, Thakur said the projected population of all children up to 5 years in India for the year 2021 is 13.75 crore approximately.

"However, only 7.49 crore children up to 5 years were enrolled in Anganwadis and registered on Poshan Tracker of the Ministry of W&CD as



per the February 2025 data," the minister said.

A total of 7.25 crore of them were measured on growth pa-

rameters of height and weight and 39.09 per cent of them have been found to be stunted, 16.60 per cent have been found to be

13.75 CRORE the projected population of all children up to 5 years in India for the year 2021

7.49 CRORE children up to 5 years were enrolled in Anganwadis and registered on Poshan Tracker of the Ministry of W&CD as per the February 2025 data

7.25 CRORE of them were measured on growth parameters of height and weight

39.09% of them have been found to be stunted

16.60% have been found to be underweight

5.35% are said to have been wasted

underweight and 5.35 per cent are said to have been wasted (a child too thin for her height), she said.

In response to another question, she said the women's helpline has been integrated with Emergency Response Support System and so far, they have handled over 2.10 crore calls and assisted over 84.43 lakh women.

She added that as of January 2025, 745 fast track special courts, including 404 exclusive POCOS (e-POCO) courts, are operational in all states and Union Territories. They have disposed of more than 3.06 lakh cases of rape and offences under POCOS Act across the country, the minister said.

Govt to launch Zero Accident Day drive



Women to play a pivotal role as ambassadors of change, leading awareness drives, engaging with communities, and demonstrating leadership in mobility solutions

The campaign to deploy innovative, evidence-based interventions to minimise accidents, promote responsible driving behaviours, and cultivate a safety-first mindset among commuters

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: In a landmark move to enhance road safety and instill responsible commuting habits, the Odisha government is set to launch a month-long Zero Accident Day (ZAD) campaign, with women at the forefront of the transformative initiative. The announcement was made by Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) and Commerce and Transport departments' principal secretary Usha Padhee at a high-level preparatory meet at Kharvela Bhawan here Wednesday. This pioneering multi-stakeholder campaign aims to reduce road accidents through data-driven strategies, community engagement, and awareness initiatives, ultimately fostering a cultural shift towards safer road practices. A distinctive feature of the

campaign is the leadership role given to women, who will serve as ambassadors of change, advocating for responsible driving and promoting pedestrian safety. Their involvement will span various activities, including awareness campaigns, interactive workshops, and community outreach programmes. Speaking at the meet, Padhee underscored the need for collective responsibility and synergy among various departments to ensure the initiative's success. "Road safety is more than just a government directive—it is a shared mission that requires active participation from every citizen. With Zero Accident Day, we are empowering communities, particularly women, to drive change and make our streets safer, smarter, and more inclusive," she said. The campaign will incorporate recent scientific interventions and technological innovations

to improve road safety infrastructure and commuter awareness. Experts from IIT Madras presented key research-based strategies to guide the campaign, highlighting best practices that have yielded positive results in other regions. Discussions also included measures such as enhanced traffic monitoring, improved pedestrian zones, stricter enforcement of traffic rules, and public awareness programmes. The high-level meeting witnessed participation from senior government officials, law enforcement agencies, urban planners, and municipal bodies, all of whom pledged their support to ensure the campaign's impact is widespread and lasting. With ZAD, Odisha is setting a national benchmark in road safety, reinforcing its commitment to innovation, equity, and sustainable urban transport. As the state moves towards a Viksit Odisha, this initiative stands as a testament to its progressive approach in saving lives and ensuring safer roads for future generations.



FESTIVE FERVOUR: Students from Hindi Teacher Training Institute play with colours ahead of Holi in Cuttack, Wednesday

OP PHOTO

STA honours SuVahaks for road safety efforts

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The State Transport Authority (STA) honoured 30 women SuVahaks working with CRUT as Sarathi during a special event held Wednesday, celebrating their contributions to road safety and public transport. The event was graced by the Commerce & Transport department principal secretary Usha Padhee who commended the women drivers for breaking barriers and leading the way in safe and inclusive mobility. "The journey of women SuVahaks is truly inspiring. The government is committed to women's empowerment, and the SuVahak scheme is a significant step in this direction. It not only provides professional



driver training but also creates employment opportunities, allowing women to play a crucial role in road safety and public transport services," she said. Padhee further highlighted the government's efforts to increase women's participation

in transport services, such as 'Ama Bus' and 'Mukhyamantri Bus Seva'. She also mentioned initiatives to facilitate easy loans for women drivers, enabling them to own vehicles and achieve financial independence.

During the event, the SuVahaks shared their inspiring stories, recounting their struggles and achievements in a once male-dominated profession. The SuVahak project, launched by STA, aims to enhance the skills of Heavy Motor Vehicle (HMV) drivers both men and women through free training centres in Chhatia, Palur, Keonjhar, and Bonai. Many women have successfully completed the training and established themselves as professional drivers, proving that driving is no longer a male-dominated skill but an inclusive profession. The event served as a platform to recognize their efforts, boost their confidence, and encourage more women to take up driving as a career.

Police to crackdown on drunken driving

Bhubaneswar: Commissionerate Police will take strict action against drunken driving and public nuisance during Holi, deploying 20 platoons of security personnel at key locations and water bodies, DCP Jagmohan Meena said Wednesday. Additionally, ODRAF and fire personnel will assist in monitoring water bodies to prevent mishaps. Public nuisance and offensive remarks in public will invite legal action under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), he warned. Police stations have been directed to intensify checks in hotels and sensitive areas, while patrolling will be heightened in Jatni, Chandrasekharpur, Bailanta, Balipatna, and Laxmisagar, where large Dola Yatra gatherings are expected.

Brothers held in ₹1.14cr land fraud

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Mancheswar police Wednesday arrested two brothers for allegedly defrauding a land buyer of ₹1.14 crore by attempting to sell a property near Gadakana that had already been sold years ago by their ancestors. The accused, Krushna Chandra Behera (57) and Ramesh Chandra Behera (50), returned ₹23 lakh of the total amount after the victim lodged a complaint, said Inspector-in-Charge (IIC) Mrutyunjay Swain. According to police, the incident dates back to early 2022 when complainant Sukanta Sahoo came in contact with the Behera brothers while looking to purchase land in the Gadakana area. As an initial payment, he handed over ₹24 lakh in cash



on the land, he was confronted by Sachink Routray, who claimed to be the original owner. Upon verifying the property documents, Sukanta discovered that the land had been legally sold to Routray by the Behera brothers' ancestor, Gandharba Behera, years ago. When Sukanta confronted Krushna Chandra Behera, the latter feigned ignorance and went uncommunicative. Left with no option, Sukanta filed a complaint with Mancheswar police. Based on the investigation, police booked Krushna and Ramesh Chandra Behera under Sections 420 (cheating), 467 (forgery of valuable security), 468 (forgery for cheating), 506 (criminal intimidation), and 34 (common intention) of the IPC. The accused were produced before a local court Tuesday.

Three held for murder over scooter dispute

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: Jatni police Wednesday arrested three individuals for the murder of Satya Sundar Bajpayee following a dispute over a borrowed scooter. The prime accused, Sarfaraz Khan, was arrested earlier March 2, said IIC Stalin Biswal. The arrested accused, Jayadish Mania (20), Tathastu Prusty (19), and Baibhab Kumar Dash (20), were students of a local institution along with the victim. The incident occurred February 28, when Satya Sundar delayed returning Sarfaraz's scooter by 15 minutes, leading to an argument. Though friends intervened, the accused later attacked him near Loco Colony. Police booked the trio under relevant BNS sections and produced them before a local court.

New CII Odisha leaders elected

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The chief executive officer (CEO) of Vedanta Aluminium Ltd, Jharuguda Sunil Gupta, has been elected as the chairman of the CII Odisha State Council for 2025-26, while executive director of Odisha Asset, AM/NS India Suresha G will serve as the vice chairman. Their election was announced during the CII Odisha State Annual Day 2025, held here Wednesday. Gupta, who oversees Vedanta's aluminium operations, reaffirmed his commitment to sustainability and resource efficiency. "Our focus will be on expanding production while integrating technology and reducing our carbon footprint in line with Vedanta's net-zero targets," he said. Suresha, who heads AM/NS



India's Odisha operations, highlighted the company's focus on innovation and operational excellence. "A strong safety culture and sustainable growth are at the core of our strategy," he said. The event featured a session on "Viksit Odisha@2036: Towards Setting the Agenda for Nation Building." CII Eastern Region chairman Suwendra Behera highlighted Odisha's industrial incentives, including a 30 per cent subsidy with no upper limit and government support for MSMEs.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Sanjaya Kumar Biswal, S/o- Late Mr. Kangali Biswal, resident of Village-Narasingshpur, P.O.-Brahmanipal, Via/P.S.- Dhusuri, Dist.-Bhadrak, PIN- 756119 declare by the affidavit number- 70AA283272, Dated- 12.03.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Sanjay Biswal for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Gop, dated 12.03.2025, I, Rani Sahoo, residing at At-Narasingshpur Sasan, Nayahat, Puri, 752107, Odisha, hereby declare that I have changed my name from Benga Sahoo to Rani Sahoo. Henceforth, I shall be known as Rani Sahoo for all purposes. Rani Sahoo

BJD pledges to protect Odisha's interests in delimitation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 12: The Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Wednesday reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding Odisha's interests in the upcoming delimitation exercise, brushing aside allegations of aligning with anti-BJP platforms. BJD's eight-time MLA RP Swain made the statement in response to accusations from the ruling BJP, which claimed that the BJD was tilting towards the Congress-led INDIA bloc. While the BJD has long maintained an equidistant stance from both the BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led INDIA alliance, its position appears to have shifted post-2024 elections. "It is not about maintaining equidistance; our priority is to ensure Odisha's best interests

in the delimitation process," Swain said. The controversy arose after a two-member delegation from the DMK, consisting of former Union Minister Dayanidhi Maran and Tamil Nadu Industries Minister TRB Rajaa, met BJD president Naveen Patnaik at his residence to discuss the issue. "There is a growing fear that Odisha may be adversely affected in the upcoming delimitation process. The DMK delegation requested Patnaik to join discussions March 22 in Chennai, and he has agreed to participate," senior BJD leader Debi Prasad Mishra stated. Mishra further revealed that Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin had invited Patnaik to be part of a joint action committee on delimitation, an offer that Patnaik accepted in the interest of Odisha's people.



However, when asked whether Patnaik would personally attend the Chennai meeting, BJD spokesperson Lelin Mohanty responded, "The BJD president will make that decision." Reacting to these developments, Odisha's Panchayati Raj Minister and senior BJP leader Rabi Narayan Naik remarked, "Biju Patnaik supported delimitation in the past. Let's see what his son,

Naveen Patnaik, decides. He is acting on the advice of one person (referring to Patnaik's close aide VK Pandian)." The Odisha BJP also accused parties within the INDIA bloc of spreading misinformation on the delimitation process, creating confusion among the public with controversial statements. "While the country supports delimitation, the DMK is pushing its divisive agenda. The BJD's participation confirms that the party is still under a Tamil influence," alleged Odisha BJP spokesperson Anil Biswal. Biswal further claimed that after its defeat in the 2024 Assembly elections, the BJD was moving closer to the INDIA bloc. He criticised Patnaik's meeting with the DMK leaders, stating, "Instead of attending the Assembly, Naveen Babu

met representatives from Tamil Nadu, proving that he remains under Tamil influence." In response, the BJD dismissed the BJP's allegations. "Perhaps the Odisha BJP is suffering from Tamil Nadu jaundice. What is wrong with regional and national parties discussing delimitation together? The Odisha BJP need not be reactive," the party said in a statement. The BJD also underscored the sensitivity of redrawing constituency boundaries. "It is crucial to ensure that Odisha's Lok Sabha and Assembly seats do not decrease. If certain states fear seat reductions, the central government must take a decision that upholds the principles of federal democracy and safeguards the interests of all states," the party asserted.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.6°	35.0°
Min Temp	18.4°	18.2°
Humidity	78%	61%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Dry weather		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VARIATION	
SENSEX	74029.76	↓ 72.56
NIFTY	22470.50	↓ 27.40
DOLLAR	87.32	↑ 0.01
EURO	95.29	↑ 0.19
GOLD	₹86,336	↑ ₹184
SILVER	₹99,250	↑ ₹1118

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Jharkhand criminal hurt in encounter



Rourkela, March 12: A notorious criminal from Jharkhand sustained a bullet injury in an encounter with police in the Steel City here Wednesday, an officer said.

"Acting on specific intelligence inputs about the movement of two notorious criminals Beyas Lakhua, 32, and Amit Topno, 30, a police team led by inspector in-charge (IIC) of Bisra police station tried to nab the duo early Wednesday morning," said Brijesh Kumar Rai, DIG (Western range).

Seeing the police team zeroing in on them, Lakhua opened fire on the cops. In retaliation,

two criminals from Jharkhand are being verified from different police stations in Jharkhand and Odisha, they said.

"We have been tracking them with intelligence inputs from our own sources and Jharkhand. IIC of Bisra got the information late in the night that Lakhua and Topno were seen in a white Scorpio SUV," said Rourkela superintendent of police (SP) Nitesh Wadhvani.

"Two police teams proceeded towards their location. Our team tried to stop them. Knowing that they cannot escape they started firing at us. A total of four rounds were fired by us and one of the bullets hit him," said Wadhvani.

The bullet had hit him just under the right knee and went out from the back. The injured criminal is under treatment at a hospital in Rourkela, he said.

Though Topno managed to flee the spot under the cover of darkness, the police nabbed him after an hour of search, the SP said.

The police have seized one country-made 9-mm pistol and magazine, four empty cases, two mobile phones and the SUV.

Several cases have been registered against the two criminals at police stations in Jharkhand and Odisha

the police also retaliated, injuring Lakhua, he added.

Several cases have been registered against the two criminals at police stations in Jharkhand and Odisha. While there are four cases against Lakhua, three cases are pending against Topno, the police said.

However, more cases of the



SPRING FEST: Devotees pay obeisance to idols of Radha Krishna displayed on various palanquins at Munshi Melan held on the premises of Bhandaripokhari police station in Bhadrak district Wednesday

HC stays managing committee changes in Danar co-op society

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, March 12: The Orissa High Court has issued an interim order directing that the current status of the managing committee of the Danar Service Cooperative Society in Hatadihi block of Keonjhar district, be maintained.

The order, issued March 5, 2025, came in response to a petition filed by society chairman Akshaya Dhal (case number is W.P.(C)-6388/2025). The court has also sought a report from the affected parties.

The dispute arose over the

transfer of nine directors from the Danar Service Cooperative Society to the newly formed Kaligaon and Gedama cooperative societies. Even after their membership was officially transferred June 9, 2023, these directors continued to function in the society's management committee. The disagreement allegedly escalated when society secretary Umakant Nayak raised objections January 18, 2025.

Following this, as per the directives issued September 29, 2023, the Registrar of Cooperative Societies (RCS) had issued a

letter (No 2182) February 3, 2025 requesting a report from the Deputy Registrar of Cooperative Societies (DRCS), Keonjhar. As a result, the membership of the nine directors was officially transferred from the Kaligaon and Gedama cooperative societies to the Danar Service Cooperative Society. However, the Danar society did not acknowledge or accept this transfer.

Nayak convened a managing committee meeting where discussions were held regarding appointing the vice chairman as the acting chairman.

2 die in Bhadrak road accident



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhadrak, March 12: Two youths died after their motorcycle collided with a tractor in Bhadrak district Wednesday, police said.

The accident took place near Dohara Balighata on Aradi-Bhadrak State Highway-35 under Dhusuri police station, they added.

"The impact was so severe that one of the bikers died on the spot while the other succumbed to injuries while being taken to the hospital by locals," said Santanu Jena, officer in-charge of Dhusuri police station.

The victims were identified as Chandan Jena, 20, of Telasadamuka village under Pirahat police station in Bhadrak district and Shiba Jena, 22, of Bajaratap under Mangalpur police station in Jajpur.

The tractor driver fled the scene following the accident.

The cause of the accident has not yet been ascertained. An investigation has been initiated, Jena said.

Man, mom held for killing 2 kids

POST NEWS NETWORK

Nayagarh, March 12: Two days after the bodies of two minor boys were found hanging in Dhanchengeda village under Fatehgarh police station in Nayagarh district, the cops Wednesday arrested the father and grandmother of the deceased children.

Investigations revealed that the father of the boys, Prakash Mohanty, committed the murders while the grandmother assisted him. They attempt to stage the killings as suicides reportedly failed. The accused will appear in the court Thursday.

Police have also detained two neighbouring couples in connection with the case. Police confirmed that the father and grandmother were the primary perpetrators.

The bodies of Akash Mohanty, 14, and his younger brother, Aditya, 9, were found hanging from the stair railing of Prakash's house in the village Monday morning. A neighbouring couple allegedly removed the bodies from the railing.

Police registered a case (61/25) after a complaint was lodged by the victims' maternal relatives and began an investigation.

Tihidi, Pirahat police stations run sans IICs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Tihidi, March 12: With the festival of colours 'Holi' round the corner, villages, markets, shrines and other public places will witness heavy rush, while Dola Melan and Kumbh Mela being planned at various locations would also pull crowds. However, severe staff crunch at two major police stations - Tihidi and Pirahat - has raised doubts over smooth conduct of the festival, especially when the inspector-in-charge (IIC) posts remaining vacant there.

Reports said the IIC post at Tihidi PS has remained vacant since January 31. The station has only three sub-inspectors (SIs), instead of five. Similarly, only five assistant sub-inspectors (ASIs) are at work instead of a sanctioned strength of eight. The PS is also running short of five constables. Moreover, of the three havildars, two will retire March 31.

There is considerable pressure on Tihidi PS as some of its officers are deployed in several other blocks of the district



during festivals, exams and for headquarters responsibilities. The PS oversees 19 panchayats, including several sensitive areas where maintaining law and order is not easy.

Similarly, the IIC post at Pirahat PS has been vacant since February 15. Instead of three SIs, the station runs with two, including a female officer. Likewise, out of three sanctioned ASI posts, two are vacant. And, seven constable posts are yet to be filled. The station has only two home guards. Pirahat PS oversees 12 panchayats, some of which, like Barasara, Gobindpur, Shyamsundarpur and Narendrapur are over 12km away.

With this skeletal staff strength at the police stations, locals have raised doubts over smooth 'Holi' celebrations. Ar-

ees like Kalimegha, Jharpata, and Tihidi will witness heavy rush during Dola Purnima that will be observed March 14. "Managing the crowd at these places would be a herculean task for the police in the evening," said a local.

Adding to the problem, reports also said Chandbali SD-PO post has remained vacant for the last five months.

Given these challenges, locals have demanded immediate action and deployment of additional police personnel in these areas.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Arup Abhishek Behera said special officers will be deputed to man the 'Holi' arrangements. "Efforts are being made to fill the vacancies in a phased manner," he added.

New fish species Ariosoma Tamilicum identified

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 12: A collaborative effort by Indian Marine Biodiversity Centre at Gopalpur in Ganjam district and National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources in Kerala led to the identification of new fish species - Ariosoma tamilicum - in the coasts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

According to Anil Mohapatra, a scientist at the Indian Marine Biodiversity Centre, the eel species, belonging to the Ariosoma genus, was named Ariosoma tamilicum in reference to its discovery in Tamil-speaking coastal regions.

The fish was first collected in 2021 by researcher Paramasivam Kodeswaran at the fishing harbour of Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu. Initial examinations were conducted at the National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources Centre in Kerala, followed by further analysis at Gopalpur Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).

A team of scientists, including Mohapatra, Thipramalai Thangappan Pillai, Ajit Kumar, Smruti Rekha Acharya, and Paramasivam Kodeswaran, conducted the DNA sequencing



and mitochondrial gene analysis. The genetic study revealed a 13.4 per cent difference in mitochondrial gene sequence, confirming it as a distinct new species.

The eel has a bicoloured body, with a dark upper portion and a lighter underside. It possesses a vertebral column with 116-121 bony segments and grows up to 30 centimetres in length. It is non-toxic and is commonly used as poultry feed. These eels are benthic dwellers, living at the bottom of the sea.

The full scientific description of Ariosoma tamilicum has been published in the international journal Zootaxa. Further research on the species is in progress, according to Mohapatra of the ZSI.

Braving odds, Anita goes extra mile to help others

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sambalpur, March 12: Many women face hardships in life, but some refuse to give up. Instead, they turn their struggles into strength and work for the betterment of society, inspiring others. One such woman is Anita Bag, an Anganwadi worker from Daldalipada in Sambalpur district.

Daldalipada, near Khetrajpur railway station in Sambalpur, is home to a predominantly Scheduled Caste population. Despite living in an urban area, residents lack access to proper education and healthcare. In these challenging circumstances, Anita has stepped forward to help. Under her leadership, voluntary organisation 'Our Helping Hand' has become a source of hope for the community.

Anita has endured significant hardships in her life. Her husband Ajay Suna has been missing since 2008 after setting off for Rourkela. Despite this, she pursued her education, se-



cured a master's degree in social work and has joined as an Anganwadi worker. She has also supported her elder daughter, who is a second year M Tech student at VSSUT, and her younger daughter, who is pursuing law.

Anita's dedication and benevolence extend beyond her family. She is committed to educating and empowering children in her community. In 2012,

alongside her sister Kabita Bag and other women, she founded 'Our Helping Hand' to support underprivileged families. The organisation gained recognition in 2014 for its work during a jaundice outbreak, when its volunteers distributed safe drinking water, sprayed bleaching powder and raised awareness about hygiene in more than 30 affected households in the locality.

The organisation also

focuses on skill development. Children working as domestic helpers have received training in making paper bags, packaging spices and tailoring and helping them become self-sufficient.

"In areas where government initiatives have fallen short, 'Our Helping Hand' has provided access to education," said Anita. So far, it has helped educate around 350 students and continues to support 50 children through evening classes and vocational training, she added.

Beyond education, Anita has taken steps to promote public health awareness. Despite facing adversity, she has not only ensured a good education for her own family but also worked for years to make her community self-reliant. Today, more than 20 men and women actively support her efforts.

At a time when empowerment of women is a global topic, Anita stands as a beacon of inspiration for others.

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E-Auction SALE NOTICE
E-Auction Sale Notice Under SARFAESI ACT, 2002

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act) read with proviso to Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to be held on 28.03.2025 from 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Bank of India under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rules 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice to the borrower, and the Authorised Officer has taken possession of the property described herein below. Offers are invited by the Authorised Officer under Sub-Rule 5 & 6 of Rule 8 of the said Rules by holding e-auction on 28.03.2025 from 11:00AM to 05:00PM. Public at large and Borrower and Guarantor in general are being informed that E-auction under SARFAESI Act in respect of under noted property will be conducted for sale on the terms & conditions under Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 and to following conditions for realization of debts due to Bank.

Date & Time of E-Auction: Dt.: 28.03.2025 from 11.00 A.M. to 05:00 P.M. with unlimited extension of 10 (Ten) minutes each.

Last date for submission of EMD & Documents: Dt. : 28.03.2025 from 11.00 A.M. to 03:00 P.M.

Date & Time of Inspection of Property: 25.03.2025, between 11.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M.
For inspection please contact the Respective Branch Head or Recovery Department, Zonal Office, Baripada (Nischit, Mob.: 8895188144)

Sl. No.	BRANCH / Name & Address of the Borrower/Guarantor / Total Dues	Description of the Property	Reserve Price / EMD / Type of Possession
1.	REMUNA BRANCH / Borrower: Mahalaxmi Industries, Prop.: Muralidhar Bal, At: Nuasahi, P.O.: Balla, P.S.: Sahadevkhunta, Dist.: Balasore, PIN-756056 / Total Dues: Rs.13.88 Lakh with UCI plus further expenses thereon	EQM of Land & Building situated over Khata No.: 223/520, Plot No.: 571/725, Area: Ac.0.20 Dec., KISSAM: Gharabari at Mouza: Sutei, P.S.: Sadar, SRO: Balasore, Tahasil: Remuna, Dist.: Balasore, standing in the name of Muralidhar Bal, Bounded by North: Amitabh Girl, South: Plot No.: 571, East: Plot No.: 572 & West: Road	₹ 54,24,300/- / ₹ 5,42,430/- / Symbolic
2.	BHADRAK BRANCH / Borrower: Mr. Sarat Kumar Jena, S/o: Baidhar Jena / Co-Borrower: Mrs. Bhanumati Jena, W/o: Mr. Sarat Kumar Jena, Both are A.T.P.O.: Dolasahi, Dist.: Bhadrak, PIN-756127 / Total Dues: Rs. Total Dues: Rs.10.07 Lakh with UCI plus further expenses thereon	Equitable Mortgage of Land & Building situated over Khata No.: 840/424, Plot No.: 929/3036, at Mouza: Dolasahi, Tahasil/SRO:Tihidi, Dist.: Bhadrak, standing in the name of Sarat Kumar Jena, S/o.: Baidhar Jena, admeasuring Area: Ac.0.040 Dec, KISSAM: Gharabari, Bounded by North: Road, South: Plot No.:927 & 928, East: Shiv Prasad Mallick, West: Vendor	₹ 20,54,000/- / ₹ 2,05,400/- / Symbolic

Terms and conditions of E-Auction

The sale shall be subject to the terms and conditions and provisions prescribed in the SARFAESI Act 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://baanknet.com>

15 DAYS E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN TO BORROWER(S)/ GUARANTOR(S)/ MORTGAGOR(S)

This is also a 15 days sale notice to the Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s)/Mortgagor(s) of the aforesaid loan accounts for settlement of their outstanding dues with the bank and to participate in the public auction on the above mentioned date.

Place: Baripada
Date: 12.03.2025

Authorised Officer
Bank of India

FOCUS RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

ENDGAME NOT EASY



Negotiations to end the war are not going to be easy. Both Ukraine and Russia would have their maximalist or extreme positions

than 1,900 km long border with Ukraine. Russia tried this earlier, with two break-away regions of Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) declaring independence after the Russia-Georgia war of 2008.

Russia has military personnel and equipment stationed there. Similarly, the Transnistria region that broke away from Moldova in early 1990s is a proxy state for Moscow. Russia also has heavily militarised its exclave of Kaliningrad on the borders of Poland and Lithuania which are NATO members. The Russian controlled areas in Ukraine would serve the same purpose. Thus, Russia would not depend on assurances from the West about NATO expansion and ringfence itself with buffer zones to prevent any future security shock.

But what about security guarantees for Ukraine? European powers have suggested that they could undertake a peacekeeping role after the war ends. The length of the border and the amounts of personnel and equipment this required would be enormous and expensive. Many European countries may be reluctant to commit so much human, military and financial capital for this. Russia would be opposed to any European/NATO role in peace keeping since those powers have been party to the war in different ways. Instead, the option of having a UN or international peace-keeping mission may be considered.

On the whole, it may not be easy to achieve a lasting peace, though Trump looks to be in a hurry. The pressure on Ukraine would work, since it has been totally dependent on the West to fight the war. Russia on the other hand has been fighting practically on its own. It is used to massive sanctions since 2014. It can live with a few more. If Russia cannot have the advantages it has won after three years of war, it may not be prepared to conclude a peace deal.

The writer is a retired Professor, Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

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Within a month of Donald Trump assuming Presidency of the US, there have been remarkable shifts in American policy towards Ukraine. What looked like a total US commitment to see the strategic defeat of Russia a few months ago, has now transformed into putting pressure on Ukraine to move towards a ceasefire and negotiate a peace deal. The bulldozing of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Oval Office, pause in military aid to Ukraine and stopping intelligence sharing indicate that the US is strongly pushing for an early end to the war. Caught in this radical shift in the US position and meeting of American officials with their Russian counterparts in Riyadh and Istanbul, Ukraine has had to recognise this new reality and agree to the peace process without insisting on security guarantees. However, the story does not conclude here. There are many imponderables on the way to end the war.



Ajay Patnaik

IT MAY NOT BE EASY TO ACHIEVE A LASTING PEACE, THOUGH TRUMP LOOKS TO BE IN A HURRY

The European powers have rallied together in support of Ukraine's war efforts and have promised to continue the supply of military and financial aid. This may not be enough for Ukraine to regain its lost territories, let alone inflict a defeat on Russia. Still, such support in military and financial terms could prolong the conflict for some time at least.

Secondly, the US policy is not in favour of empowering Russia to the extent that it becomes a hegemonic power in Eurasia. The US since the end of Cold War, even during days of bonhomie in the 1990s, never considered Russia as an equal and even treated it as a 'defeated' power. The fact that Moscow still had the largest nuclear arsenal and the capability to destroy the West has always bothered policymakers in Washington and European capitals. As a result, the policy of containment continued even after the Cold War ended. In pursuit of this policy, the US/West expanded NATO eastward to Russia's borders, changed regimes that were friendly with Russia and installed more anti-Russian and pro-Western

governments, for example in Georgia and Ukraine. As Russia pushed back against such Western policies, the proxy states were encouraged to stay away from any effort to normalise relations with Moscow. The Minsk II agreement of 2025 and Istanbul talks of 2022 are examples of this. The thinking that Russia has to be contained still persists in the West. Trump's inclinations notwithstanding, he cannot probably go against the larger strategic goal of weakening Russia as a global power. He has even cautioned Russia with sanctions on banks and tariffs if the country does not agree to an immediate ceasefire.

However, Trump's pressure would be more effective with Ukraine than with Russia. Being a proxy state, Ukraine was totally dependent on Western military and financial aid, the bulk of which came from the US. Being a smaller country, it has experienced relatively more damage to its infrastructure, manpower and other resources. If the war lingers, further attrition is on the cards. So, America is actually doing Ukraine a favour by trying to stop this protracted war.

For, Russia the end of this conflict is desirable in many ways. It does not have an inexhaustible supply of men and materials to endlessly fight. At many levels sanctions are biting though not as much as the West desired. To escape the severity of sanctions, Russia has depended more on China, which may look beneficial now but in the long run it could stymie Russia's power in Eurasia where China is al-

ready advancing rapidly with its economic heft. To escape from any potential Chinese economic grip, Russia needs to quickly end this possibility. This can be done by working to end the sanctions and resume trade and investment relations with Europe. Achieving that would depend on how soon a peace deal is signed with Ukraine. Now that the US is on board for a negotiated settlement the chances of peace are brighter.

Negotiations to end the war are not going to be easy. Both Ukraine and Russia would have their maximalist or extreme positions. Kyiv would demand the return of all areas under Russian control since 2014, including Crimea. Moscow would want complete control over Crimea and four other regions (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia) it had declared as part Russia after a referendum there in September 2022. Moscow at the moment does not have complete control of these territories. It would expect Kyiv to cede the territories to Russian sovereignty.

The other sticky point could be security guarantees. Russia wants Ukraine out of NATO in future. Given the US statements on this issue, NATO may not include Ukraine as a member for now. But the situation may change in future with new political dispensations in the US. Given past experiences on NATO expansion despite assurances, Russia may not accept such a "commitment" at face value. It needs buffer zones to insulate itself from NATO reaching its frontiers, especially through its most

SPECTRUM ECONOMY

The case for structural reforms

With the economy growing 6.2% in the December quarter, recovering just a little from a seven-quarter low, economists are divided on the issue of the economy's revival. It is difficult to believe there has been any noticeable improvement in the first two months of the calendar year. Surveys had predicted weakened spending of households, whose incomes have long lagged the price rise. Though food inflation has been brought down, the purchasing power of people has not improved.

A few days back the International Monetary Fund, as usual, underlined the need for structural reforms, arguing that production linked incentives would not be sufficient to create jobs to absorb the growing labour force. These reforms encompass the judiciary, tariffs, labour regulation along with a stable regulatory regime. In the latest review, it has called for GST simplification along with a cut in excise

duty on fuel and broadening of the income tax base. Meanwhile, the somewhat reduced public capital expenditure leads to a dependence on private investments as well as consumption. But private investments are not forthcoming to the desired extent as such investments are significantly influenced by consumer demand. Thus, in sectors like education, hospitals and hotels there is a lot of activity, but not in manufacturing. The fast-growing consumer goods companies, whose stocks have taken a severe battering, remain pessimistic about their immediate future growth and profits.

According to the RBI's consumer survey, the consumer mood was subdued in January this year from last November with deepening gloom since the start of the current fiscal. Additionally, the subdued sentiment was also evident in February and this is expected to remain so in March as well. This is because even a large

section of the middle class does not have sufficient resources to spend except, of course, on essentials and education and health, the costs of which have increased considerably. Private investment and interest costs outweigh a demand deficiency for products and services. The spectre of inflation has re-emerged with significant depreciation of the rupee and its persisting downfall trend. It has made further monetary easing uncertain besides increasing exchange-rate risks.

Added to this are external developments which have been staggeringly unpredictable and risky in the past two months. This includes the barrage of threats of trading partners, particularly tariffs, walkouts from global bodies and forums, unilateral conflict resolving issues, and alienation of long-standing allies. Regarding affordable housing, it has shrunk considerably as most people are forced to live

on the periphery of cities or in satellite towns and travel long distances daily to reach their places of work. It is almost impossible for low-income groups and even the lower section of the middle-class to afford a house in the city as most builders are busy catering to the upper echelons of society. Analysts have found that a major part of the SME sector has failed to move ahead through modernisation and technology upgradation due to discrimination in bank credit. The total outstanding credit to SME sector adds up to just 8% of GDP compared to 120% in China while in Japan and Korea it is roughly equal to the size of GDP.

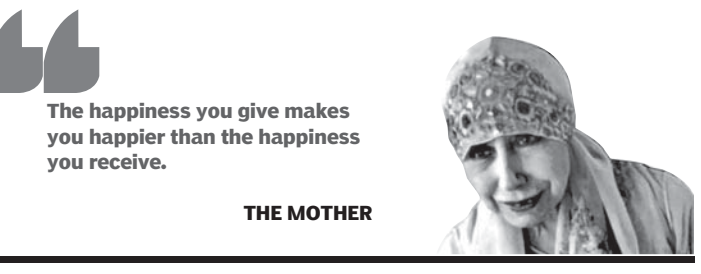
The State is obsessed with increasing the income of the top 100-200 business groups or so and is providing them all facilities. This will not help in economic revival unless the benefits of development reach all sections, all regions and all segments of population.

INFA



Dhurjati Mukherjee

PRIVATE INVESTMENTS ARE NOT FORTHCOMING TO THE DESIRED EXTENT AS SUCH INVESTMENTS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY INFLUENCED BY CONSUMER DEMAND



The happiness you give makes you happier than the happiness you receive.

THE MOTHER

Mediocre Emperor

For the past decade, scholars have been debating how to make sense of Donald Trump's rise and rule. They have cycled through labels such as populism and fascism, and proposed various historical parallels - some of them rather outlandish ("Martin Luther Was the Donald Trump of 1517"). But now Trump himself has offered a hint, posting on social media that "He who saves his Country does not violate any Law" - a quote widely attributed to Napoleon, though most likely put into the emperor's mouth by Balzac.

Napoleon is usually seen as a prime example of Caesarism, a term invented in the nineteenth century to characterize and legitimate a particular form of autocratic rule. Is it the label we've all been looking for? While there are some striking parallels, crucial elements of Caesarism are missing from Trump's regime.

But first consider the similarities. Even before seizing power, Napoleon - like Trump - had intuited that propaganda is crucial to modern mass politics. He personally edited bulletins about his army's victories and commissioned a steady stream of self-promotional pamphlets, portraits, and newspapers with titles like the Journal of Bonaparte and Virtuous Men. While references to Caesar - a towering figure of antiquity - were common, only in 1800 was the public graced with a volume comprehensively establishing A Parallel Between Caesar, Cromwell, Monck and Bonaparte. It was authored by the interior minister, Napoleon's brother Lucien.

Those drawing this parallel emphasized that a Caesar is a charismatic leader who (crucially) channels "the will of the people." Napoleon's nephew Louis - who was elected president in 1848, retained power by means of a coup d'état in 1851, and later crowned himself emperor as Napoleon III - seized on this when he reintroduced universal male suffrage after conservative elites had restricted the vote to the propertied. But there were always limits to Napoleonic democracy. Both Napoleons relied not only on propaganda but also on the police, censoring criticism and clamping down on opposition. When they held plebiscites, the point was to demonstrate overwhelming popular support for something they were going to do anyway. They sought to liberalize the political system only when they started to face significant political uncertainty and pushback - Napoleon I in the 100 days after his return from Elba, and Napoleon III during the final years of his reign.

Napoleon has been called a modern "media emperor," and both Napoleons relied on spreading the story of their improbable rise (Napoleon III's surprise 1848 election, after several failed coups, eerily resembles Trump's unlikely return to power). But they also sought to produce spectacular achievements to keep citizens enthralled. As Napoleon Bonaparte put it, "a new-born government like ours needs to amaze and astonish people, in order to consolidate itself, or it will go under."

His means were, of course, martial. He sought to demonstrate a popular touch in his relationship with the army, "treat[ing] his soldiers as equals, addressing them in deliberately familiar, emotional language," the historian David Bell writes. But in addition to military glory, Napoleon embellished Paris with spectacular edifices and had his engineers improve the water supply and the sewage system. Napoleon III also pursued spectacular feats of urbanism. His prefect of the Seine, Georges-Eugène Haussmann, built famously beautiful boulevards long enough to offer astonishing vistas - and wide enough to deploy the military quickly in case of insurrection. In an early instance of gentrification, workers and the poor were systematically displaced from the city center.

Trump also has an architectural agenda. One of his lesser-noted day-one executive orders, "Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture," calls for a return to federal buildings in the classical style (the result, if any, will be gilded McMansion-like edifices with "engraved concrete and foam columns wrapped in plastic," one critic predicts). Similarly, Trump's rhetoric about enlarging the US to include Canada and Greenland is reminiscent of the darkest days of nineteenth-century imperialism, when glory was equated with territorial expansion.

More to the point, Trump's only real talent lies in exploiting our willingness to buy his image as a successful businessman, even though his actual business career was a string of failures. In this regard, he resembles Napoleon III, a "grotesque mediocrity," according to Karl Marx, who lived off a fantasy of grandeur. In his case, the fantasy proved popular enough to pull off what political scientists call an autogolpe (self-coup): a leader who comes to office legally using unlawful means to remain in power. Trump, having failed on 6 January, 2021 in such an endeavor, might try again during his second administration.

Still, the Caesarism analogy is ultimately flawed. At the most basic level, Trump lacks accomplishments. When Goethe praised Napoleon's "productivity of deeds," he was not just talking about battlefield victories. Here was a self-made man who went on to remake the French state and legal system.

Whereas both Napoleons managed to present themselves as figures who had transcended parties and classes with the breadth of their popular support, Trump is a militantly partisan Republican who is advancing his party's goal of cutting taxes for the wealthy. Far from single-handedly dragging the US state into the future, his ally Elon Musk is wantonly sabotaging it. Where the Napoleons promised order and an end to revolutionary upheaval, Trump and his henchmen, apparently enthralled with the idea that "disruption" is good for some businesses, are purposefully sowing chaos.

Trump's throwaway line about being above the law does not speak to Caesarist aspirations. It is nothing more - or less - than run-of-the-mill authoritarian rhetoric designed to legitimize violence. El Salvador's autocratic leader, Nayib Bukele, has posted the same phrase, and it also appeared in the Norwegian mass murderer Anders Breivik's manifesto. In the name of defending Europe against Islam, he killed 77 people in Oslo and on a nearby island in 2011. Et tu, MAGA?

The writer is Professor of Politics at Princeton University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1781: Uranus is discovered. German-born British astronomer William Herschel is credited with the planet's discovery.
1881: Tsar Alexander II of Russia was assassinated in St. Petersburg.
1925: The Tennessee legislature passed a bill that banned the teaching of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in the state's public schools; in a highly publicized trial, high-school teacher John T. Scopes was later convicted of breaking the law.

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



Unchecked influence

Sir, Elon Musk's clash with Poland's Foreign Minister over Starlink's role in Ukraine highlights the risks of a private businessman influencing geopolitical matters. Poland, which helps fund Starlink for Ukraine, opposed Musk's claim that Ukraine would collapse without it. This sparked reactions from US Senator Marco Rubio supporting Musk and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk backing his foreign minister. Musk's unofficial yet significant role in US strategic projects poses risks, as his influence over critical services like Starlink lacks government oversight. With Trump in power, Musk's unchecked influence could become a liability, potentially impacting US foreign policy unpredictably. The US must ensure its infrastructure is not reliant on the decisions of a private entity acting on personal discretion. For India, as it considers licensing satellite internet services with Starlink as a strong contender, regulatory safeguards are essential to prevent overreach. India must maintain strategic autonomy and avoid dependence on a private service provider for critical infrastructure, ensuring national interests are protected. Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

Poor representation

Sir, International Women's Day was celebrated with pomp on 8 March. Reams were written about representation of women in different walks of life. Incidentally, 10 March was International Day of Women Judges. A study by the Centre for Law and Policy Research has said that traditionally 3.95 per cent of judges at the Supreme Court of India were women. Currently, 2 of the 32 judges are women. Very interestingly, since 2021, 28 Supreme Court judges were appointed, but none of them was a woman. As far as the High Courts are concerned, again there is a notable gender imbalance. While Telangana High Court had 33 per cent women representation, the best in India with regard to gender composition, three High Courts had zero women judges. In High Courts, the presence of women judges was 14.45 per cent only. Less number of women lawyers-17 per cent of the total-may be one reason for the meagre number of judges but that cannot be the only reason. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Kiosks to be installed in Ayodhya to guide pilgrims

These kiosks will not only guide the devotees but also provide historical, cultural and tourism-related information, ensuring seamless connectivity and real-time updates



Ayodhya (UP), March 12: Display kiosks will be installed at key locations at Ayodhya to provide real-time information about the opening timings, distances and other details of prominent religious sites, including Ram Mandir and Hanumangarhi, officials said Wednesday.

Under this initiative, kiosks will be installed at four key locations, including railway stations and airports. These kiosks will not only guide the devotees but also provide historical, cultural and tourism-related information, ensuring seamless connectivity and real-time updates, the officials said.

Shri Ayodhya Ji Tirtha Vikas Parishad has been responsible for implementing this project. If successful, the initiative will be expanded to additional locations, making it even more accessible for visitors, they said.

Each kiosk will cost approximately ₹2.5 lakh. The project is expected to be a valuable facility for pilgrims and tourists, they said.

Santosh Sharma, CEO of Shri Ayodhya Ji Tirtha Vikas Parishad, emphasised the significance of the initiative, saying, "We aim to provide a convenient and informative experience to devotees visiting Ayodhya. These kiosks will help visitors access essential details about temples and other attractions, making their journey smoother. This initiative will also contribute to boosting tourism in Ayodhya."

The display kiosks will feature a touch-screen interface, allowing users to access information according to their needs. Besides, they may include voice command functionality for easier navigation. A QR code

scanner will also be available, enabling devotees to access information directly on their mobile phones, he said.

To ensure uninterrupted service, the kiosks will be equipped with internet connectivity, power backup systems and security features to prevent vandalism, the officials said.

About the benefits of the new initiative, they said devotees and tourists will receive the latest updates about Ayodhya's religious sites and attractions. Information about Ayodhya's historical and cultural significance will be available on the kiosk so devotees and tourists can know more about the city, they said.

The kiosks will facilitate seamless connectivity, allowing devotees and tourists to access information through mobile phones or other devices.

Mosques covered with tarpaulin

Following an 18th-century tradition, Holi in Shahjahanpur begins with revellers hurling footwear at a man impersonating 'Laat Saheb' -- a British Lord -- seated on a bullock cart

Shahjahanpur (UP), March 12: Mosques on the route of the traditional 'Laat Saheb' Holi procession here have been covered with tarpaulins and strict security measures put in place ahead of the festival of colours which coincides with the Friday prayers.



The local administration has raised barricades along the procession route and installed several CCTV cameras.

"There are 18 Holi processions in the city, including the two major 'Laat Saheb' processions. To ensure security, the larger procession has been divided into three zones and eight sectors, with around 100 magistrates deployed," Superintendent of Police Rajesh S told PTI.

Moreover, police have taken preventive action against 2,423 people to deter potential troublemakers, he said.

"The security deployment includes 10 police circle of-

ficers, 250 sub-inspectors, around 1,500 police personnel and two companies of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC)," the SP added.

Warning that no one will be allowed to take the law into their hands, the police officer said, "We urge everyone to celebrate Holi peacefully. Our police force will keep a close watch on miscreants and the entire event will be monitored live."

Municipal Commissioner Vipin Kumar Mishra said, "We have installed around 350 CCTV and still cameras along the procession route. Additionally, about 20 mosques on

the route have been covered with tarpaulin so that these are not stained by colours."

Barricades have also been placed near mosques and electrical transformers for safety, he said.

"Two tractor trolleys will accompany the procession to collect the discarded shoes, torn clothes and other debris. A sky lift will also be part of the procession and cameras will be positioned at 16 police picket points for video recording and it will be monitored live."

Dr Vikas Khurana, a historian from Swami Sukhdevanand College, traced the origins of

the tradition to 1728, when Nawab Abdullah Khan, who had left Shahjahanpur for Farrukhabad, returned to the city on Holi.

"Upon his return, he played Holi with the locals, which became an annual tradition. In 1930, the procession began using camel carts. Over time, its format has evolved," he explained.

Khurana further noted that in the 1990s, a petition was filed in the High Court seeking to stop the procession, but the court refused to intervene, ruling it was an old tradition.

Harnaam Katihar, a member of the organising committee, detailed the procession's route and customs.

"The procession starts from Kuncha Lala and reaches the Phoolmati Temple where a man dressed as 'Laat Saheb' offers prayers. It then proceeds to the police station, where the 'Laat Saheb' questions the police about the crimes committed over the past year," he said.

"As customary, police offer a bottle of liquor and some cash as a bribe. The procession then continues through a seven-km route before returning at Kuncha Lala. Throughout the march, participants hit the 'Laat Saheb' with shoes," Katihar said.

Bengal front-runner in big industrial investment: CM

Kolkata, March 12: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday said the state has emerged as a front-runner in receiving concrete big industrial investment intentions.

Citing a report published by the central government's Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the CM claimed Bengal has surpassed all the states in attracting (big) corporate industrial investment intentions in 2024.

This comes two days the state topped the list in MSME manufacturing industries and also recorded the highest percentage of women-headed establishments in the country.

"Glad to share that we are now in the top grade of the country in the big industries sector also. We have been at (the) country's top level in the MSME sector for some years; now we are



a big achiever in big industries too," Banerjee posted on X.

"According to the latest report published by the Government of India, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), West Bengal has been a front-runner State, and in the very top bracket among all States, in receiving concrete big industrial investment intentions," she added.

The Bengal CM said, "DPIIT Annual Report 2024-25 shows that, in terms of attracting (big) corporate industrial investment intentions, we have surpassed almost all other States in 2024. We have been among the top three in India. This is over and above our MSME achievements."

"Needless to mention that in 2025, we have since had the most

impressive Bengal Global Business Summit, and records are being further made," she added.

Banerjee Monday said the state topped the list in MSME manufacturing industries and also recorded the highest percentage of women-headed establishments in the country.

Citing the recently published findings of the 'Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises' conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO), Banerjee highlighted Bengal's outstanding performance in multiple sectors.

"Happy to share that the recently published findings of the 'Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises' conducted by the National Statistics Office, Government of India, once again establish Bengal's top position in MSME manufacturing industries and, simultaneously, our women's wonderful performance there," Banerjee posted on X.



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee performs 'dandiya' dance during celebrations of 'Doljatra and Holi Milan Utsav', in Kolkata, Wednesday

Dalit families enter Gidheshwar Shiv temple in West Bengal

Kolkata/Katwa (Purba Bardhaman) March 12: Breaking the shackles of caste-based discrimination, practiced in a rural pocket of West Bengal for nearly three centuries, representatives of 130 Dalit families for the first time set foot inside the Gidheshwar Shiv Temple in Purba Bardhaman district Wednesday, officials confirmed.

A group of five members of Das families — four women and a man — from Gidhgram village's Daspara area in the district's Katwa subdivision climbed the steps of the temple around 10 am, poured milk and water on the Shivaling and offered prayers to Mahadev without obstruction, amidst the presence of local administrative officials and personnel from the local police station deployed around the shrine to prevent any law and order problems.

PTI had reported Saturday how the Dalit families, all having 'Das' surnames and belonging to the traditional community of cobblers and weavers, were fighting an uneven battle against majority villagers to exercise their fundamental right to worship at the Gidheshwar Shiv Temple, believed to have been founded some 300 years ago.

The families, which had planned to break tradition



and offer prayers at the temple during the Maha Shivratri festival February 26, had not only been driven away from the temple premises on grounds that they belonged to "low caste", they also faced economic isolation from a significant section of villagers following their move to seek help of the local administration and police to carry out their plans to worship at the temple, PTI had further reported.

Happy and relieved by the day's development, the families thanked the administration and police for their "active intervention and cooperation," but expressed uncertainty about whether the effort to end the bigotry would be long-lasting.

"We are ecstatic to have been granted the right to perform puja at the temple. I prayed to God for everyone's well being," said Santosh Das, a villager who was previously disbarred from setting foot on

temple steps.

"We received tremendous support from the local police and administration on whom we had reposed our faith," Ekkori Das, another villager chipped in, adding, "We hope we haven't spoken too soon. The village heads have agreed to the arrangement under administrative pressure. We have to see whether the temple doors remain open for us even after the police deployment is removed."

The villagers confirmed that stoppage of dairy milk procurement from the Das families, enforced for the past few days as a means for economic exclusion from the village, have remained in place till Wednesday morning.

"Police have directed the milk procurement centres to start collecting milk from domesticated cattle owned by us. If the collection doesn't resume by this evening, we will have to report to the authorities," Ekkori said.

Although interventions from police and administration to convince village elders and temple servants to allow the Dalit families to pray at the temple had previously failed to break the ice, multiple rounds of talks over the last few days with stakeholders, including the latest one Tuesday, held at the office of the local subdivisional officer, Ahimsa Jain, seemed to have resolved the impasse.

No Holi in Santiniketan Haat



Kolkata, March 12: The West Bengal government has banned Holi celebrations at the popular Sonajhuri Haat in Birbhum district this year, citing possible damage to the green-eries in the forest belt, an official said Wednesday.

The Sonajhuri Haat is located near Visva Bharati's Santiniketan campus, a UNESCO heritage site.

Bolpur Divisional Forest Officer Rahul Kumar said several banners have been put up in the area, requesting people - a large number of whom could be foreigners and domestic tourists - neither to park vehicles nor celebrate the festival of colours there. Visitors were also requested not to videograph Holi festivities, he said.

"The department will seek support of police and administration to enforce the ban but will also leave it to people for the better sense to prevail," Kumar told PTI.

A spokesperson of Visva Bharati, a central university, said the varsity authorities cannot open the campus area for lakhs of people on Holi, keeping in mind the UNESCO heritage status.

About the ban on celebrating the Holi festival in the forested Sonajhuri area, the DFO said, "We are not issuing any diktat and people in large groups will be prevented from walking to the Sonajhuri Khowai belt on March 14 - the day of Dol Yatra."

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
AGRICULTURE & FARMERS' EMPOWERMENT DEPARTMENT
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INVITATIONS FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
Notice No. 451 Date : 11.03.25

Bid Identification No/E - Procurement Notice No. - S.E (A), S/Z 08 of 2024-25
No. L. - The Superintending Engineer (Agril.), Southern Zone, Brahmapur on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate Bids in Double Cover system for the work "Construction of RCC Pre-Cast Boundary wall at Govt. Agril. Farm, Umerkote, Dist - Nabarangpur" for a running length of 6345 Mtr. of a cost around Rs. 3,52,59,165.00 (Excluding GST & CESS) & "Construction of RCC Pre-Cast Boundary Wall at Govt. Agril. Mix Farm, Semilguda, Dist - Koraput" for a running length of 10300 Mtr. of a cost Rs. 5,72,33,701.00 (Excluding GST & CESS). Only A class contractors of Government of Odisha or of equivalent class of other state Govt./ Railways/ CPWD/ MES having experiences as mentioned in the DTCN after depositing Rs. 10000.00 as bid paper cost can participate in the bidding. Bid documents consisting of detail tender call notice, the schedule of quantities and set of terms and conditions of the contract and other necessary documents will be available on <http://tendersodisha.gov.in> website from date 13.03.2025 at 11:00 A.M. to Date. 26.03.2025 up to 5:30 P.M. for "ONLINE BIDDING". The original bid documents (Cover-I) will be received in the chamber of Superintending Engineer (Agril.), Southern Zone, Rite Campus, Rangelunda, Brahmapur from dated 25.03.2025 at 10:30 A.M. to date 27.03.2025 up to 11:30 A.M. (Except Holidays) through Government Speed Post/ Registered Post/Personal submission. Private Courier service is not allowed. Hard copies submitted by the bidders must reach on or before 11:30 A.M. of 27.03.2025. Which will be opened in the chamber of Superintending Engineer (Agril.), Southern Zone, Ganjam, Berhampur on 27.03.2025 at 02:30 P.M. in presence of member of the committee & bidders or their authorised representatives.

Sd./- Superintending Engineer (Agril.)
Southern Zone, Brahmapur
OIPR-01504/11/0007/2425

INVITATIONS FOR BIDS (IFB)
GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, AGRICULTURE & FARMERS' EMPOWERMENT DEPARTMENT, DIRECTORATE OF HORTICULTURE, ODISHA, BHUBANESWAR
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), HORTICULTURE, SOUTHERN ZONE, BERHAMPUR, GANJAM
e-Procurement Notice

No. L- Bid Identification Number - E.E. (A), HORTICULTURE, S/Z-02 of 2024-25
Tender Call Notice No: 115 Date: 12-03-2025

Name of the work:	Construction of Infrastructure Works for Year 2024-25				
Total No. of Projects:	10 (Ten) numbers				
Estimated cost of projects:	Varies from Rs. 5.0 lakh to Rs. 50.0 lakh				
Class of contractor:	"D", "C", "B" & "A" Class (of Odisha PWD) or relevant Class of other licensing authorities.				
Period of Completion:	As per TCN Annexure - I, Column no. -06				

Other details:

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification Number	Availability of Tender online for bidding		Submission of Original Documents	Date & Place of Opening of tender
		From	To		
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), HORTICULTURE SOUTHERN ZONE, BERHAMPUR, GANJAM	E.E. (A), HORTICULTURE (S/Z), BERHAMPUR - 01 OF 2024-25	13.03.2025 from 11.00 A.M.	24.03.2025 up to 5.00 P.M	During office hours of WORKING DAYS from dt. 25.03.2025 from 11.00 AM to 26.03.2025 up to 05.00 PM in the Office of the Executive Engineer, C/o Dy. Director Horticulture, Baidyanath Nagar, Ganjam, Berhampur, 760010 (To be dropped in the sealed Box)	Dt. 27.03.2025 at 11 AM in the Office Conference Hall of Dy. Director of Horticulture, Baidyanath Nagar, Ganjam, Berhampur, 760010

Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in

Sd./- Executive Engineer (Agril.)
Horticulture, Southern Zone, Berhampur
OIPR-01469/11/0003/2425



“ BJP is the biggest land mafia party. Since coming to power, BJP leaders have been terrorising the poor and forcibly snatching their land AKHILESH YADAV | SP PRESIDENT

BJP SWEEPS HARYANA CIVIC POLLS

The BJP's mayoral candidates registered emphatic victories in seven municipal corporations in Haryana Wednesday while its nominees were leading in two other civic bodies in the recently held elections. The Congress, which was looking to turn around its electoral fortunes after suffering a defeat in the 2024 Assembly polls, had to bite the dust



of the day quote

If a country's Prime Minister has written a letter to anyone, leaving aside the extremely personal letters, why shouldn't it come out before the country GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT | UNION MINISTER

Political leaders, whether in the government or Opposition, must exercise caution while making statements, to ensure that communal discord is not created. Maharashtra is home to a large number of patriotic Muslims AJIT PAWAR | MAHA DEPUTY CM

However, the relationship was tarnished by credible allegations that shell companies in Mauritius were used by Adani and his associates to engage in large-scale money-laundering, round-tripping, and tax evasion JAIRAM RAMESH | CONG GENERAL SECY (COMMUNICATIONS)

Mamata slams Suvendu's remark on Muslim MLAs



Banerjee's comments came a day after Adhikari claimed that if the BJP comes to power in West Bengal in the next Assembly polls, Muslim MLAs from the Trinamool Congress will be "thrown out" of the state Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 12: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Wednesday lashed out at Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari over his controversial remark on Muslim MLAs, accusing the BJP of importing "fake Hinduism" to the state. She also expressed concern over the BJP's treatment of minorities and criticised the Opposition party for allegedly undermining democratic values. Banerjee's comments came a day after Adhikari claimed that if the BJP comes to power in West Bengal in the next Assembly polls, Muslim MLAs from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) will be "thrown out" of the state Assembly. In response, Banerjee con-

demned the statement and remarked, "Your imported Hindu dharma is not supported by the Vedas or by our seers. How can you deny the rights of Muslims as citizens? This is nothing but a fraud. You are importing fake Hinduism." Banerjee expressed concern over what she called the "BJP's attempt to manipulate religious sentiments for political gains", stressing that her version of Hinduism differed from theirs. The Chief Minister also questioned Adhikari's statement that the Hindu population would oust the TMC from power, stating, "How can your leader say that when Muslims win, you people will remove them from Assembly? How can they dismiss 33 per cent of the population?" Banerjee emphasised the importance of respecting the country's policies, citing the legacy of leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Highlighting the state's religious diversity, Banerjee mentioned, "We have 23 per cent tribal brothers and sisters in the state, alongside other communities, including Muslims. We are committed to protecting all religions and promoting peace."

India, Mauritius ink 8 pacts

In the meeting, Modi reiterated India's continued support and assistance to Mauritius in augmenting its defence and security needs given the shared objectives of the two nations in the region

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Port Louis, March 12: India and Mauritius Wednesday elevated their ties to 'enhanced strategic partnership' and inked eight pacts to boost ties in several sectors, including maritime security, and promote trade in local currencies, even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled an ambitious vision for growth and security of the Global South.

On the second and final day of his two-day trip to Mauritius, Modi graced the national day celebrations of the island nation as the chief guest and announced a raft of development projects for the strategically-located country.

Following talks with his Mauritian counterpart Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Modi announced India's new vision for Global South and named it "MAHASAGAR" or "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions", a policy approach that came against the backdrop of China's relentless attempts to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean.

"We are committed to extend full cooperation in the security of Mauritius' Exclusive Economic Zone," the Prime Minister said. In the meeting, Modi reiterated India's continued support and assistance to Mauritius in augmenting its defence and security needs given the shared objectives of the two nations in the region.

The PM said a free, open, secure, and safe Indian Ocean is the common priority of India and Mauritius and that he and Ramgoolam agreed that defence



cooperation and maritime security are an important part of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The two sides also unveiled a 'Joint Vision for an Enhanced Strategic Partnership' that outlined the futuristic approach in expanding bilateral cooperation in a range of areas including in defence and maritime security, trade, health and education, and space and climate change.

The document noted that the two sides will enhance maritime cooperation through increasing deployment of ships and aircraft for joint maritime surveillance and hydrographic surveys. It said the two leaders also resolved to deepen cooperation towards securing EEZ of Mauritius, including through enhanced utilisation of newly built runway and jetty at Agalega. The unveiling of the 'MAHASAGAR' vision came 10 years after the prime minister announced during his visit to Mauritius in 2015 New Delhi's SAGAR or Security and Growth for All in the Region policy that formed the bed-

rock for India's engagement with the Indian Ocean Region. "We have taken the SAGAR vision forward for the stability and prosperity of this entire region. Today, taking it forward, I would like to say that our vision for the Global South will be, beyond SAGAR -- (it will be) MAHASAGAR that is "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions", Modi said in his media statement.

The new approach will focus on the spirit of trade for development, capacity building for sustainable growth, and mutual security for a shared future, he said. "Under this, cooperation will be ensured through technology sharing, concessional loans and grants," Modi said. The agreements inked after Modi-Ramgoolam talks will provide for promoting use of national currencies for cross-border transactions, sharing of maritime data, joint work in combating money laundering and enhancing cooperation in the MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) sector.

ICGS Saksham makes port call at Port Victoria, Seychelles

POST NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi, March 12: Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Saksham, an Offshore Patrol Vessel arrived at Port Victoria, Seychelles, March 12 for a three-day goodwill visit aimed at strengthening maritime cooperation and fostering regional partnerships.

During its port call, the crew of ICGS Saksham will engage in a series of professional interactions, including high-level calls on local dignitaries, joint training exercises, and sporting events with their Seychellois counterparts. These engagements are designed to enhance interoperability, promote mutual learning, and reinforce the strong maritime ties between India and Seychelles.



In alignment with India's outreach initiatives, the embarked National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets will participate in a Walkathon and a beach cleanup activity, contributing to the Government of India's 'Puneet Sagar Abhiyan'—a campaign aimed at environmental sustainability and marine conservation.

Student blackmailed over nude video, raped for over 16 months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Palanpur, March 12: A college student from Gujarat's Banaskantha district was allegedly repeatedly raped by seven persons for nearly 16 months after being blackmailed with her nude video, police said Wednesday.

One of the six accused befriended the 20-year-old woman over Instagram months after she started attending a college in Palanpur in 2023. In November 2023, he persuaded her to join him for breakfast at a hotel. He deliberately spilled food on her dress and took her to a room on the pretext of cleaning it, as per the FIR.

Police said when the student removed her clothes in the bathroom, the accused, identified as Vishal Chaudhary, barged inside and filmed her. When she protested, he threatened to make the video public and post it on Instagram, said the first information report (FIR), which was registered Monday. Using the same clip, he forced the student to have physical relations with him and his friends at different places on different occasions between November 2023 and February 2025, stated the FIR.

SHORT TAKES

Shah to visit Assam, Mizoram March 14-16

Guwahati/Aizawl: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will embark on a three-day visit to Assam and Mizoram beginning March 14 during which he will address the annual conference of the All Bodo Students' Union in Kokrajhar and grace a function for shifting of Assam Rifles establishments from Aizawl to Zokhawsang. Shah will also review the implementation of the three new criminal laws in the Northeastern states in Guwahati March 16 before returning to Delhi, officials said.

Fake gold racket busted in Assam

Morigaon: Five people, including three youths from Uttar Pradesh, have been arrested for possessing fake gold in Assam's Morigaon district, police said Wednesday. Acting on a tip-off, police raided a hotel Tuesday night and arrested the three UP youths, who were allegedly involved in the fake gold business, along with two local men, Morigaon additional SP Samiran Baishya said. Police seized Rs 49,000 in cash, 2.283 kg of fake gold, and other items from the trio.

Five Naxalites held in Ch'garh

Bijapur: Police Wednesday arrested five Naxalites, one of them carrying a reward of ₹1 lakh on his head, in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh, officials said. Narayan Bhandari, Dharma Kaka, Neela Kaka, Kista Dhruva and Rambabu Punem were apprehended by the security personnel near a forest in Marudbaka village under the Usur police station limits during an anti-Naxal operation, an official said. The local police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and its elite Commando Battalion of Resolute Action (CoBRA) units were involved in the operation launched in the area Monday, he said.

Dhankhar discharged from AIIMS

New Delhi: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar was discharged from AIIMS-Delhi Wednesday after making a satisfactory recovery, the premier hospital said. He was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) March 9 following cardiac-related ailments, it said in a statement.



People aboard a train amid heavy rush owing to the upcoming Holi in Patna, Bihar

More than 500 Indians rescued from scam centers in Myanmar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: India has brought back 549 of its citizens in two military aircraft after securing their release from cybercrime centres located along the Myanmar-Thailand border, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The Indians were victims of fake job offers, officials said. In a post on X, MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the government of India arranged for the safe repatriation of 266 Indians Tuesday onboard an Indian Air Force aircraft. On Monday, 283 Indians were similarly repatriated, he said.

The Indian nationals, mostly from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were lured with fake job offers to either Thailand or Myanmar. They were



then taken to cybercrime centres in Myanmar's Myawaddy region, he said. The Indian embassies in Myanmar and Thailand worked with the governments of the two countries for the release and repatriation of the Indians, he added. The MEA said Monday that the government has been making sustained efforts for the release of Indians lured to various Southeast Asian countries, including Myanmar, with fake job offers.

Why is TN at row with Centre over NEP's three-language formula?

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: The three-language formula proposed in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, is at the centre of a political row between the DMK-led Tamil Nadu government and the central government. Here is an explainer on the formula:

1. What is the proposed formula?

The three-language formula in NEP 2020 recommends that students learn three languages, at least two of which must be native Indian languages. This formula applies to both government and private schools, giving states the flexibility to choose languages without any imposition.

2. The three-language formula is for which classes?

The NEP has stated that the medium of instruction will be home language, mother tongue, local language or regional lan-

guage until at least class 5 but preferably till class 8 and beyond.

3. What is the history of three-language formula?

The formula was first proposed by the Education Commission (1964-66), officially known as the Kothari Commission. It was formally adopted in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968 under then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The policy was reaffirmed in NPE 1986 under PM Rajiv Gandhi and revised in 1992 by Narasimha Rao's Congress government to promote linguistic diversity and national unity. The formula included three languages — mother tongue or regional language, official language (including English) and a modern Indian or European language.

4. What does NEP 2020 say about three-language formula?

The NEP proposes an "early implementation of the



three-language formula to promote multilingualism" from the school level. The document states that the three-language formula will continue to be implemented "while keeping in mind the Constitutional provisions, aspirations of the people, regions, and the Union, and the need to promote multilingualism as well as promote national unity."

5. Is the formula aimed at imposing languages on states?

According to the NEP

6. What about foreign languages?

The NEP states that there will be greater flexibility in the three-language formula, and no language will be imposed on any state. The policy states that the three languages learned by children will be the choices of states, regions, and of course, the students themselves, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.

2020, in addition to Indian languages and English, students at the secondary level can also learn Korean, Japanese, French, German and Spanish, among other foreign languages. English which is used as medium of instruction in majority of schools, will now be considered a foreign language. Because of this students opting for English will have to opt for two Indian languages.

7. What is Tamil Nadu's Opposition?

The state has historically opposed the three-language formula. In 1937, the then Madras government, headed by C Rajagopalachari, introduced compulsory Hindi in schools. This move sparked widespread protests by the Justice Party and Dravidian leaders like Periyar. The policy was revoked in 1940, but anti-Hindi sentiments persisted.

When the three-language formula was introduced in 1968, Tamil Nadu opposed it, see

8. What is the fresh trigger?

Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement key aspects of NEP 2020, particularly the three-language formula, has resulted in the Centre withholding ₹573 crore in central education assistance under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). According to policy rules, states must comply with NEP guidelines to receive SSA funding, of which 60 per cent is provided by the Centre to states like Tamil Nadu.

national



Children are disproportionately impacted because they tend to breathe faster. They have a higher respiratory rate than adults
SOUMYA SWAMINATHAN | FORMER WHO CHIEF SCIENTIST

5,400 TEACHING POSTS VACANT IN VARSITIES ACROSS COUNTRY
More than 5,400 teaching positions are vacant across central universities, with over half of them reserved for OBC, ST, and SC categories, the Rajya Sabha was informed Wednesday. Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar said that more than 7,825 teaching positions have been filled in these varsities through special recruitment drives



of the day quote

Since the Mirwaiz was released from house arrest, I have not seen any objectionable statement from him, but we do not have any information about the reasons behind the ban. (But), we will see what to do (about it) in the future
OMAR ABDULLAH | J&K CM

We have earmarked an initial allocation of ₹1,000 crore in the 2025-26 budget for this planning approach and will undertake pilot projects in every district
PEMA KHANDU | ARUNACHAL CM

I heartily congratulate state Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Jagdish Devda for the budget. This is the budget of developed Madhya Pradesh aimed at creating the developed India of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. This budget will give a new momentum and direction to the development of the state and public welfare
SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUBHAN | UNION MINISTER

X POST OF THE DAY

The Prime Minister is on a visit to Mauritius, an important financial centre and a longtime ally of India's. However, the relationship was tarnished by credible allegations that shell companies in Mauritius were used by Adani and his associates to engage in large-scale money-laundering, round-tripping, and tax evasion. A Supreme Court-monitored SEBI investigation that was supposed to take two months has gone on for two years, in part because of its failure to obtain information from foreign jurisdictions involved in the Adani MegaScam.
@Jairam_Ramesh

SHORT TAKES

Absconding BJP worker arrested
Mumbai: Bhosale, a BJP worker and close aide of Beed MLA Suresh Dhas, has been arrested in alleged attempt to murder and other cases from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra Police said Wednesday. Bhosale, also known as 'Khokya', had spoken at length to some news channels over the last few days even as he was on the run. He was nabbed from Prayagraj, said a senior police official.

Nine-year-old boy sexually assaulted
Nagpur: Police have launched a manhunt after a nine-year-old boy was allegedly sexually assaulted by a 35-year-old man in Nagpur, an official said Wednesday. The incident took place Monday afternoon when the child was playing with his friends outside his house, said the official from Kotwali police station. The accused lured the boy with chocolates, took him to his home and sexually assaulted the minor, the official said, citing the FIR.

Biker killed in hit-and-run
Udupi (Karnataka): A 29-year-old man lost his life, and another sustained serious injuries after their two-wheeler was hit by an unidentified vehicle near Moolur on National Highway 66, police said Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as Pratheesh Prasad, while the injured, Nihal Wilson (29), is undergoing treatment, they added.

'Suspicious dying declaration can't become basis of conviction'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: The Supreme Court has said it was not safe to convict on the basis of a suspicious dying declaration in the absence of corroborative evidence and acquitted a man of his wife's murder. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said a dying declaration was an important piece of evidence and a conviction could be made by relying solely on it as it held immense importance

in criminal law. "However, such reliance should be placed after ascertaining the quality of the dying declaration and considering the entire facts of a given case," the bench said. The apex court, therefore, acquitted a man convicted for allegedly murdering his wife by setting her ablaze in September 2008. The bench said the trial court convicted him on the basis of his wife's dying declaration. "In other words, if a dying declaration is surrounded by doubt or there are inconsistent



dying declarations by the deceased, then courts must look for corroborative evidence to find out which dying declaration is to be believed," the bench said in its March 4 ver-

dict. Courts, the bench said, were required to act cautiously in such matters. The order observed the relations between the families of the accused and the woman had soured and a couple of years the woman's death, the man's brother had filed an assault case against his father-in-law and brother-in-law. While allowing his appeal, the bench set aside a Madras High Court's February 2012 order that had upheld his conviction and life sentence for the

alleged offence of murder. According to the prosecution, the woman succumbed to burn injuries in a hospital three weeks after being set on fire by the husband. The couple lived in Tuticorin with its minor son. The apex court observed the woman told the police in the hospital the fire was due to an accident in the kitchen. However, three days later, the police recorded another statement of the victim in which she claimed her husband set her on fire by pouring kerosene.

Delhi: Woman, 2 daughters found dead inside room

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: A 42-year-old woman and her two daughters were found dead at their home in southeast Delhi's Molarband Wednesday, with initial investigations suggesting that they committed suicide due to financial distress, police said. The three decomposed bodies were found after neighbours reported a foul smell emanating from their residence, a police officer said, adding that no suicide note has been recovered from the house so far. Police received a PCR call Wednesday afternoon from Molarband, with the caller informing that a strong odour was coming from House Number 43 on the second floor in street number 16, where the mother and daughters resided, he said.

Responding immediately, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) and Station House Officer, Badarpur rushed to the spot and found the bodies of - Pooja (42), her 18-year-old daughter, and her younger daughter, aged around 8-9 years -, he added. The three had white foam coming out of their mouths, suggesting the consumption of a poisonous substance, a senior police officer said. Initial observations suggest that the bodies were around four to five days old. Preliminary investigations suggest financial distress as a possible reason behind the alleged suicide, he said. Locals informed that the family had not paid rent for the past two months, which might have contributed to their decision of allegedly killing themselves, police said. The crime team was called to the scene, and forensic experts examined the site for evidence. The bodies have been sent for postmortem which will confirm the exact cause of death, they said.

NEP a saffron policy: Stalin

Addressing a public rally, Stalin also took on the Modi government on the delimitation exercise, claiming that it was attempting to "sustain power" by winning in northern states



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, March 12: Upping the ante against the Centre on the NEP, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin Wednesday alleged that it was not the National Education Policy but a "saffron policy" aimed at developing Hindi and not the nation.

imposition and its stance on NEP's three-language formula exposed their "hypocrisy". "We oppose NEP as it will completely destroy Tamil Nadu's education growth. The NEP does not accept reservation that is social justice. This policy denies the assistance amount to SCs, STs and Other Backward Classes," Stalin alleged.

Addressing a public rally, Stalin also took on the Modi government on the delimitation exercise, claiming that it was attempting to "sustain power" by winning in northern states. The BJP was trying to increase the number of MPs in states of their influence and thereby develop party, but the DMK will stop it, he asserted.

The chief minister said the Centre was trying to filter students by holding public exam for classes, including 3 and 5 and the exams for classes from 9 to 12 will be semester-based and similar to All India exams. Further, he alleged that in the name of vocational education, from class 6 onwards, they would implement "caste-based vocations."

Stalin's "saffron policy" jibe came a day after Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan accused the DMK-led state government of trying to score political brownies to "revive" the ruling party's fortunes, saying the DMK's "latest cacophony" on language

Pradhan should not take a class on democracy for the Tamil people. Stalin said: "Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I have an appeal! Try to develop India rather than Hindi. Sanskrit cannot be developed even if you spend thousands of crores. You will spend crores to

Online news channel MD, reporter held for content against Revanth Reddy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 12: The Managing Director of an online news channel and its reporter were Wednesday arrested here for allegedly circulating a video on social media platforms with "derogatory and abusive" contents against the Congress government in Telangana and Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, police said.



The video with defamatory content was allegedly shot in the office of BRS, Additional Commissioner of Police (Crimes & SIT) P Viswaprasad told PTI Videos.

He plan to circulate this video keeping in view the Budget session of the Telangana Legislative Assembly, the senior police official said.

Hyderabad Cyber Crime Police apprehended P Revathi and B Sandhya in connection with a case registered against them under relevant sections of IT Act and BNS for allegedly being involved in social media trolling against the Telangana government and the CM, police said.

The Budget session of the Telangana Assembly began March 12.

During the investigation, it was revealed that the online channel was found responsible for shooting of the video and its circulation widely on social media, Viswaprasad said. "The video was shot in February and it started circulating on social media from March 10. It clearly shows an orchestrat-

The investigation established that the media house and the media representative used to identify some persons, including senior citizens and illiterate persons and were provoking them to speak against the chief minister by using abusive and disrespectful references, the Additional CP said.

Rao in a post on 'X' said: "Kya Yahi Hain Aap Ki 'Mohabbat Ki Dukaan' ? @RahulGandhi Ji? Arresting two women journalists in the wee hours of the morning!! What is their crime? Giving voice to the public opinion on incompetent & corrupt Congress Govt Last I checked, the Constitution of India that you hold regularly, upholds Freedom of Speech Mr. Gandhi."

NOD TO ENERGY PROJECTS ALONG INDO-PAK BORDER

OPPN ALLEGES NATIONAL SECURITY COMPROMISED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: Opposition members, mainly from the Congress and the DMK, Wednesday staged a protest in the Lok Sabha over clearance granted to a renewable energy project near the India-Pakistan border and staged a walk out after "not getting a satisfactory reply" from the government.

that as per security protocol, any big infrastructure project should be at least 10 km away from the IB.

Asking a supplementary during Question Hour, Manish Tewari of the Congress said national security and energy security have to go hand in hand.

He asked whether any relaxation was granted to the proposed project. The government asserted that nods and licences to any proposal are granted after obtaining clearances from the Centre, the state and relevant agencies.

He claimed the mixed renewable energy project will run up to one kilometer of the International Border (IB) and noted

New and Renewable Energy Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government is keen to produce renewable energy in the country.

He said clearances are sought from the central, state government and relevant agencies before licences are issued and nod is granted.



People take part in Holi celebration, organised by Rajasthan Patrika Group, at Patrika Gate in Jaipur

Friday prayers after 2 pm to accommodate Holi in Ayodhya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ayodhya (UP), March 12: Friday prayers in all mosques across Ayodhya will be offered after 2 pm in view of Holi celebrations this week, a prominent cleric of the city said.

applies colour to them, they should respond with a smile and say 'Holi Mubarak' in the spirit of love and respect." "This is not the first time that Holi and Juma have coincided. This happens frequently and it is an opportunity for us to foster unity," he said.

Speaking to PTI, Mohammad Haneef, who is also the president of Ayodhya's central mosque, Masjid Sarai, said the timing for Juma prayers would be adjusted to accommodate Holi celebrations.

Haneef, also the 'ameer' of the Tablighi Markaz in Ayodhya, extended heartfelt Holi greetings to people. "We wish our Hindu brothers the very best for Holi. We share in their joy and stand with them in celebration," he said. Ayodhya's District Magistrate (DM), Chandra Vijay Singh, said police personnel have been stationed at all Holika Dahan sites to maintain order. Holika dahan will be celebrated March 13.

"Considering the timing of the Holi festival, we have directed all mosques to offer Juma prayers after 2 pm as the window for Juma prayers remains open until 4.30 pm," Haneef said. "I have also urged all members of the Muslim community to be patient and generous during Holi. If anyone



established traditional sites, not new ones to "ensure safety and prevent any untoward incidents." "A control room has been set up to handle any emergencies. We are also stationing police personnel at all Holika Dahan sites to maintain order. The administration remains

vigilant, especially as the holy month of Ramzan continues. Peace committee meetings are being held with religious leaders and prominent community members in both towns and villages to ensure peaceful celebrations," the DM said. Muslim clerics in Kannauj

Ayodhya Chief Cleric Mohammad Haneef issued instructions Wednesday for this week's Juma Namaz -- which is also the second Friday of the month of Ramzan

Namaz timings are being discussed by authorities in many places as Friday prayers coincide with Holi celebrations March 14

Ayodhya District Magistrate (DM) Chandra Vijay Singh said adequate security arrangements have been made for Holi and peace committee meetings are also being held to avoid any communal tension

mosques. Earlier a circle officer in UP's Sambhal kicked up a row by saying that those who feel uncomfortable with Holi colours should stay indoors, as the festival comes only once a year whereas Juma namaz takes place 52 times in a year.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath supported the remarks of the Sambhal police officer, saying the official may have spoken as a "pehelwan", but what he said was correct. Ahead of the festival, many mosques in the state have shifted the Friday prayer timings on Holi.

The imam of Lucknow Eidgah has asked the mosques to hold the Juma Namaz at 2 pm that day. He also advised Muslims to offer prayers at a nearby mosque, instead of going to a distant one.

district of UP have also announced that Friday prayers will be held after 2 pm in

international



As the US are applying tariffs worth 28 billion dollars, we are responding with countermeasures worth 26 billion euros (\$28 billion)

URSULA VON DER LEYEN | EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT

UN TURNS 80

The United Nations is seeking ways to improve efficiency and cut costs as it turns 80 this year amid a cash crisis, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Wednesday - but don't liken it to the US effort by President Donald Trump and Elon Musk



of the day quote

Our government intends to put 100,000 volunteers through military training yearly starting in 2027 as it seeks to build an army of reservists with worries about Russia growing



DONALD TUSK | PRIME MINISTER, POLAND

It has been foreshadowed that no country regardless of its relationship with the United States has been granted an exemption. Such a decision by the Trump administration is entirely unjustified



ANTHONY ALBANESE | PRIME MINISTER, AUSTRALIA

We cannot continue to allow our police and military to be spat at, attacked and have their throats slit as if they were inanimate objects



PEDRO SÁNCHEZ | DEFENSE MINISTER, COLOMBIA

SHORT TAKES

Indian-origin jailed for abusing teen

Singapore: An Indian-origin man has been handed a jail sentence of 10 years and six months for sexually assaulting a 16-year-old boy in 2007. Ranjeet Prasad, who the prosecution said showed a total lack of remorse, was found guilty of three counts of having carnal intercourse against the order of nature. According to a judgment dated March 3, the man abused the boy in 2007. The Straits Times reported Monday. Prasad is appealing against the conviction and sentence. District Judge John Ng while sentencing Prasad took into account that there was abuse of a position of authority by the accused, who previously worked with young people at the People's Association (PA), a state-run institution operating social services for the society here.

Russian Arrested for ship collision

London: The captain of a cargo ship that collided with a US tanker is a Russian national who remains in UK police custody, the vessel's owner said Wednesday, as it emerged that the ship failed several safety checks last year. The 59-year-old man, who hasn't been named by authorities, was arrested by police in northeast England Tuesday on suspicion of manslaughter by gross negligence over the collision. He hasn't been charged. Shipping company Ernst Russ, which owns the Portugal-flagged cargo vessel Solong, said that the ship's 14 crew were a mix of Russian and Filipino nationals. UK authorities say they have found no evidence of foul play in the crash, and there is nothing so far to indicate that it's connected to national security. Humberside Police said that detectives were conducting inquiries alongside partner agencies.

Somalia Hotel attack: Al-Shabab siege ends

Mogadishu: Somali security forces Wednesday ended a 24-hour siege at a hotel in the central city of Beledweyne, leaving an unknown number of people dead, including all the al-Shabab militants who launched the attack, officials said. The attack began when a car bomb exploded Tuesday at the Cairo Hotel, which houses traditional elders and military officers involved in coordinating the government's offensive against al-Shabab. The mayor of Beledweyne, Omar Alasow, Wednesday said security forces had "successfully ended the siege" and that six al-Shabab militants died.

PAKISTAN TRAIN HIJACK

Balochistan on boil

21 passengers and 4 paramilitary soldiers were killed by militants holding hostages after seizing control of a train in Pakistan's Balochistan province

ASSOCIATED PRESS



Islamabad, March 12: Pakistan's neglected southwestern province of Balochistan has been the scene of a yearslong insurgency, with a dramatic uptick in attacks in recent years underscoring the struggles the government in Islamabad faces in dealing with myriad security threats.

However, the hijacking of a passenger train Tuesday was the first time the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army, or BLA, carried out such a large-scale operation, taking hundreds of people aboard the train hostage and battling Pakistani security forces to a standoff Wednesday.

Islamabad-based independent analyst Abdullah Khan told The Associated Press the train hijacking was the worst attack to date by the BLA — and predicted the country will be shocked when the final details surface, including the number of casualties, which he expects to be high.

All 33 militants were killed in initial exchanges of gunfire around the Jaffer Express since the BLA attacked the train. Security officials said over 300

hostages were rescued, and the operation continued. The separatists have killed 21 passengers and 4 soldiers. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The separatists attacked the train carrying about 450 people Tuesday in a tunnel in a remote part of southwestern Balochistan province.

WHO ARE THE SEPARATISTS AND WHAT ARE THEY FIGHTING FOR?

Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province and the country's least populated. It's also a hub for the country's ethnic Baloch minority, whose members say they face discrimination by the government.

The separatists have fought since the early 2000s for autonomy — if not outright independence — from Islamabad and for a greater share of natural resources that the undeveloped province abounds in, such as natural gas, oil and minerals.

Over the years, the BLA has grown in strength, prompting some analysts to say the group today compares to the Pakistani Taliban in terms of the threat it poses for the country.

The BLA has regularly targeted Pakistani security forces and has also in the past attacked civilians, including Chinese nationals working on multibillion-dollar projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. It has also staged attacks beyond Balochistan, including in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city.

Although the government insists it has significantly curbed violence, attacks in Balochistan have not abated. Islamic militant groups also operate in the province.

WHY NOW?

The BLA, which both Pakistan and the United States have designated a terrorist organisation, is estimated to have around 3,000 fighters, promptly claimed responsibility for the attack Tuesday. The group seeks to establish an independent Baloch state, encompassing territories in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan where the Baloch ethnic group lives.

The Pakistani government claims that there is a degree of cooperation between the BLA and the country's top militant group, the Pakistani Taliban.

Analysts say the BLA has grown more emboldened since the Pakistani Taliban ended a cease-fire with the government in November 2022, encouraging more militant attacks across the country.

WHAT'S THE BIGGER PICTURE?

Separately from the rivalry with India, Pakistan has also had a tense relationship with neighbouring Iran, contributing to the insecurity in Balochistan.

The two countries share a 900-kilometer border, which remains largely ungoverned, allowing smugglers and militant groups to move about freely. Both governments accuse each other of harbouring or tolerating insurgent groups.

Economic factors also drive the unrest, said Khan, the analyst, adding that it does not bode well for Pakistan's economy.

"Who will come and invest in Pakistan if we keep seeing such attacks," he said.

Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative has poured billions of dollars into Pakistan but it has also alienated the Baloch minority further. They say Islamabad is exploiting Balochistan's resources while neglecting the local communities.

Greenland's election winners push back against Trump's wish

REUTERS

Nuuk, Greenland, March 12: Greenland's pro-business Demokraatit Party surged to victory in a shake-up that could boost US President Donald Trump's attempts to tap the island's mineral wealth, with the victors keen for reforms favouring private enterprise and mining.

The Democrats, which favour gradual independence from Denmark, more than tripled their seats to 10 in the 31-seat Inatsisartut parliament, according to results released Wednesday, and will begin talks to form a coalition. The strongly pro-independence Naleraq doubled their seats to eight from the prior election, while the ruling coalition lost almost half of its share of the vote.

"People want change," the Democrats' leader Jens-Frederik Nielsen told. "We don't want independence tomorrow, we want to build a good foundation." Independence became the central campaign theme in Tuesday's election after Trump's repeated insistence that the semi-autonomous Danish territory is vital to US national security and will eventually become part of the United States.

Trump's trade war expands

Trump metals tariffs draw swift retaliation from Canada and EU

REUTERS

Washington/Brussels, March 12: President Donald Trump's increased tariffs on all US steel and aluminum imports took effect Wednesday, stepping up a campaign to reorder global trade in favor of the US and drawing swift retaliation from Canada and Europe.

Trump's action to bulk up protections for American steel and aluminum producers restores effective tariffs of 25% on all imports of the metals and extends the duties to hundreds of downstream products, from nuts and bolts to bulldozer blades and soda cans.

Trump's hyper-focus on tariffs since taking office in January has rattled investor, consumer and business confidence in ways that economists worry could cause a US recession and further lag on the global economy.

The European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union charged with



- US duty rate on steel, aluminum rises to 25% as exemptions end
- Trump threatened 50% Canada metals tariff rate, but backed off
- EU responds with tariffs on up to 26 bln euros of US exports
- Canada plans C\$29.8 bln in retaliatory tariffs, official says

coordinating trade matters, responded swiftly, saying it would impose counter tariffs on up to 26 billion euros (\$28 billion) worth of US goods - often with more symbolic than economic impact - from next month.

Nevertheless, Commission

President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters she had tasked Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic to resume talks with US officials on the matter.

"We firmly believe that in a world fraught with geo-economic and political uncertainties, it is not in our common interest to burden our economies with such tariffs," she said.

DENTAL FLOSS TO DIAMONDS

The 27 countries of the EU are less impacted, for now. Germany's Kiel Institute estimated a hit to EU output of only 0.02%, because "only a small fraction" of the targeted products are exported to the US.

NASA's Spherex telescope lifts off to scan 300 million galaxies

The \$488 million Spherex mission aims to explain how galaxies formed and evolved over billions of years, and how the universe expanded so fast in its first moments

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vandenberg Space Force Base (US), March 12: NASA's newest space telescope rocketed into orbit Tuesday to map the entire sky like never before — a sweeping look at hundreds of millions of galaxies and their shared cosmic glow since the beginning of time.

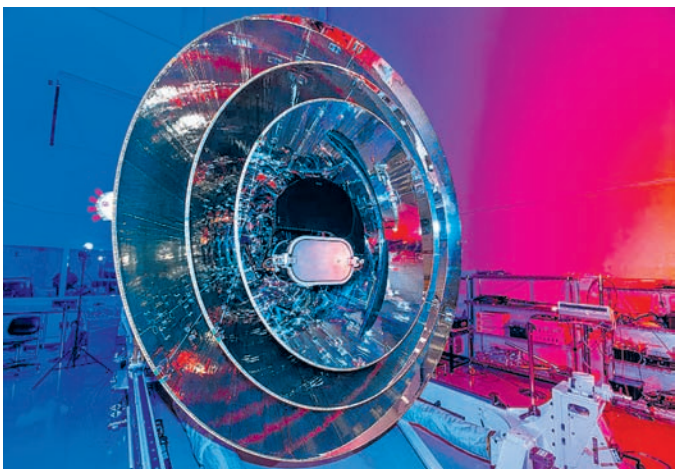
SpaceX launched the Spherex observatory from California, putting it on course to fly over Earth's poles. Tagging along were four suitcase-size satellites to study the sun. Spherex

popped off the rocket's upper stage first, drifting into the blackness of space with a blue Earth in the background.

The \$488 million Spherex mission aims to explain how galaxies formed and evolved over billions of years, and how the universe expanded so fast in its first moments.

Closer to home in our own Milky Way galaxy, Spherex will hunt for water and other ingredients of life in the icy clouds between stars where new solar systems emerge.

The cone-shaped Spherex



— at 1,110 pounds (500 kilograms) or the heft of a grand piano — will take six months to map the entire sky with its infrared eyes and wide field of view. Four full-sky surveys are

planned over two years, as the telescope circles the globe from pole to pole 400 miles (650 kilometers) up.

Spherex won't see galaxies in exquisite detail like NASA's

Ukraine accepts ceasefire deal



After more than eight hours of talks with Ukrainian officials in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US would now take the offer to Russia, and the ball is in Moscow's court

REUTERS

Jeddah, March 11: The United States agreed Tuesday to resume military aid and intelligence sharing with Ukraine after Kyiv said it was ready to support Washington's proposal for a 30-day ceasefire with Russia, the countries said in a joint statement.

After more than eight hours of talks with Ukrainian officials in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US would now take the offer to Russia, and the ball is in Moscow's court.

"Our hope is that the Russians will answer 'yes' as quickly as possible, so we can get to the second phase of this, which is real negotiations," Rubio told reporters, referring to US President Donald Trump.

The Kremlin launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine three years ago, and Russia, which has been making advances, now holds around a fifth of Ukraine's territory, including Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Rubio said Washington wanted a full agreement with both Russia and Ukraine "as soon as possible."

"Every day that goes by, this war continues, people die, people are bombed, people are hurt on both sides of this conflict,"

US resumes intelligence sharing, security assistance for Kyiv

Rubio says he will present offer to Moscow, ball in Russia's court

Ukraine, US agree to conclude minerals deal as soon as possible

Ukraine conducted major overnight drone attack on Russia

he said. How Moscow would respond was far from certain.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has said he is open to discussing a peace deal, but he and his diplomats have repeatedly stated they are against a ceasefire and would seek a deal that safeguards Russia's long-term security.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was in Saudi Arabia but did not participate in the talks, said the ceasefire was a "positive proposal," that covers the frontline in the conflict, not just fighting by air and sea.

WILL RUSSIA AGREE?

The Ukrainian leader said the ceasefire would take effect as soon as Russia agreed.

"When the agreements come into force, during these 30 days of 'silence,' we will have time to prepare with our partners at the level of working documents all the aspects for reliable peace and long-term security," Zelenskyy said.

Rubio said the plan would be delivered to the Russians through multiple channels. Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz, was due to meet his Russian counterpart in the coming days and Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff plans to visit Moscow this week to meet Putin.

Philippine ex-Prez Duterte to face murder charges at ICC

Rotterdam: A plane taking former Philippine leader Rodrigo Duterte to the International Criminal Court over murder charges was headed for Rotterdam Wednesday in a move hailed by families of victims of his "war on drugs" as giving them hope for justice. Duterte, who led the Philippines from 2016 to 2022, was arrested early Tuesday in Manila, marking the biggest step yet in the ICC's probe into alleged crimes against humanity during an anti-drugs crackdown that killed thousands and drew condemnation around the world. Duterte, 79, could become the first Asian former head of state to go on trial at the ICC in The Hague. The plane had originally been set to land in the Netherlands around 0600 GMT, but tracking service Flightradar 24 showed it should now arrive just after 1600 GMT after a long layover in Dubai during which he received medical checks. The ICC's warrant for his arrest says that as president, Duterte created, funded and armed death squads that carried out murders of purported drug users and dealers.

glow captures all light emitted over cosmic history

Closer to home in our own Milky Way galaxy, Spherex will hunt for water and other ingredients of life in the icy clouds between stars where new solar systems emerge

The cone-shaped Spherex — at 1,110 pounds (500 kilograms) or the heft of a grand piano — will take six months to map the entire sky with its infrared eyes and wide field of view

Four full-sky surveys are planned over two years, as the telescope circles the globe from pole to pole 400 miles (650 kilometers) up

glow captures all light emitted over cosmic history," said the mission's chief scientist Jamie Bock of the California Institute of Technology. "It's a very different way of looking at the universe," enabling scientists to see what sources of light may have been missed in the past.

By observing the collective glow, scientists hope to tease out the light from the earliest galaxies and learn how they came to be, Bock said.

"We won't see the Big Bang. But we'll see the aftermath from it and learn about the beginning of the universe that way," he said.

The telescope's infrared detectors will be able to distinguish 102 colors invisible to the human eye, yielding the most colorful, inclusive map ever made of the cosmos.



It is the responsibility of the state government to check rat-hole mining. We need the cooperation of the state government too
G KISHAN REDDY | UNION COAL MINISTER

TEMASEK TAKES BITE OF HALDIRAM'S

Singapore's state investment company Temasek has signed a deal to pick up close to a 10% stake in the snacks business of India's Haldiram's at a cost of about \$1 billion, two people with direct knowledge of the matter said Wednesday



Business

of the day **QUOTE**

BIS has not yet approved any foreign or domestic manufacturer under the QCO scheme, creating uncertainty and supply chain bottlenecks
AJAY SRIVASTAVA | FOUNDER, GTRI

Leadership must collaborate with IT teams to develop a strong cyber resilience strategy based on Zero Trust, preparing for and mitigating the impact of sophisticated AI-driven attacks. We call this becoming 'Resilient by Design'
JAY CHAUDHRY | CEO, CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER, ZSCALER

Work-life balance is the need of the hour, especially in the IT sector. Organizations must adapt to employees' expectations and refrain from overloading them with work on weekends
GAGAN ARORA | FOUNDER, VERTEX GROUP

Inflation falls below 4%

The drop in retail inflation opens space for another repo rate cut April 9

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: Retail inflation slipped to seven-month low of 3.61 per cent in February mainly due to easing prices of vegetables, eggs, and other protein-rich items, creating space for the RBI to go for another cut in interest rate next month.

The consumer price index-based retail inflation was at 4.26 per cent in January and 5.09 per cent in February 2024.

The previous low was witnessed in July.

The consumer price index (CPI) has been in the comfort zone of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) since November 2024.

"There is a decline of 65 basis points in headline inflation of February 2025 in comparison to January 2025. It is the lowest year-on-year inflation after July 2024," the National Statistics Office (NSO) said while releasing the CPI.

Year-on-year food inflation for February was 3.75 per cent.

"A sharp decline of 222 basis points is observed in food inflation in February 2025 in comparison to January 2025. The food inflation in February 2025 is the lowest after May 2023," NSO said.

A significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during February has been mainly attributed to decline in inflation of vegetables, egg, meat and fish, pulses and products, and milk and products.

Key items having lowest year-on-year inflation in February were ginger (-35.81 per cent), jeera (-28.77 per cent), tomato (-28.51 per cent), cauliflower (-21.19 per cent), garlic (-20.32 per cent).



We believe that the sequential uptick in vegetables inflation in March 2025 is likely to prevent a further softening in the food and beverages inflation print in the month, after the substantial cooling seen over the past four months

ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST, ICRA

On the other hand, top items with highest inflation were coconut oil (54.48 per cent), coconut (41.61 per cent), gold (35.56 per cent), silver (30.89 per cent), and onion (30.42 per cent).

Data on urban inflation showed a significant decline from 3.87 per cent in January 2025 to 3.32 per cent in February. A similar decline was observed in food inflation, which decreased from 5.53 per cent to 3.20 per cent in February.

A sharp decline in headline and food inflation in the rural sector was also observed in February to 3.79 per cent from 4.59 per cent a month earlier.

The lowest inflation was in Telangana (1.31 per cent) and highest in Kerala (7.31 per cent).

The RBI, which has been mandated to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent (+/- 2 per cent), has reduced the short-term lending rate (repo) by 25 basis points last

month on easing concerns on the inflation front. The central bank is scheduled to announce the next set of bi-monthly monetary policy April 9.

ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the CPI inflation declined sharper than expected to a seven-month low, appreciably below the mid-point of the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee's medium-term target range, led by a welcome cooling in food inflation.

Nayar further said the February inflation print falling well below 4 per cent has cemented the expectation of a back-to-back 25 basis points rate cut in the April 2025 MPC meeting. This may be followed by another 25 bps repo rate cut either in the June 2025 or the August 2025 meetings, she added.

NSO collects the price data from selected 1,114 urban markets and 1,181 villages covering all states/UTs on a weekly roster.

BEAR MARKET

Sensex falls for 4th day as IT pack drops

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 12: India's benchmark indexes fell Wednesday, with information technology stocks confirming a bear market as worries over the US economy prompted multiple stock downgrades.

The Nifty 50 closed 0.12% lower at 22,470.5, while the Sensex fell 0.1% to 74,029.76. During the session, the indexes oscillated between 0.7% decline and 0.4% gain.

Analysts said the Indian market has fared better than global equities since last week due to the moderating valuations after the sharp fall seen in the last few months.

"Indian equity market could be in the latter stages of correction unless some extreme unanticipated risk materializes," Motilal Oswal Financial Services said in a note.

IT stocks fell about 3% to an eight-month low. The index also confirmed a bear market, falling more than 20% from the record closing high December 13.

Infosys and Wipro shed 4.3% and 3.3%, respectively, and were the worst hit among IT and Nifty 50 stocks.

Morgan Stanley downgraded Infosys to "equal-weight" from "overweight". Motilal Oswal cut Infosys and Wipro to "neutral" and "sell" ratings, respectively.

Concerns that a potential recession in the US economy could hinder revival in discretionary spending weighed on IT stocks as the sector gets a major chunk of its revenue from the country.

Manufacturing rebound bolsters factory output

Industrial output production rises 5% in first month of the year

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 12: India's industrial production growth accelerated to 5 per cent in January 2025, driven by a rebound in manufacturing activity, according to official data released Wednesday.

The government has also revised the December 2024 industrial output figure to 3.5 per cent from the provisional estimate of 3.2 per cent released in the previous month, an official statement said.

The IIP growth in November 2024 was 5 per cent. The pace of factory output growth stood at 5 per cent in January 2025.

The country's factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), witnessed 4.2 per cent growth in January 2024.

The data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that the manufacturing sector's output grew by 5.5 per cent in January 2025, up from 3.6 per cent in the year-ago month.

Mining production growth declined to 4.4 per cent from 6

per cent year-on-year. Power output growth slowed to 2.4 per cent in January 2025 from 5.6 per cent a year ago.

In the April-January 2024-25 period, the IIP grew 4.2 per cent, slower than 6 per cent recorded in the year-ago period.

As per use-based classification, the capital goods segment growth accelerated to 7.8 per cent in January 2024 against 3.2 per cent in the year-ago period.

Consumer durables (or white goods production) grew by 7.2 per cent during the reporting month against a growth of 11.6 per cent in January 2024.

In January 2025, consumer non-durables output contracted 0.2 per cent compared to a growth of 0.3 per cent a year ago.

According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 7 per cent in January 2025, up from a 5.5 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods logged a 5.5 per cent growth in January 2025 against 2.9 per cent a year earlier.

The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 5.2 per cent in the month under review, slightly down from 5.3 per cent a year ago.



SHORT TAKES

Growth to exceed 6.5%: Moody's

New Delhi: Moody's Ratings Wednesday said India's economic growth will exceed 6.5 per cent in the next fiscal, up from 6.3 per cent this year, on higher government capex and consumption boost from tax cuts and interest rate reduction. Projecting a stable outlook for the banking sector, Moody's said although the operating environment of Indian banks will remain favourable in the next fiscal, their asset quality will deteriorate moderately after substantial improvements in recent years, with some stress in unsecured retail loans, microfinance loans and small business loans. Banks' profitability will remain adequate as declines in net interest margins (NIMs) are likely to be marginal amid modest rate cuts, it said.

Vedanta repays \$900 million loan

New Delhi: Mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd repaid a \$900 million high-cost loan through a mix of QIP proceeds and a new \$350 million facility at a lower interest rate, resulting in \$550 million net deleveraging and further strengthening of its balance sheet, sources said. The loan, taken by subsidiary THL Zinc Ventures in May 2023 at 13.9 per cent interest, was partly repaid using funds from Vedanta's \$1 billion June 2024 QIP. Besides, Vedanta raised a new \$350 million loan at 9.6 per cent per annum from JP Morgan and other bankers, reducing annual interest costs by \$90 million, sources said.

Daikin unveils new products, plans to dominate Odisha mkt



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 12: Daikin Airconditioning India Pvt. Ltd (DAIPL), a subsidiary of Japan's Daikin Industries Ltd, has unveiled a range of new air-conditioning products for Odisha at a city hotel Wednesday, reinforcing its commitment to the state as a key growth driver.

The company aims for a 30% growth in Odisha, targeting Rs 210 crore in revenue by FY 2025-26.

Kunal Basu, Regional Vice President - East, Daikin Airconditioning India Pvt Ltd; Kuldeepak Virmani, Executive Director and Senior Vice President, Daikin Airconditioning India Pvt Ltd and Satyaketan Mishra, Branch Manager were present at the event.

"With India's strong and sustained growth, we are accelerating our expansion across Odisha with an aggressive market strategy," said Virmani. "Our

goal is to dominate the room AC segment, offering energy-efficient and durable solutions."

Daikin projects the eastern AC market to reach Rs 1,600 crore by 2026, fueled by rising infrastructure and housing demand. To capture an 18% market share, the company is expanding its dealer network and investing heavily in marketing and promotions across Odisha.

Daikin's new 75.5-acre manufacturing plant in Sri City, Andhra Pradesh, now fully operational, will support this growth.

"This facility strengthens our supply chain and aligns with our vision for sustainable and innovative HVAC solutions," Virmani added.

The company is also leveraging the government's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to boost domestic production and achieve 75% localisation within the next three to four years.

SNIPPETS

Raw material imports: ArcelorMittal Nippon sues govt as fight escalates



New Delhi: ArcelorMittal's India joint venture has sued New Delhi for rejecting imports of a steelmaking raw material, saying it was incorrectly imposing import curbs retroactively, escalating its fight over a policy change that is hurting its business, documents show. India's government imposed curbs on imports of low-ash metallurgical coke, or met coke, starting in January, with country-specific quotas to help domestic suppliers. That has spooked big players like ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India which are concerned about quality issues with local met coke. ArcelorMittal Nippon has already

warned New Delhi privately that it may have to severely curtail steelmaking and delay any expansions due to the curbs. In an escalation of the tussle, the company challenged Indian authorities at the Delhi High Court March 5 for rejecting 168,300 million tonne of met coke import orders from Indonesia and Poland which were placed before the restrictions kicked in. India's government rejected its import request, saying the company had sufficient quantities of met coke already, but that decision "militates against" the country's free trade policy which allows for the import of already placed orders before restrictions are imposed, ArcelorMittal Nippon said in its court filing, which Reuters is the first to report. New Delhi was seeking to apply its policy change retroactively, and this "creates uncertainty and lack of confidence among traders and investors regarding the policy assurances," the 290-page filing said.

Antitrust case: Apple blocks Tinder owner, startups from commercial secrets in India

New Delhi: Apple has successfully blocked its opponents in India, Tinder-owner Match and a group of startups, from accessing its commercially sensitive information which was part of antitrust findings against the US firm, a confidential order shows. An investigation by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) last year found Apple exploited its dominant position in the market for app stores on its iOS operating system to the detriment of app developers, users and other payment processors. Apple has denied wrongdoing and said it is a small player in India where phones using Google's operating system are dominant. The investigation process has concluded but CCI's senior members are yet to review the findings and pass a final ruling, which could force Apple to pay fines and even change its practices if the company is confirmed to have indulged in wrongdoing. Apple's opposing parties in the case - Match and startup group Alliance of Digital India Foundation (ADIF) - asked the CCI to allow access to certain confidential information which include developer payouts and details of total billings, but were redacted when investigation reports were shared with parties.



MARKETS STUMBLE

Inflows of equity MF slip to 10-month low

REUTERS

Mumbai, March 12: Inflows into India's equity mutual funds fell to a 10-month low in February, data released Wednesday showed, with investors scurrying to safety with smallcaps and midcaps firmly in a bear grip.



Inflows fell 26% month-on-month, the steepest percentage drop since April 2023, to about Rs 293 billion (\$3.4 billion), according to data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India.

Flows into largecap funds fell 6% month-on-month to Rs 29 billion while those into smallcap and midcap funds slumped 34% and 36% to Rs 37 billion and Rs 34 billion, respectively.

"Investors are shifting tactically, balancing market corrections while awaiting clearer macro signals," said Karthick Jonagada, founder and chief executive of Quantace Research.

Slowing economic growth and corporate earnings, relentless foreign selling and US trade policies have led to sharp falls in Indian markets over the last five months.

The Nifty 50 has fallen 15% from a record high in late September while the smallcap and midcap indexes are down 24% and 21% from their all-time highs.

Contribution to systematic investment plans (SIP), where investors make regular payments into funds, fell for the second straight month. The number of SIP accounts fell to 82.6 million from 83.4 million in January.

RIVALRY TURN PARTNERS

After Airtel, Jio signs satellite internet deal with Starlink

REUTERS

New Delhi, March 12: Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Jio signed a deal with Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring Starlink satellite internet services to India, a surprise move from the billionaires after being at odds for months over how the country should grant them spectrum.

India's largest telecom operator will stock Starlink equipment in its retail stores, giving Starlink a direct distribution point in thousands of such outlets across the country.

Musk and Ambani had fought intensely over how airwaves should be assigned for

Reliance Jio to stock Starlink equipment in retail stores
Deal follows similar Starlink partnership with Bharti Airtel
Satellite service sector to grow 36% annually to \$1.9bn by 2030

satellite internet, with New Delhi finally siding with the allocation approach the US billionaire lobbied for.

Ambani's Reliance had been concerned, relying new tab that Musk could dominate the telecom space once he launches his products, but the distribution deal will eventually see

the Indian billionaire offering his rival's products in the fast-growing market, while also competing with them.

"While it has been surprising, it's a prudent strategy for Starlink to enter the India market and a win-win for all the parties involved earlier competing for the pie and now cooperating and sharing," said Neil Shah, co-founder of research firm Counterpoint.

The Reliance deal follows a similar partnership an-

nouncement between Starlink and India's No 2 telecom player Bharti Airtel a day before. Both the Airtel and Jio deals are conditional upon Starlink obtaining government approval to begin operations in the country.

Airtel shares lost as much as 1% in Mumbai trade Wednesday after the Jio deal was announced, while Reliance Industries was trading marginally higher.

The agreements come weeks after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Musk in Washington, where they discussed issues including space, mobility, technology and innovation.

India's satellite service sector is set to grow 36% a year to \$1.9 billion by 2030, according to Deloitte.

Starlink has been waiting since 2022 for licenses to

operate commercially in India, with no clear timeline yet on a decision. It has been delayed for reasons including national security concerns.

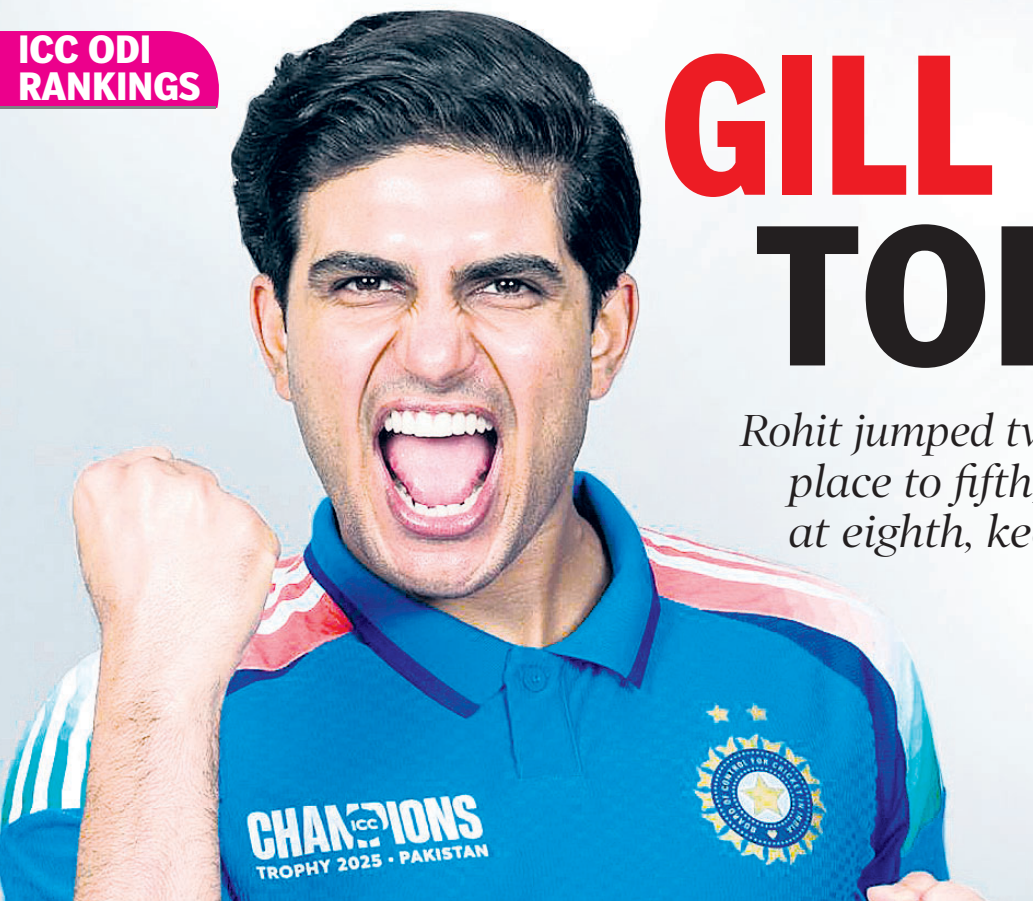
The Jio-SpaceX deal is tied to certain financial terms and will help Reliance offer Starlink products in areas where the Indian company doesn't have offerings, a source with direct knowledge of the matter said, without disclosing details.

"This is a low-cost entry model" for Starlink in India, the person added.

Jio Platforms, which runs Reliance Jio, will also provide installation and activation support for the Starlink devices.



ICC ODI RANKINGS



GILL RETAINS TOP SPOT

Rohit jumped two places to third, Kohli slipped one place to fifth, while Shreyas remained steady at eighth, keeping four Indians in the top-10

India's vice-captain wins Player of the Month

Star India opener Shubman Gill was Wednesday named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for February following his stellar performances, which includes his exploits in his team's title-winning Champions Trophy campaign. Gill took home the award, beating competition from Australia's Steve Smith and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips. In his five ODIs over the course of the month, Gill compiled 406 runs, averaging 101.50 at a strike rate of 94.19. This included a stellar outing in the 3-0 series win over England, wherein Gill registered three consecutive scores of over fifty. Gill began with a confident 87 in Nagpur and followed it up with a 60 in Cuttack. He finished in a grand style, smashing a hundred in Ahmedabad. His 112 came from merely 102 balls and included 14 fours and three sixes. Gill was awarded player-of-the-match for this innings, and also took home the player-of-the-series award. Continuing his golden run into the Champions Trophy, Gill hit an unbeaten 101 to lead India's chase in their tournament opener against Bangladesh here. He followed it up with a resolute 46 against Pakistan. India won both of their opening matches in the Champions Trophy on the back of these knocks. This is the third ICC Men's Player of the Month honour for Gill, who had previously won it twice in 2023 -- January and September.

...climbed six spots to second behind Sri Lankan offspinner Maheesh Theekshana. Indian duo -- Kuldeep Yadav and Ravindra Jadeja -- raised three places each to be inside the top-10 following their exploits at the Cham...

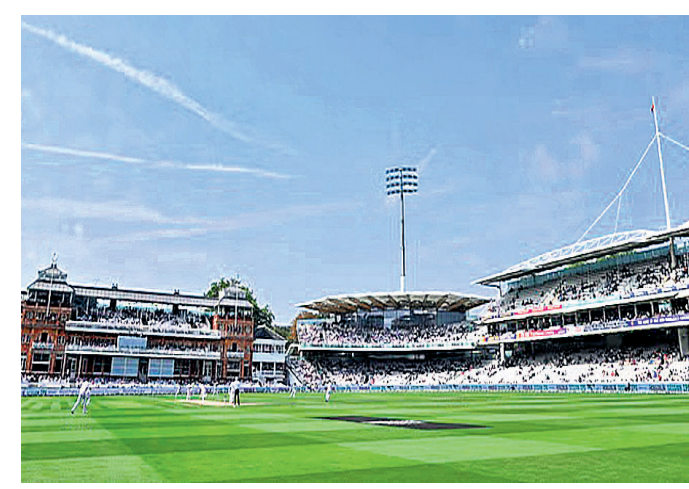
Rohit might be eyeing 2027 ODI WC: Ponting

Australia legend Ricky Ponting believes Rohit Sharma is still going strong and a sense of unfinished business was behind his decision to continue playing and leading India in the 50-over format until the 2027 ODI World Cup to be jointly hosted by South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Barring the ODI World Cup, Rohit has won all ICC titles while captaining India. He came agonisingly close to laying his hands on the 50-over world title at home in 2023, only to lose to Australia in the final. Speaking on The ICC Review, the former Australia skipper said Rohit is pretty clear about his future goals. "When you start getting to that point of your career, everyone's waiting for you to retire. And I don't know why, when you can still play as well as he's played (in the Champions Trophy final), I think he was just trying to put those questions to bed once and for all and say, 'no, I'm still playing well enough. I love playing in this team. I love leading this team.' "And I think, the fact that he said that, to me, it means that he must have that goal in mind of playing in the next (50-over) World Cup (in 2027)," Ponting stated.



...following his five wickets for India during their unbeaten run at the Champions Trophy. Afghanistan star Azmatullah Omarzai maintains his lead at the top of the rankings for ODI all-rounders, though he does have some fresh competition from a trio of New Zealand players. Santner rose one place to fourth overall, Michael Bracewell gained seven spots to move to seventh, while Rachin Ravindra climbed eight rungs to improve to eighth.

Massive revenue loss in WTC final



India's absence to cost Lord's £4 million in revenue

London, March 12: India's failure to qualify for the World Test Championship final is expected to cost Lord's nearly 4 million pounds in revenue when it hosts the five-day match in June. After finishing as runners-up in the last two editions, India missed out on a spot in the summit clash, with Australia and South Africa now set to battle for the ultimate glory in Test cricket.

...the absence of India has significantly curtailed the financial windfall expected by Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), underscoring the financial influence of Indian cricket across the global game. Having spent most of the past year in the top two of the ICC World Test Championship standings, Rohit Sharma and his team slipped to third place after losing a

home series 0-3 to New Zealand, followed by a 1-3 defeat to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, thus missing out on the final. MCC had originally set premium ticket prices for the World Test Championship final, anticipating that India's participation would lead to a surge in ticket sales. However, once it became clear that India would not make it to the final, After finishing as runners-up in the last two editions, India missed out on a spot in the summit clash, with Australia and South Africa now set to battle for the ultimate glory in Test cricket. the MCC revised their strategy and reduced ticket prices. "The decision to be flexible with prices for the World Test Championship final was taken this year, with tickets now being sold at between £40 and £90 -- about £50 cheaper than they had originally been priced accounting for the loss in revenue," the report said.

SHORT TAKES

Woods ruptures his Achilles tendon

Ponte Vedra Beach: Tiger Woods had a less invasive surgery for a ruptured Achilles tendon Tuesday, which will keep him out of the Masters and leaves in question whether he can play in any other major championship the rest of the year. Woods posted the development on his social media accounts without saying how long he expected to be out or any other details except that the surgery went well. "As I began to ramp up my own training and practice at home, I felt a sharp pain in my left Achilles, which was deemed to be ruptured," Woods said. He said he had a minimally invasive Achilles tendon repair for a ruptured tendon that the doctor said went smoothly.

Former India all-rounder Syed Abid Ali dies

New Delhi: Former India all-rounder Syed Abid Ali, who was known for his versatility and sharp fielding skills, died Wednesday after a prolonged illness. He was 83. He was part of an illustrious group of Hyderabad cricketers that included MAK Pataudi, ML Jaisimha, and Abbas Ali Baig. He died in the United States. The news of Abid Ali's passing was shared by the North America Cricket League (NACL). "It is with profound reverence and a heart full of admiration that I share with you the passing of uncle Syed Abid Ali a cricketing legend from India who made Traz, California, his home, and whose remarkable legacy continues to inspire us to strive for excellence." NACL posted in its Facebook page.

BFI excludes Thakur from polls

New Delhi, March 12: The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) Wednesday rejected Anurag Thakur's nomination for inclusion in the electoral college finalised for the March 28 elections, saying the former Sports Minister was not eligible to represent Himachal Pradesh.

Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association had sent Thakur and Vice President Rajesh Bhandari's names.

The BFI issued a 60-member electoral college that was finalised after scrutiny.

"Anurag Singh Thakur (Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association) - The State Unit had sent the name, however, he is found ineligible for violation of Boxing Federation of India notice dated 07.03.2025 and National Sports Development Code of India, 2011," BFI said, explaining the decision.

The March 7 notice, sent to all affiliated state associations, had mentioned that only bona-fide and duly elected members during the election AGM (duly notified to BFI) of the State Units affiliated with the BFI shall be authorised to represent their respective States/Union Territories.



"Thakur is not an elected member of the Himachal Pradesh state body, that's why his name has been rejected. It is the job of the BFI to scrutinise all the names and send the list of eligible candidates to the Returning Officer, who will now upload the list," said a BFI source. The BFI also rejected names of Larry Kharran (Meghalya) and Asish Kumar Saha (Tripura) for the same reason and clarified that the two names sent by Delhi state body -- Rohit Jainendra Jain and Neeraj Kant Bhatt -- were subject to clearance from the Returning Officer. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) had set up a five-member Ad-hoc panel to oversee day to day functioning of boxing in the country after the BFI failed to conduct election on time. However, the Delhi High Court March 4 stayed the order when the Federation approached it, terming the move as "arbitrary and illegal". The BFI was supposed to conduct its election on or before February 2, 2025.

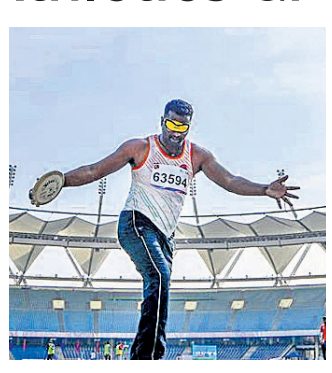
Poor participation dampens World Para Athletics GP

New Delhi, March 12: The World Para Athletics Grand Prix continued to witness poor participation for the second straight day with some events failing to attract enough participants at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here Wednesday.

Already hit by the withdrawal of several key Indian para athletes, including javelin thrower Sumit Antil, discus exponent Yogesh Kathuniya, and high jumper Praveen Kumar, the competition on the second day saw many lesser-known Indian para athletes also pulling out, leaving the organisers red-faced.

The men's 400m T12 event -- a competition for whose vision is constricted to a radius of less than five degrees and/or the ability to recognise a moving object at a distance of one metre -- saw Dilip Kumar running a lone race, clocking 59.96 seconds.

The only other athlete in the event, Pragadeeshwara Raja Moorthy did not start. In the men's 400m (T13, T20) -- for athletes with a vision constricted to a radius of less than 20 degrees -- Botswana's



Edwin Masuge won the gold in 50.60 seconds, followed by Denis Shabalina, a Neutral Paralympic Athlete (NPA), with a timing of 50.40 seconds.

Two of the three Indians initially registered for the race -- Bhushan and Rohit Shah -- did not start (DNS), while Pradipsinh Chauhan finished sixth and last, with a timing of 58.62 seconds.

In women's shot put (F11, F12) -- for field athletes with a near-total visual impairment -- Svetlana Irzhanova of Kazakhstan emerged winner with a best throw of 8.16 metres with the only other competitor in the fray, Viveka from India, pulling out.

PSA squash event returns India after seven years

Mumbai, March 12: Mumbai will host a PSA event from March 24 to 28, pitting India's top squash players like Ramit Tandon and Anahat Singh against their overseas rivals.

The USD 40,000 prize money Indian Open, to be held at the indoor courts of Bombay Gymkhana, will see participation of players from countries like Egypt, Canada, Malaysia and Japan.

Besides Tandon and Anahat, other Indian players set to take part are Velavan Senthilkumar, Veer Chotrani, and Akanksha Salunkhe.

The event will mark the return of a top squash tournament in the country after 2018, when Mumbai hosted the CCI International -- a PSA World Tour Silver tournament, a release from title sponsors JSW Sports said.

Starting in August 2024, PSA (Professional Squash Association) replaced World Tour tournaments with new PSA World Events, comprising new tournament-tiers -- Diamond, Platinum, Gold, Silver, Bronze and Copper. The Indian Open will be a copper event.

Man United to build world's greatest stadium

London, March 12: Manchester United unveiled plans Tuesday to build the "world's greatest" soccer stadium.

"Manchester United is the world's most favorite football club and, in my view, is the biggest and deserves a stadium fitting of its stature," part owner Jim Ratcliffe said. Work could begin as early as this year, with completion by the 2030-31 season, the club said.

Ratcliffe, who is one of Britain's richest people, said the new venue could be a tourist attraction in the manner of the Eiffel Tower. "We have 1 billion people around the world who follow Manchester United. They will all want to visit this stadium,"



he said. Designed by British architect Norman Foster, the first released images of the stadium include three giant tentpoles that would be seen from 40 kilometers (25 miles) away. They support a surrounding covered area, which he describes as "arguably the largest public space in the world." Wembley is currently the big-

gest stadium in the U.K., with a capacity of 90,000, and is home to England's national soccer teams.

Twickenham, the national rugby stadium, holds 82,500.

Old Trafford is the country's biggest dedicated soccer stadium with a capacity of just over 74,000, but is dated in comparison to the likes of the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, which regularly hosts NFL games.

Old Trafford, which was bombed during World War II, has been home to United since 1910.

Under the plans, the 20-time English champion said it would not need to relocate during the construction process. It is estimated it would take around 12 months to disassemble Old Trafford once the new stadium is completed.

ALL ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Birmingham, March 12: Star Indian shuttler PV Sindhu suffered an inexplicable meltdown, bowing out of the All England Championships with a three-game loss to Korea's Kim Ga Eun in the women's singles opening round Wednesday.

The two-time Olympic medallist, returning after recovering from a hamstring injury, squandered an opening-game advantage to lose 21-19, 13-21, 13-21 to world number 21 Kim in a match that lasted just over an hour at Arena Birmingham.

Sindhu, 29, was cruising at 20-12 in the opening game but almost threw it away, allowing Kim to recover to 19-20 before eventually winning the game.

However, Sindhu's form dipped thereafter, while Kim grew in confidence, which was reflected in her improved movement and shot selection. It was yet another disappointing result for world number 16 Sindhu, who had exited in the opening round of the Indonesia Masters in January, following a quarterfinal finish at the India

Mix day for shuttlers



Open Super 750 to start the year. India's Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde, however, progressed to the second round of mixed doubles competition, prevailing 21-10 17-21 24-22 over Chinese Taipei's Ye Hong Wei and Nicole Gonzales Chan, ranked 41st.