

## British woman raped in Delhi

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 13: A British woman was allegedly raped and molested by two men at a hotel in Delhi's Mahipalpur, police said Thursday. Police have arrested both men and informed the British High Commission about the incident that happened March 11.

The woman travelled to India a month ago and stayed in Maharashtra. She came to Delhi March 11 to meet Kailash, 24, whom she met on Instagram recently, they said. She had booked a room at a hotel and had drinks with Kailash, who allegedly raped her. Later, a 27-year-old hotel housekeeper touched her inappropriately, they added.

# Stalin drops '₹'

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin's populist attempt to carve out Dravidian identity on the face of what he termed 'an imposing Centre' took a fresh turn Thursday when the southern state replaced the Indian Rupee symbol (₹) with Tamil letter '₹' in its logo for the Budget 2025-26, which will be tabled Friday. The DMK chief's move came amid the ruling party's battle with the BJP-led Centre over 'Hindi imposition' via the new National Education Policy's three-language push

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai, March 13: Intensifying the language tussle with the Centre, the Tamil Nadu government Thursday replaced the Indian Rupee symbol with a Tamil letter in its logo for the Budget 2025-26, in an unprecedented move signalling its unrelenting stance against the three-language formula under the National Education Policy (NEP).

## PUTIN 'BACKS' US CEASEFIRE IDEA

REUTERS

Moscow, March 13: President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that Russia supported a US proposal for a ceasefire in Ukraine in principle, but that any truce would have to address the root causes of the conflict and that many crucial details needed to be sorted out.

"We agree with the proposals to cease hostilities," Putin told reporters in the Kremlin. "But we proceed from the fact that this cessation should be such that it would lead to long-term peace and would eliminate the original causes of this crisis."

The move comes amidst a political firestorm over the issue after the Tamil Nadu government rejected the NEP with CM MK Stalin accusing the Centre of trying to impose Hindi on the state under it and claimed that NEP was a 'saffron policy' aimed at promoting and developing Hindi and not the nation.

The logo for the Budget, released by the government Thursday, carried 'Ru', the first letter of the Tamil word 'Rubaai', which denotes the Indian currency in the vernacular language. TN Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu is scheduled to table the Budget Friday.

The logo also had the caption 'everything for all', indicating the ruling DMK's assurance of an inclusive governance model.

The symbol change triggered a political slugfest, with BJP leaders attacking the DMK, and the ruling party members asking if any



rule barred such a depiction. DMK MLA Ezhilan Naganathan justified the move and said there was nothing wrong with using the mother tongue.

Slamming the Stalin government's move, BJP TN chief K Annamalai asked the CM how stupid he could be to do it.

"The DMK Government's State Budget for 2025-26 replaces the Rupee Symbol designed by a Tamilian, which was adopted by the whole of Bharat and incorporated into our Currency. Thiru Udhay Kumar, who

designed the symbol, is the son of a former DMK MLA. How stupid can you become, Thiru @mkstalin?" he said in a social media post.

Responding to Annamalai's criticism, DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai said no law opposed or stopped using 'Ru' in Tamil. "Then why such anger," Annadurai asked in a post on X.

Senior BJP leader and former state unit chief Tamilisai Soundararajan also attacked the DMK. "We feel very sorry for the attitude of the TN CM and the TN government," she said.

According to a government portal, the rupee symbol is an amalgam of Devanagari 'Ra' and the Roman Capital 'R' with two parallel horizontal stripes running at the top representing the national flag and also the 'equal to' sign.

"The Indian Rupee sign was adopted by the Government of India on 15th July, 2010," it said.

## BEd after Class XII ISRO's feat

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 13: Students can enrol in a four-year BEd course, which will soon be offered by teacher training institutes (TTIs), after completing Class XII, Higher Education Minister Suryabanshi Suraj said Thursday.

The course will be offered at eight of the 16 TTIs or BEd colleges while the remaining eight will implement the programme in near future, he said.

The eight institutes inked pacts with the nearest government degree colleges to implement the Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). The agreements were signed in the presence of the minister here.

"Our goal is to strengthen the foundation and infrastructure of the colleges and to provide quality education to the students. ITEP will allow students to complete their BEd within four years after Class XII," Suraj said. Earlier, students had to complete a three-year undergraduate degree and then a two-year BEd programme, requiring a total of five years.

"However, with ITEP, students can directly enrol in the integrated programme and complete the course in four years. This initiative aligns with the NEP, 2020 and aims to strengthen the education system in the state," he said.

NEW DELHI/BANGALORE:

ISRO Thursday said it has accomplished de-docking of the SpaDeX satellites, clearing the way for future missions such as exploring the moon, human spaceflight, and building its own space station. Union Minister Jitendra Singh announced the successful de-docking of satellites in a post on X. "SpaDeX satellites accomplished the unbelievable de-docking," Singh said.

## HOLIDAY NOTICE


The offices and press of Orissa POST will remain closed March 14 & 15 on the occasion of Dola Purnima and Holi. Hence, there will be no edition of the paper March 15 & 16. Also, the weekend supplement Sunday POST will not be published.

—EDITOR


## IRREGULAR by MANJUL




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**MESSAGE**



Holi, the festival of colours is an occasion of joy, happiness and festivity. On this auspicious occasion, I convey my heartfelt greetings and good wishes to the people of Odisha. May this festival fill the life of all Odias staying in the State and outside with peace, joy and happiness .

*(Signature)*  
( Hari Babu Kambhampati )

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# leisure



### SADIE SINK TO JOIN SPIDER-MAN CAST

Actor Sadie Sink, known for *Stranger Things* and *The Whale*, has reportedly boarded the cast of the fourth installment in the *Spider-Man* film franchise. As per sources, Sink is the latest addition to the sequel from Sony Pictures and Marvel Studios which will see lead star Tom Holland return as Spider-Man.

### SCARLETT ON REASON SHE AVOIDS POSE WITH FANS

Scarlett Johansson is particular about her boundaries with people. In an interview, the 40-year-old revealed her long-standing policy when it comes to her fans. She explained that she likes privacy when she is not working and wishes to be able to do whatever she wants without being self-conscious.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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#### ARIES

Okay, you feel like Midas, says Ganesha. But remember, all that glitters is not gold. You must spend some time with your loved ones to make them happy. Also, you need to acknowledge those who contributed to your success. If you have kids, it's time to be their Santa Claus!

#### TAURUS

Dark clouds may keep the sunshine from getting through to your window today, says Ganesha. Negative thoughts and apprehensions may cloud your judgement further. You will look to your family and friends to help you get past today. A loved one may play the pivotal role in changing your fortunes and your mood in the evening, predicts Ganesha.

#### GEMINI

You will be in the mood to break free of the rut and routine of daily life today. Trying to keep up with numerous deadlines will keep you tense with worry. You will end up neglecting your familial duties in pursuit of work related activities. You need to find a balance between your responsibilities at work and at home, says Ganesha.

#### CANCER

You are honest and straightforward, and today will be no different. It's just that you can be too straight at times, leaving those around you embarrassed. Early in the day, small things may bother you in a big way. You may get involved in big financial transactions. You will get due appreciation for your efforts at work.

#### LEO

Today, you will most certainly pay close attention to your personal appearance, says Ganesha. After all, no one ever said looking good was a crime. At work, you shall find the resources to dig up a successful business tactic. If you are a job aspirant, an interview in the evening shall go well.

#### VIRGO

The fairer sex will find pleasure in both the kitchen and the dining table. Expect to host the closest in the evening for some food and drinks. You might just go all mushy and gaga over your beloved too, says Ganesha. Not that they would mind.

#### LIBRA

Today, you will try every practical solution at hand to win over somebody's affections, predicts Ganesha. Well, that little bit should get you going. In any case, you make the best possible impression on the opposite sex, and today will be no exception. In the evening, you can expect to spend some magical moments with your family members, says Ganesha.

#### SCORPIO

The itch of love will spread like a rash today. Passion will set you ablaze, says Ganesha. At work, the course of things may shift to being better than before. However, in love relationships, cold logic will rule over intense emotions. But sweat not in the heat of love, and find the poignancy hidden within, advises Ganesha.

#### SAGITTARIUS

Logic and reasoning will shape your day today. You remain confident of better things to come in the future. Your cubicle may offer stress and tension, but all of that will be swept away by the showers of love and affection of your dear ones. Keep that smile and your chin up, says Ganesha.

#### CAPRICORN

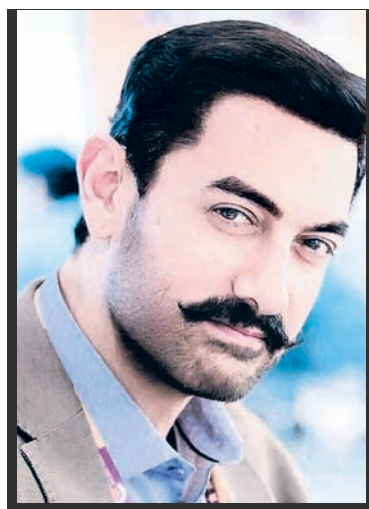
When work starts to give nightmares, even meditation cannot restore the peace of mind. You are likely to have a similar kind of harrowing experience at work today, says Ganesha. But the day won't be completely dulling. It's an auspicious day if you have plans to buy a house or a car.

#### AQUARIUS

Today, you will blow hot and cold. Hence, no one will know what to expect from you. This will throw your rivals off balance, keeping you a step ahead of them. At work, you will finally win recognition and respect.

#### PISCES

If legal hassles have been troubling you of late, they are likely to reach a satisfactory conclusion today, says Ganesha. Your finances look good. Family matters will keep you busy in the afternoon. Your evenings are likely to be filled with music or dance classes.



### AAMIR FINDS LOVE YET AGAIN

**Mumbai:** On his 60th birthday, Aamir Khan surprised everyone by introducing his new love to the world. Known for keeping his personal life private, the actor made headlines when he introduced his new partner, Gauri Spratt, during an intimate birthday celebration March 13, 2025.

According to a news portal, the Dangal actor and Spratt first met 25 years ago and reconnected one-and-a-half years back. The latter is a Bangalore resident and currently works in Aamir's production banner. She has a six-year-old son.

Spratt is of mixed heritage, with a Tamilian mother and an Irish father. Her grandfather was a freedom fighter, according to a source. Aamir was previously married to Reena Dutta (1986-2002), with whom he shares two children, Ira and Junaid. He later married filmmaker Kiran Rao in 2005, and they have a 12-year-old son, Azad. Their marriage ended in 2021, but they continue to share a warm bond.

Love knows no age, and Aamir Khan proved it by finding love at 60. As his daughter Ira tied the knot in 2024 and his son Junaid recently made his acting debut, the actor begins a new chapter in his own life with Gauri.

Earlier, in an interview, Aamir and Kiran opened up about their post-divorce relationship. Aamir shared that just because a couple parts ways, it doesn't mean they must become adversaries. He emphasised the emotional connection they still share as a family, both personally and professionally.

AGENCIES

### Alaya shares takeaways from fitness challenge

**Mumbai:** Alaya F, beyond her presence on the big screen, is a passionate fitness enthusiast who continues to inspire many with her dedication to fitness, diet, meditation and flexibility. Recently, she took on the intense '75 Hard Challenge', known for its strict guidelines. It requires two daily workouts—one indoors and one outdoors, drinking 3.5 litres of water, following a diet, avoiding alcohol and cheat meals and reading 10 pages of a book daily. Missing even one requirement means starting over.

Alaya pushed herself further by making it a '75 Harder' challenge. She added 10 minutes of meditation, did

three workouts most days, read six books, practiced daily writing and Buddhist chanting, and eliminated gluten, sugar, meat, fried foods, and caffeine from her diet.

Explaining her motivation, she said, "While I wanted to tone my muscles, I mostly wanted to regain discipline. There was no room for flexibility I had to schedule my life around this." She revealed how the challenge reshaped her routine, including 75 days without a night out due to her outdoor workouts.

Reflecting on the journey, Alaya shared, "There are a lot of things that I will take forth from this experience. I realised I'm very comfortable in my own company. You can't rely on others in this challenge, so you build a strong connection with yourself. I really enjoyed that."

AGENCIES



Orissa POST and *Dharitri* Editor Tathagata Satpathy, Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy and others at the event.

### Bhang Journeys' Hindi version launched in City

**BHUBANESWAR:** The Hindi edition of *Bhang Journeys*, titled *Ras Bhang*, was launched here by Walking Bookfairs and Rajkamal Prakashan, Thursday. Authored by Walking Bookfairs co-founder Akshaya Bahibala, the Hindi version was translated by Vyalok Pathak. *Orissa POST* and *Dharitri* Editor Tathagata Satpathy graced the event as the chief speaker.

"The goal of releasing the Hindi edition is to reach a broader audience, given the vast number of Hindi-speaking people in India," remarked Bahibala. He also hinted at the possibility of an Odia translation in the future.

The book recounts Bahibala's personal experiences with Bhang and how it sparked conversations about this traditional practice. "Consumption of Bhang should not be stigmatised as a taboo; instead, it should be viewed through the lens of public health,"

the author emphasised. Bahibala called for a more open and non-judgmental dialogue about Bhang and cannabis.

Former lawmaker Satpathy, who had previously advocated for the legalisation of cannabis during his tenure, shared his insights on the subject. He compared the adverse effects of cannabis to those of alcohol, noting that while any form of intoxication is harmful, cannabis, when consumed in moderation, may cause less physical and financial harm than alcohol.

Satpathy also highlighted the decline in reading habits, particularly among the younger generation, attributing it to the fast-paced nature of modern life and the impatience of today's youth.

Adyasha Satpathy, the Chief Executive of *Orissa POST* and *Dharitri*, was in attendance, lending her support to the event. Walking Bookfairs co-founder Satabdi Mishra was also present.

### Panchamaveda's 21st state-level drama fest: Day II

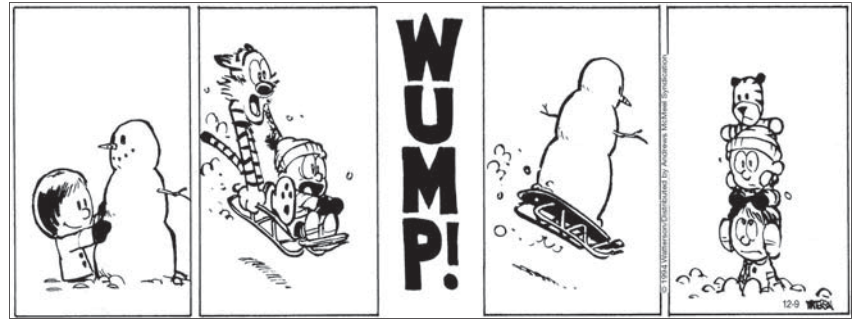


Uttar Purusha, one of the oldest drama troupes of the state, presented Odia play *Nareera Kankala* at Bhanjankala Mandap, Thursday on the second day of the event. The play, originally written in English as *The Skeleton Woman* by Kalki Koechlin and Prashant Prakash, was transcreated by well-known storyteller Saqti Mohanty. Debadutta Pati, the troupe's secretary, directed and headlined the play.

### PEANUTS



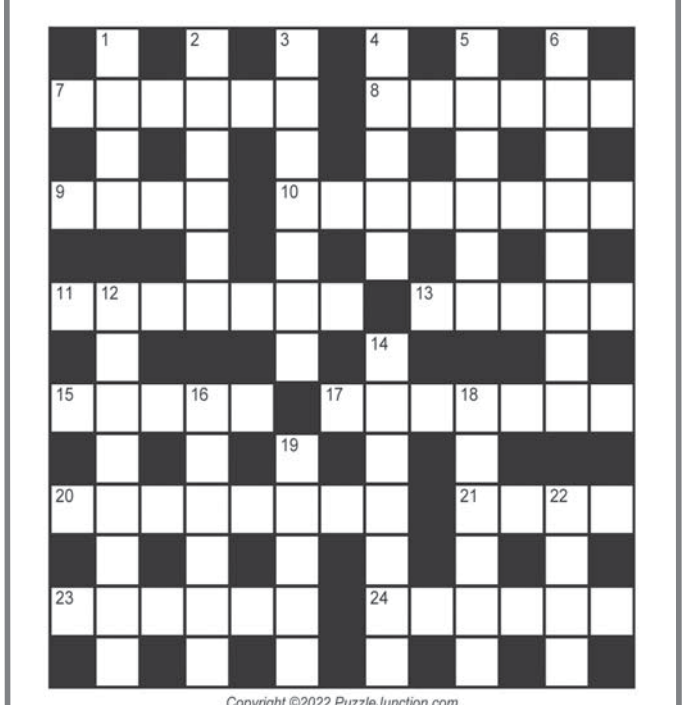
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



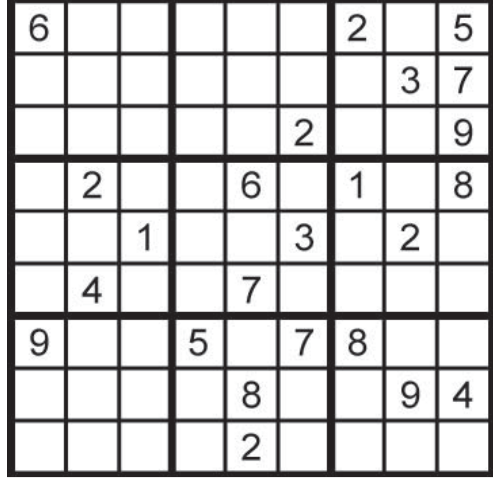
### FUN post CROSSWORD



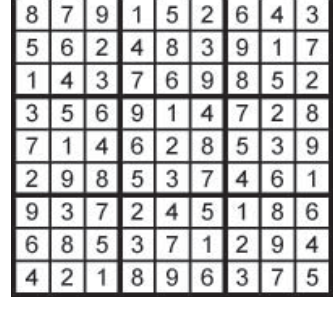
- Copyright ©2022 PuzzleJunction.com
- Across**
- 7 Nero's tutor
  - 8 Ended
  - 9 Humdinger
  - 10 Tortellini topping
  - 11 Troglodyte (4,3)
  - 13 Eye part
  - 15 Redhead's dye
  - 17 Like some diets (3-4)
  - 20 Trips
  - 21 Timber wolf
  - 23 Aromatic bulb
  - 24 Grand Canal locale
  - 4 Frighten off
  - 5 Black Forest cake
  - 6 Impose a fine or jail sentence
  - 12 Alaska islands name
  - 14 Gigantic
  - 16 Light-footed
  - 18 Cheetah, e.g.
  - 19 Pizzeria order
  - 22 Stag
- Down**
- 1 Machu Picchu site
  - 2 Wig, old style
  - 3 Largest inland body of water in the world

### 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

Commissionerate Police sleuths conduct a thorough check for harmful chemical colours at a makeshift stall in Bhubaneswar ahead of Holi celebrations, Thursday



# downtown

## Illegal gun making unit busted in Cuttack



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 13:** Sleuths from the Special Task Force (STF) of Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate Police and Kolkata Police busted an illegal firearms manufacturing unit running from a thatched house that resembled a cowshed in a village on the outskirts of Cuttack, Thursday.

An STF official said that four persons, including the owner of the house, were taken into custody following the joint raid at the unit located in Dhulishwar village under 42 Mouza police station in the morning hours. Thirty Mausers, several gun-making equipment and labeling machines were seized from the spot, the official added.

Significantly, though the illegal unit ran not far away from the local 42 Mouza police station, and the owner of the house was previously associated with 'Mo Police' initiative, no one got a whiff of the large-scale operation until the Kolkata police obtained the intelligence while investigating a murder case in West Bengal.

The arrested accused were identified as Sarat Behera, own-

**The swoop follows intelligence inputs gathered during investigations into a recent murder case in West Bengal, where a Mauser linked to 42 Mouza area was used**

er of the house, Shamsher Alam and Mohammad Abid Hussain of Munger district in Bihar, and Mohammad Azam from West Bengal. According to the official, the three suspects from outside states had been residing at Behera's residence since early 2024 under false pretense. Equipment, including labeling machines, was transported into the premises via Sidua river embankment. The illegal gun making unit was secretly manufacturing Mausers and country-made firearms, which were then smuggled to states like West Bengal, Bihar, and Jharkhand under the cover of darkness.

During interrogation, the accused learnt to have confessed to their involvement in illegal arms distribution. However, Behera claimed he had no knowledge of the factory's operations. He stated that the three accused had

hired his premises in January 2024. Though they promised to provide identification documents later, they are yet to do so. The police, however, are skeptical of his claims, as to how such a large-scale operation could take place without his knowledge.

Locals revealed that the factory was well-hidden within bamboo groves and mango orchards near Sidua embankment. The suspects reportedly stayed indoors during the day and operated the facility at night.

The official said the Kolkata police gathered information about the illegal unit while investigating a recent murder case where a Mauser linked to 42 Mouza area was used. Accordingly, they shared the intelligence with their Odisha counterpart and collaborated in the raid. The custody of the accused will be transferred to Kolkata police following their transit remand from a local court, he added.

Moreover, Behera's previous association with 42 Mouza 'Mo Police' initiative has further raised suspicion about his role in the operation, which is likely to be unraveled during further investigations.

## Din in House over Polavaram

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** The state Assembly was adjourned multiple times Thursday due to a din created by Opposition BJD over the controversial Polavaram Dam project in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Congress MLAs boycotted the proceedings of the House for the second consecutive day, demanding withdrawal of the suspension order on senior member Taraprasad Bahinipati.

An all-party meeting convened by Speaker Surama Padhy to end the Congress boycott also failed to yield any result. Bahinipati was suspended Tuesday for seven days for "misconduct and unruly behaviour".

As soon as the House assembled for Question Hour, BJD members rushed to the well and staged a protest after their notice for a discussion on Polavaram issue was rejected by the Speaker.

They shouted anti-BJP slogans and accused the saffron party of sacrificing the interest

### Road mishaps claim 17,348 lives in 3 yrs

**Bhubaneswar:** As many 17,348 people have been killed and 31,441 others injured in road accidents in the state in the last three years, state Transport Minister Bibhuti Bhusan Jena informed the Assembly Thursday. In a written reply to a question from Biju Janata Dal (BJD) legislator Prasanta Behera, the minister submitted the detailed road accident data. As per the statistics furnished by Jena, a total of 36,030 road accidents took place in Odisha in 2022, 2023 and 2024, in which, 17,348 people were killed and 31,441 individuals injured. The number of road accidents, casualties and injured persons increased in each passing year over the last three years. While 5,467 people were killed in road accidents in 2022, the death figure increased to 5,739 in 2023 and 6,142 in 2024. Similarly, the number of people injured in road accidents also increased from 10,302 in 2022 to 10,369 in 2023 and 10,770 in 2024. The minister informed that 11,663 road accidents were reported in the state in 2022, which marginally increased to 11,992 in 2023 and further to 12,375 in 2024. In another reply in the House, the minister said that 484 road accidents took place in the state in January, 2025, when the state was observing National Road Safety Month with an investment of ₹1.89 crore. During the month, 505 people died and 472 got injured in road accidents.

of Odisha for the sake of NDA government's political gains in Andhra Pradesh.

Keeping in view the noisy scene, the Speaker first adjourned the proceeding for about an hour till 11:30am and later four times till 4 PM.

When his party members were shouting in the Well of the House, BJD's deputy leader Prasanna Acharya claimed that Odisha would be severely affected after completion of Po-

lavaram project. "Andhra government's unilateral and forceful construction of Polavaram project has become intolerable for Odisha. We demand a discussion on the matter," Acharya said.

BJD's notice for a discussion on the project was rejected on the ground that the House cannot debate on a matter which is sub-judice.

Senior BJD MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo said Polavaram proj-

ect's design was changed during the NDA government though it was sanctioned during the UPA regime. "If the matter is sub-judice, how did the BJP-led central government sanction ₹16,000 crore to Polavaram project in two phases? If the matter is sub-judice, how did the AP government undertake its construction?... Should we wait silently till the dam project inundates Odisha's villages because the matter is sub-judice?" Sahoo said. BJD MLA Irasish Acharya justified the Assembly rejecting the notice.

### 1,859 SNAKEBITE DEATHS IN 2 YRS

Odisha reported 1,859 snakebite deaths in two years - 2023-24 and 2024-25, Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) Minister Suresh Pujari informed the Assembly Thursday. While snakebites claimed 1,150 lives in 2023-24, 709 people died following snakebites in 2024-25, Pujari said. According to norms, the department distributes compensation to the family members of victims from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) on the basis of local-level investigation and post-mortem report, Pujari said while responding to a query by Basta MLA Subasini Jena.

### 8 places record 40°C

**Bhubaneswar:** Eight places in the state recorded a maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius or more Thursday, with Jharsuguda sizzling at the highest 41.4 degrees Celsius, the Met department said. Boudh followed Jharsuguda at 40.8 degrees Celsius, while Bolangir was next at 40.4 degrees Celsius, as per the evening bulletin issued by the Bhubaneswar centre of India Meteorological Department's (IMD). Hirakud, Titilagarh and Bhadrak towns recorded a maximum temperature of 40.1 degrees Celsius each. Besides, Baripada and Sambalpur registered the maximum temperature of 40 degrees Celsius each, it said. Forecasting heatwave, the weather office has issued 'yellow' warning (be aware) for the districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir, Jharsuguda, Sundargarh, Angul, Boudh, Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, and Subarnapur for Friday. Heatwave conditions are expected to continue for another three days, the Met centre said. The IMD advised people to avoid heat exposure and wear lightweight, light-coloured, loose, cotton clothes, and to cover their heads with a cloth, hat or umbrella during the peak daytime.

### Youth Cong activists scuffle with police

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** Youth Congress activists Thursday scuffled with the police during a protest over alleged rise in crimes against women and the suspension of senior party MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati from the Assembly.

The agitators, led by Youth Congress leader Ranjit Patra, marched from Bhubaneswar Club towards the CM's official residence. However, they were stopped midway by the police, leading to a scuffle.

The agitators broke through the police barricades before courting arrest. They also demanded formation of a House Committee to inquire into the crimes against women and formulation of a stringent law to deal with cases of violence against women.

The outfit came down heavily on the BJP, accusing its MLAs of attacking Opposition party members in the House.

"If an MLA is not safe inside the House, how can the government ensure the security of 4.5 crore people in the state?" it questioned.

The protesters demanded action against Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling and senior BJP MLA Jaynarayan Mishra for an "attack" on Bahinipati in Assembly Tuesday.

Bahinipati, a senior Congress MLA from Jeypore, was suspended from the House for seven days by Speaker Surama Padhy following a scuffle between the Congress and BJP members in the well of the House Tuesday.

Bahinipati was accused of unruly behaviour in the House while demanding a statement from CM Mohan Charan Majhi, who is also in charge of Home department, on "rising" violence against women across the state.

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**ଜଣେ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛୁ**

**Woman faints during protest**

**BHUBANESWAR:** A woman member of Sanatani Kesaria Hindu Bahini fainted while staging a fast-onto-death protest demanding grant of national animal status to cow, and laws for prohibiting their slaughter, at Lower PMG Square here, Thursday. The protestor, identified as Binduja Upadhyay, was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital in an ambulance for treatment. President of the outfit which works towards protection of cattle, Santosh Kumar Bhola, said, "We have been protesting since the last couple of days, urging the Union and state governments to ensure security for cows as cases of cattle smuggling is on the rise. We also demand national animal status for cows. Although three of our activists have fallen ill, we will continue our fight till our demands are met."

**WEATHER**

	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	36.6°	37.0°
Min Temp	23.2°	22.0°
Humidity	86%	83%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
<b>FORECAST</b>	Dry weather 	

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VARIATION
SENSEX	73828.91 ↓ 200.85
NIFTY	22397.20 ↓ 73.30
DOLLAR	87.09 ↓ 0.23
EURO	94.69 ↓ 0.58
GOLD	₹87,510 ↑ ₹824
SILVER	₹100,984 ↑ ₹1,508

**CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT**

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before Executive Magistrate, Tihidi, I, Abhimanyu Gochhayat, S/o- Dushasan Gochhayat of Vill/P.O.-Kolha, P.S.-Tihidi, Dist- Bhadrak, Odisha, Pin-756130 declare by this affidavit No.-2816, dtd.09.07.2024, that now onwards I shall be known as Abhimanyu Gochhayat for all future purposes.

**LOST**

I, Pragnyesh Panigrahi, S/o. Satyanarayan Panigrahi, R/o. Ghodaghatpada, P.S.- Sonepur, Dist.-Subarnapur have lost the ROR copy of Suratarangini Panigrahi, Khata No. 814 Sonepur Town Unit-2 on dated 11.03.2025, while I went to Block Chowk from my residence Ghodaghatpada. In spite of my thorough search I could not trace out the same.

I, Sri Sameer Kumar Sahoo (29), S/o Gouranga Sahoo of Vill - Bahadajholla, P.S. - Odagaon, Dist. - Nayagarh I do here by declare that I have misplaced my sale deed No. 778 dt. 24.04.1990 & ROR No. 869/154 & other documents. Some where in his residence to Nuaagon to mahipur under P.S. - Jurisdiction if any one found these document kindly contact - Sameer Kumar Sahoo, S/o - Gouranga Sahoo, At - Bahadajholla, P.S. - Odagaon, Dist. - Nayagarh.

**BJD LEADER HELD IN MINING SCAM**



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** The Crime Branch of Odisha Police Thursday arrested Biju Yuva Janata Dal state vice-president Soumya Shankar Chakra, alias Raja Chakra, in connection with an alleged multi-crore mining and transport scam. The Orissa High Court Wednesday rejected Chakra's plea seeking interim protection from arrest.

Additional DGP, CID, Crime Branch Vinaytosh Mishra said Chakra was interrogated and asked to clarify his role in the scam and then he was arrested. The Economic Offence Wing of the Crime Branch had earlier in February 2025 registered a case based on a complaint of alleged irregularity in the functioning of Gandhamardan Loading (GML) Agency and a transporting cooperative society limited and misappropriation of funds of the cooperative society in the mineral-rich Keonjhar district.

"In the course of the investigation, it was found that the loading agency had earned around ₹185 crore from 2017-18 to March 24. The investigation also revealed that the coopera-

tive society president and secretary, namely Manas Barik and Utkal Das, with the help of some other local influential persons had defrauded huge sums," the ADGP said, adding that though ₹34 crore was taken in the name of peripheral development, but no work was done.

Similarly, ₹9.1 crore was taken away and paid to a petrol pump, which had not supplied any fuel to GML, rather, it was supplying fuel to the vehicles of one Soumya Shankar Chakra, whose payment was being done by GML, an official note said.

The investigation also revealed that about ₹33 crore were distributed to local villagers who are supposed to be members of cooperative society. "It was further found that around ₹74 crore have been shown as loading charges and labour payments. The corresponding muster roll and vouchers indicate a huge mismatch. It has been decided to get the period audited after which detailed defalcation would be known.

It is to further inform that the society has not conducted audit since 2012 and 2013," an official statement of the crime branch said.

It also said that though Chakra was not associated with the society on paper, he was dictating terms through his henchmen Sadashiv Samal, Sudhansu Shekhar Naik and Samir Jena.

"So far, the CB has seized 42 vehicles belonging to Raja Chakra, the statement said, adding that based on financial investigation, several bank accounts have been frozen," it said.



**TAKING STOCK:** The Srimandir Cultural Committee, led by Gajapati Dibyasingha Deba, reviews development work in and around Srimandir and Gundicha Temple in Puri, Thursday

**Hema Malini charms Sri Sri varsity audience**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 13:** Sri Sri University witnessed a memorable afternoon Thursday as legendary actress, dancer, and cultural icon Hema Malini graced the campus for an exclusive session titled "Echoes of an Era: Hema Malini Reflects on Her Iconic Films and Timeless Artistry."

Held at the Shruti Auditorium, the event celebrated her remarkable contributions to Indian cinema and classical dance, drawing an enthusiastic audience of students, faculty,



and distinguished guests.

The event began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Hema Malini, vice-chancellor Tej Partap, Director of Operations Swami Satya Chaitanya, and Dean Ratikant Mohapatra. Mohapatra, in his welcome

address, lauded her artistic journey and ability to balance cinema and dance with grace and dedication. A mesmerising Odissi dance performance, "Vande Suryam," by students set the stage for an evening of artistic reflection.

During an engaging interactive session, Hema Malini shared insights into her career, emphasising discipline and passion in mastering both cinema and classical dance.

She recalled her iconic role as Basanti in Sholay and how rigorous practice helped her perfect lengthy dialogues.

**CSIR-IMMT inks pact with CSIRO**



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** In order to investigate the recovery of titanium dioxide from titanium minerals and vanadium-bearing titanium minerals of Indian origin, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), through its constituent laboratory, the Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) here has signed a research and development agreement with Australia's national science agency CSIRO at the Dr RP Das Centre for Hydro, Bio and Electrometallurgy here Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, CSIR-IMMT director Ramanuj Narayan laid emphasis on more such collaborative projects on critical minerals in line with the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM) for ensuring a long term sustainable supply of critical minerals including beneficiation, processing and recovery from end-of-life products.

**The collaboration aims to develop the processing technology for extracting titanium and vanadium from ilmenite and vanadiferous magnetite ores**

The project collaboration will be led by CSIRO's principal research scientist Goutam Kumar Das and CSIR-IMMT chief scientist and Hydro, Bio, and Electrometallurgy department head Kali Sanjay. Project coordination will be managed by CSIRO's Critical Minerals Processing group leader Joanne Loh, and Ramanuj Narayan.

The joint collaboration aims to develop the processing technology for extracting titanium and vanadium from ilmenite and vanadiferous magnetite ores, found abundant in India and Australia.

Titanium and vanadium are classified as critical minerals in both countries. Titanium is widely used in metal alloys, while vanadium is also a key component in redox flow batteries, which are rechargeable and well-suited for large-scale energy storage.

The collaboration is funded by CSIRO's India-Australia Critical Minerals Research Partnership, an initiative under the Australian Federal Government's updated India Economic Strategy (IES) to 2035.

**WORLD KIDNEY DAY Awareness events by City Apollo Hospitals**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** Apollo Hospitals, Bhubaneswar, Thursday marked World Kidney Day 2025 with a series of events aimed at raising awareness about kidney health.

The hospital aligned with this year's theme, "Are Your Kidneys OK?", organising a patient awareness programme, a quiz session, and an in-house interactive discussion to promote preventive care and early detection of kidney-related ailments.

The events were designed to educate the community on the importance of regular medical checkups, healthy lifestyle choices, and proactive kidney care. Apollo Hospitals encouraged public participation, reinforcing its commitment to providing world-class healthcare solutions.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Operating Officer and



DMS Alok Srivastava highlighted the hospital's expertise in kidney care and its ongoing efforts to enhance patient well-being.

Chief Nephrologist Nisith Mohanty conducted an informative session on kidney health, stressing the need for a balanced diet, proper hydration, and regular exercise in preventing kidney diseases.

He also emphasized the importance of early detection through routine checkups and

monitoring of critical health parameters.

Adding to the discussion, Nephrologist Kumar Avijeet Dash shared insights on patient-centric approaches to managing kidney health, offering practical guidance to attendees.

Apollo Hospitals reiterated its dedication to spreading awareness and providing top-notch healthcare services, urging individuals to prioritise kidney health through preventive measures.

**New community radio station to launch soon**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** A new community radio station titled 'Radio Bhubaneswar 89.2 FM - The Temple City Radio' is set to launch soon in the Capital city by Outreach, and will broadcast on 89.2 MHz FM band, announced its founder Subrat Kumar Pati recently.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and Outreach have signed the necessary agreements for the launch.

"Radio Bhubaneswar will feature programmes covering a wide range of topics, including agriculture, education, arts, culture, sports, traffic awareness, environmental pollution, and human rights," said Pati.

"Additionally, it will inform residents of Bhubaneswar and surrounding areas about vari-



ous state and Central government schemes and initiatives. The station will work closely with local administration to cater to the needs of City residents through its programmes," she added.

For the past 11 years, Outreach has been organising country's only radio fair in the City to promote and popularise radio broadcasting. In 2023, Outreach established its first community radio station, 'Radio Outreach', in Jagatsinghpur district.

**Bike theft gang busted; 4 held**

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** The Commissionerate Police Thursday claimed to have made a major breakthrough in bike-lifting cases in the City with the arrest of four members of a notorious gang.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Jagmohan Meena said Dipuna Mallick alias Chuna, 24, Bijaya Kumar Khatei alias Kundura, 30, Taslim Khan alias Tuku, 41, and Deepak Kumar Das alias Raja, 25, were involved in about 40 cases of motorcycle thefts all over the state, with 10 in the Bhubaneswar Urban Police District (UPD) area.

Police recovered 10 motorcycles, two number plates, and a bunch of duplicate keys from the accused. Meena said police got a whiff about the gang's activities while investigating a motorcycle theft complaint lodged by Old

**The accused were booked under the Section 303 (2) of BNS, and produced before a local court for remand**



Town resident Prabir Mohanty at Lingaraj police station February 6, this year.

The DCP said the complainant had parked his Royal Enfield motorcycle (OD 02 CT 7203) in front of his house when it was stolen. After a month-long chase, the special squad arrested the foursome from their hideouts in the City on credible intelligence, Meena added.

During their interrogation police learnt that Dipuna and Bijaya used to steal vehicles from busy market locations

using duplicate keys, and later sold those to Taslim and Deepak. They would particularly target old Honda motorcycles as those were easier for them to unlock with duplicate keys.

Meena said Taslim and Deepak used to sell the stolen vehicles in Kakatapur and Astaranga areas. In a few cases, they dismantled the vehicles and sold the parts to garages.

The accused were booked under the Section 303 (2) of BNS, and produced before a local court for remand.

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Drunk man stabs son to death in Balasore

Balasore: A 17-year-old boy was stabbed to death allegedly by his father in Balasore district, police said Thursday. The incident occurred in Narama village under Khaira police limits Wednesday night, they added. According to police, Jogendra Sing returned home drunk and started beating his wife Muni Sing following an altercation. When their son Rajesh intervened to stop the scuffle, Jogendra, in a fit of rage, grabbed a knife and stabbed his son in the chest, police said. Relatives and neighbours rushed the injured teenager to Oupada hospital and later shifted him to Soro hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. Police have detained Jogendra and are currently investigating the incident. Jogendra had migrated to Narama from Udala in neighbouring Mayurbhanj district about six years ago.

Future indefinite, present tense for Charigharia locals



More than 70 households in Charigharia village, which falls under Rajnagar Forest Division, are living in a perpetual state of anxiety as they have been slapped with repeated eviction notices from the Forest department

70. The Central government declared Bhitarkanika a wildlife sanctuary in 1975, and upgraded it to a national park in 1998. According to villager Reshmi Das, life in Charigharia has become increasingly dangerous. "The Forest department has dug canals near the village which have become breeding grounds for crocodiles. Villagers and livestock frequently fall victim to crocodile and other wildlife attacks," Das said. She said despite living in a forest area, strict restrictions imposed by the Forest department have hindered their traditional livelihood activities, such as firewood collection. While many villagers are willing to relocate, they expressed frustration over the administration's alleged lack of urgency in facilitating the process. Sukumar Das, another villager, stated that the villagers are ready to shift immediately if the government included them in the resettlement plan and provided land and financial assistance in Bagapatia. He said the villagers have staged repeated protests and hunger strikes over the demand for fair resettlement. Meanwhile, tehsildar Amiya Kumar Swain said that the process of relocating Charigharia residents to Bagapatia is under consideration. "A total of 148 families have been identified for relocation," he said. Swain claimed that 'some individuals' are trying to claim multiple plots under the resettlement scheme.

VSSUT student drowns while bathing in dam

Sambalpur: A first-year engineering student of Veer Surendra Sai University of Technology (VSSUT) in Burla drowned in the power channel of Hirakud dam while bathing, Thursday. The deceased has been identified as Priyanshu Prakash Behera, 19, son of Sanjay Behera from Dhenkanal. Priyanshu was pursuing civil engineering at VSSUT. According to reports, Priyanshu and some of his friends went to the power channel of Hirakud dam Thursday morning for a bath. While bathing, the 19-year-old was swept away into deep water and drowned. His friends immediately rescued him and rushed him to Veer Surendra Sai Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (VIMSAR), but doctors declared him brought dead.

Bizman's body donated to MKCG

Berhampur: Family members of a businessman in Berhampur town donated his body to the government-run MKCG Medical College and Hospital here Wednesday for research, an official said. Donating bodies for medical research is not uncommon in the country, but in this case, the businessman did not pledge his body. It was his family's decision to hand it over to the medical college for the help of research. The body of Jammula Satyanarayana, 66, was handed over to the college authorities by his family members in the presence of his relatives and friends. Before donating his body, they also donated his two eyes to the Ophthalmology department of the medical college. "Amid the grief, we feel proud as his cadavers will benefit several medical students of the college for their studies and research works," said J Vamsi, son of the deceased. Satyanarayana died in the morning of a heart attack while undergoing treatment at the same medical college and hospital here.

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, March 13: Residents of Charigharia village, located inside the Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district, are reportedly planning to intensify their agitation for adequate resettlement as their decade-old struggle over the same has yielded no results so far. At present, over 70 households in the village, which falls under Rajnagar Forest Division, are living in a perpetual state of anxiety as they

Satellite tagging to track Olive Ridley movements



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rajnagar, March 13: The movements and lifestyle of the endangered Olive Ridley sea turtle still remain shrouded in mystery, despite extensive conservation efforts being undertaken owing to their significant role in maintaining ecological balance. To study their migration patterns and shed light on their secret underwater lives, scientists from the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have deployed satellite tags on two Olive Ridley turtles at Nasi in Gahirmatha beach here in Kendrapara district. Every year, lakhs of these turtles gather at Gahirmatha for mass nesting, but researchers still do not fully understand where they come from, why they choose this location,

have been slapped with repeated eviction notices from the Forest department, while the district administration has started preparations for their eviction without making any resettlement arrangements, reports said. They demand their rehabilitation in line with relocation of Satabhaya villagers in Rajnagar block to Bagapatia. Relocation of Satabhaya residents was necessitated due to coastal erosion. "We have been fighting for relocation to Bagapatia for over a decade now. However, a recent eviction notice has heightened our concerns," Santosh Kumar Sarkar, a resident of Charigharia village. Sarkar claimed that their ancestors had been living in the area long before Bhitarkanika was declared a national park. In the aftermath of 1971 cyclone, four families settled down in the area, giving rise to the name 'Charigharia Sahi'. At present, the number of households has grown to over

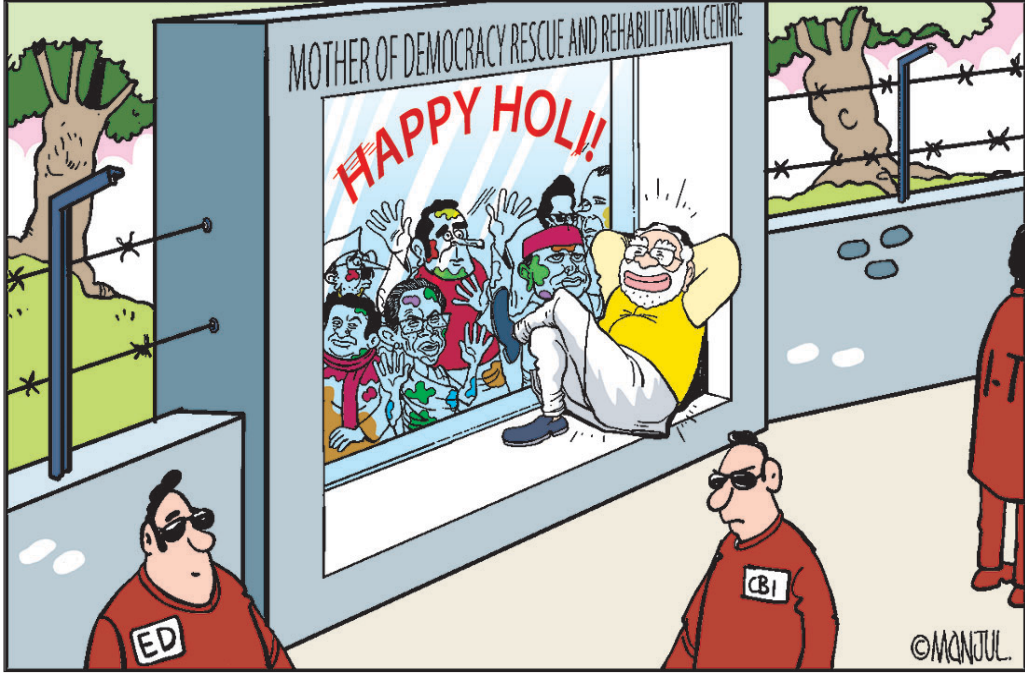
Horses run amok in Basudevpur as police race to rein them in



POST NEWS NETWORK

Basudevpur, March 13: Two horses have been on the rampage in Basudevpur area of Bhadrak district terrorising people as more than 20 individuals have been bitten by the horses over the past 15 days. The horses have been roaming freely in Basudevpur market and surrounding areas and entering shops in search of food. It remains unclear whether they are aggressive due to hunger or exhibiting some other abnormal behaviour. One of the horses has been in the area for nearly a month, while the other arrived recently. However, their origin remains unclear. Despite repeated attempts, local authorities have failed to capture the horses. The Forest department, Animal Husbandry department, and municipality have not taken effective action, leading to growing frustration among residents. Concerns regarding public safety have been raised during a road safety awareness meeting attended by District Collector Dilip Routaray, MLA Ashok Kumar Das, and police officials. When questioned, Municipal Executive Officer Sudhanshu Mohan Swain stated that steps would be taken to capture the horses with the support of relevant departments.

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Minor girl loses money in online game, kills self

POST NEWS NETWORK

Ramanaguda, March 13: A 15-year-old girl committed suicide by hanging after she lost a significant amount of money while playing an online game on her mobile phone at Ganapitiguda village under this block in Rayagada district. The deceased, identified as Saina Sahu, 15, ended her life by hanging using a scarf. The matter came to the fore after her aunt Lili Pattmayak lodged a complaint in this connection at

the Ramanaguda police station Wednesday evening. Police sources said the girl used to live with her grandmother and was regularly playing an online game. She had reportedly lost over lakhs in the game but continued playing despite repeated warnings from her family. She told her grandmother Wednesday that she was going to the toilet in the backyard but did not return for long. When her grandmother went to check, she found Saina hanging and immediately informed the

police. Gunpur SDPO Babuli Nayak, Tehsildar Pranakrishna Panigrahi, Ramanaguda IIC Sumita Behera, and ASI Pruthwiraj Jhankar reached the spot and recovered the body. A scientific team was also pressed into the service. Police registered a case and handed over the body to her family members after post-mortem. When contacted, IIC Sumita Behera said that the actual reason behind the death could be ascertained only after the post-mortem report is available.

Life imprisonment to elderly woman for friend's murder

POST NEWS NETWORK

Hatadihi, March 13: A court in Anandapur of Keonjhar district Thursday sentenced a 68-year-old woman to life imprisonment and slapped a penalty of ₹10,000 after convicting her for the murder of her friend. The convict was identified as Sara Naik of Mathadahi village under Soso police limits in Keonjhar district. The Additional District and Sessions Judge Prajyoti Rout delivered the verdict after reviewing witnesses' testimonies and evidence. In default, she has to undergo an additional year in prison. The case dates back to June

25, 2022, when Sara bludgeoned her friend, Jashoda Patra, with stones. Patra's daughter, Shantilata, found her in critical condition near Podasingidi village and rushed her to Anandapur Sub-Divisional Hospital, where doctors pronounced her dead. Following a complaint filed by Shantilata, officials at Soso police station registered a case (110/2022) and arrested Naik the next day. Out of 20 witnesses presented in court, 15 testified against the accused, leading to her conviction. Defence lawyer Subash Bishwal stated that the court handed down the life sentence based on the evidence presented.

Swain receives 'Horizon Bookers Award'

Balasore: The literary branch of the 'Prajaapati' organisation, 'Akshara', organised the 'Horizon Bookers Award' ceremony at the Atithya conference hall here, aiming to connect Odia literature with national and international literary works, readers and writers. In the presence of students, writers, and readers, Ramesh Chandra Mishra, retired registrar of Puri Jagannath Sanskrit University, inaugurated the event. Book is a friend to humans and nourishment for the soul, he said adding that true literature is an invaluable asset to humankind, and it is essential for future generations to read and cherish it. In the event, organised under the chairmanship of poet Prashant Das, founder of 'Prajaapati', honoured guest poet Dhananjay Swain expressed that a writer's perspective and thoughts are reflected through their written works and significantly impact the reading community. As Horizon guests, poet and editor Krushna Kumar Mohanty, poet and storyteller Gangadhar Vishal, poet and publisher Sridev, poet and publisher Abhyasa Das, bureau chief of 'Samaj' Shashiranjali Mallik, and educationist Sudhanshu Panda shared their opinions about the importance of literature from different languages. They mentioned that when a reader gets acquainted with literature from various languages, they connect with a broader literary community, creating a beautiful sense of curiosity. Each writer's life is a unique confluence of imagination and reality. The guests presented poet Dhananjay Swain with the 'Horizon Bookers Award-2025' for his poetry book Tuma Gaon Barsha.

Advertisement for Praneel Dash (Joy) birthday blessings. Text includes: 'Praneel Dash (Joy) Mississauga, Canada', 'On this auspicious day, we pray before Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannath to shower peace and happiness in your life. Wish you a bright future.', and contact information for relatives.

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY tender. Text includes: 'Tender No. 53-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25', 'NAME OF WORK: OHE MODIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH REMOVAL OF LIVE PARTS OF OHE FROM PLATFORMS WHERE LESS CLEARANCE IS THERE BETWEEN CHAIR ARMS AND PLATFORM SHEDS AND DUE TO RAISING OF PLATFORMS IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.', and details about the tender process.

In a 1st, Odisha exports green papaya to London, Dublin



POST NEWS NETWORK

Dhenkanal, March 13: After mangoes, the demand for Dhenkanal's green papaya is growing internationally. The fruit's unique taste and health benefits have sparked interest among consumers abroad. A total of one tonne green papaya, cultivated by 14 women farmers from the Saptasajya Agro Producer Company un-

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) facilitated the export process, aiming to provide significant economic benefits to local farmers. Previously, mangoes grown in Dhenkanal had been exported to Dubai. With rising demand for fruits like green papaya and mangoes grown in the region, there is a crucial need for cold storage facilities. Meanwhile, farmers have urged authorities to operationalise the abandoned mango hub and the fruit and vegetable preservation centre located along the national highway in Gobindpur under Sadar block. Dhenkanal Deputy Director of Horticulture, Gitashree Padhi, stated that green papaya from the district has been exported to London and Ireland for the first time through Saptasajya Agro Producer Company and the Madan Mohan Cooperative Society, with support from APEDA. She emphasised that such initiatives would encourage farmers and strengthen their economic standing.

Export of Green Papaya to London, Dublin

der Sadar block of Dhenkanal district, was exported to London last week. Similarly, green papaya harvested from Ghatipiri area of Odapada block was shipped to Dublin in Ireland, through the Madan Mohan Cooperative Society. This marks the first time that green papaya from Dhenkanal has been exported outside India. Most of these women farmers belong to tribal communities.

Advertisement for EAST COAST RAILWAY tender. Text includes: 'Tender No. 53-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25', 'NAME OF WORK: OHE MODIFICATION IN CONNECTION WITH REMOVAL OF LIVE PARTS OF OHE FROM PLATFORMS WHERE LESS CLEARANCE IS THERE BETWEEN CHAIR ARMS AND PLATFORM SHEDS AND DUE TO RAISING OF PLATFORMS IN KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.', and details about the tender process.

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FOCUS POLITICS

# A WAKEUP CALL



Sadly, the media cheerleaders are so carried away with well-spun slogans that the grime that lies beneath the glitter of a '5 trillion economy' is barely noticeable

**D**ilwalon ke dilka qarar lootne...main aayihoon UP, Bihar lootne..." The lyrics of the super-hit song from the 1999 film 'Shool' were once a metaphor for the criminalized politics of the Hindi heartland. In an era where criminal-politician nexus was institutionalized across large swathes of the Indo-Gangetic plains, the song referred derisively to the 'cash and carry' politics of the time. UP-Bihar politicians cried foul at being caricatured as gangsters, the rest of the country seemed relieved that their politics was somehow less coarse.



Rajdeep Sardesai

**LIKE BEED, THERE ARE MANY OTHER CORNERS OF INDIA WHERE LOCAL MAFIA AND THEIR POLITICAL BOSSES STILL CALL THE SHOTS**

A quarter of a century later, it is apparent that the rot is no longer confined to a few states. Viral videos last week showed how in a village in Beed district of Maharashtra, the accused beat up a sarpanch with rods, tortured him, even urinating on his body before killing him. The horrific murder was captured on camera, almost as if the accused felt emboldened enough to show off their clout to the gazing audience. No surprise that the prime accused in a case that has shocked Maharashtra is a key aide of state minister, Dhananjay Munde. The murder took place in early December. The videos have only surfaced now, the public outcry eventually forcing the minister to resign.

A belated resignation however cannot mask the reality of just how politics has become a criminal enterprise in many parts of India. The accused in this case were reportedly running an extortion racket, demanding money from a Mumbai-based wind energy company that had invested in the region. When the courageous sarpanch tried to intervene and stop the extortion bid, he was 'eliminated'. Could the accused have acted with such impunity unless they had the patronage of the minister? Was the minister controlling them or was the gang operating as an autonomous outfit?

Let's set the context. Beed is one of the most backward re-

gions in Maharashtra and the country. A drought-prone belt of Marathwada, Beed provides approximately 70% of farm labour to the more prosperous sugar heartland of southern Maharashtra. Limited sources of income have thrown up a vicious cycle of debt and poverty from which Beed has been unable to extricate itself. Crime then becomes a lucrative option for many unemployed youth: a senior journalist from neighbouring Aurangabad tells me that Beed has witnessed many such brazen 'political' murders in the last few years.

For the last three decades, Beed's politics has been controlled by the Munde family. The family fiefdom was built by Gopinath Munde, an ambitious BJP leader with strong links to the RSS. The rugged son-of-the-soil Munde belonged to the Vanjari community, a populous OBC grouping that was in direct competition with the more politically influential Marathas. Brother-in-law to the more urbane Pramod Mahajan, another stalwart BJP leader from Maharashtra, Munde gradually established himself as the party's mass OBC face, eventually becoming Maharashtra's deputy CM in 1995 in a BJP-Shiv Sena coalition government. He was appointed a Union minister in the first Modi government in 2014, only to die in a tragic car accident barely weeks after moving to Delhi. The BJP leader's

sudden death triggered a turf battle: his nephew Dhananjay Munde versus his daughter Pankaja. The 49-year-old nephew was once a BJP Yuva Morcha state president who resigned from the party in 2013, joined the NCP and took on his cousin Pankaja from the family bastion of Parli in Beed. Where he had begun his career in his uncle's shadow, he now found refuge in Sharad Pawar's embrace. Controversies swirled around him, including a rape complaint in 2021. With characteristic swagger, Munde claimed that he was in a relationship with the complainant's sister and had two children from her. The rape charge did not stick and Munde adroitly switched sides with Ajit Pawar in 2023 to become part of the Mahayuti government. This time, the heinous murder charge has forced Munde to resign: the prime accused in the sarpanch murder Valmik Karad has managed the minister's constituency for years and the duo reportedly share common business interests.

In a sense, Munde's case typifies the shifting nature of Maharashtra's politics. Where once the state prided itself on its reformist zeal, its politics is now defined by a totally immoral 'power at all costs' ecosystem. Cash, crime and corruption under the veil of caste and communal identity politics have created a toxic mix, one where there is total ideological

bankruptcy and only a desire for self-aggrandisement. Where Gopinath Munde came through the Sangh Parivar womb and remained committed to the party, his nephew, like many contemporary Maharashtra politicians, has benefitted from the opportunistic politics of splits and defections that has wrecked the state's party system. Is it any surprise then that those associated with Dhananjay actually thought that they could get away with a murder on camera? After all, when political compromise and depravity is the name of the game, who will draw the red lines of acceptable behaviour?

Which is why the 'Maha-crime' in Beed must become another wakeup call that Maharashtra and indeed the country so desperately needs. A 'Magnetic Maharashtra' or a 'Viksit Bharat' can hardly be built on the edifice of lumpenised politics. Sadly, the media cheerleaders are so carried away with well-spun slogans that the grime that lies beneath the glitter of a '5 trillion economy' is barely noticeable. Like Beed, there are many other corners of India where local mafia and their political bosses still call the shots.

Which is why instead of holding fancy investment summits in five star hotels, maybe our governments should first hold law and order meetings in every district headquarters where an unambiguous message is delivered that there will be zero tolerance for law-breakers, irrespective of their political influence.

Post-script: On a morning walk along Mumbai's Marine Drive, I met a retired IAS officer who said he wasn't surprised with what had transpired in Beed. "The chickens have come home to roost. Earlier, politicians flirted with criminals, now the criminals have simply taken over politics!"

*The writer is a senior journalist and author whose latest book is 2024: The Election That Surprised India.*

When we have passed beyond knowings, then we shall have Knowledge.



SRI AUROBINDO

## Choices We Make

Since ancient times, thinkers have asked whether we freely choose what we do or if our actions are determined by forces beyond our control. That debate has been given new impetus by scientific discoveries that have advanced our understanding of the causes of our behaviour. Robert Sapolsky, a Stanford University neuroscientist and recent guest on the podcast "Lives Well Lived," which I co-host with the Polish philosopher Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek, is one of these science-based determinists.

In his book *Determined: A Science of Life Without Free Will*, Sapolsky argues that free will is an illusion. Consider Joe, who decides that he should eat a healthy diet. He meets a friend at a café, and the friend orders a particularly tempting slice of cake, and urges Joe to order one, too. But Joe resists. He may think he exercised his free will and deserves some credit. No, Sapolsky would say: he was able to choose not to order the cake because of his genes, or perhaps because of the way he was brought up – in any case, because of factors over which he had no control.

Because our actions are determined, Sapolsky says, we are not morally responsible for them, and do not deserve praise or blame for what we do. He deplors the fact that that all over the world, in everyday life, from courtrooms to classrooms, at award ceremonies and in eulogies, we cling, with "ferocious tenacity" to our belief in free will.

What's wrong with this argument is not the claim that everything has a cause, nor the belief that everything in the universe, including our behaviour, is determined. We can grant that if someone knew everything there is to know about our genes and our environment, they could predict our behaviour. The flaw in Sapolsky's argument, and that of many others before him, is that he fails to recognise the distinction between behaviour that results from a choice we make, and behaviour that does not.

Consider George and Mary. George develops a grudge against his neighbour, who often ignores him when they pass each other on the street. George knows that every morning the unfriendly neighbour goes to a nearby station to catch a train to work, and George decides that this creates an opportunity to get rid of him.

George follows his neighbour to the platform, waiting for an opportunity to push him in front of the train as it arrives. For several days, the neighbour stands too far back from the edge, and George cannot carry out his plan. But he persists, until one day the neighbour stands close enough to the edge for George to give him a hard push. The neighbour falls in front of the train and is killed.

Mary takes the same train to work. One morning she is rushing to catch it as it pulls in, and doesn't notice that someone has left a bag on the platform. She trips over it, falling into the back of her neighbour, who is standing near the edge of the platform. He falls in front of the train and is killed.

It is reasonable to say that George freely chose to kill his neighbour and is morally responsible for that person's death. It is not reasonable to say that about Mary.

Would it be better if we did not think that George should be held responsible, blamed, and punished, for the death of his neighbour? Or if we somehow thought that George and Mary were equally responsible for the deaths of their neighbours?

Surely not. People everywhere make such distinctions. Sapolsky himself even notes that some animals do it. He describes a study showing that monkeys and chimpanzees respond differently to a person who is unable to give them food, as compared with someone who could give them food, but doesn't. They prefer to be close to the former.

Sapolsky's response to this is: "Heck, even chimps believe in free will." But the study doesn't show that chimps believe in the kind of free will that is incompatible with the truth of determinism. If they believe in free will at all, it is a kind that is compatible with our actions being determined, just as the difference in our responses to George and Mary are compatible with their behaviour being determined.

When it comes to crime, Sapolsky rejects retributive theories of punishment, and believes that we should seek to reduce the social iniquities that make it more likely that some people will engage in anti-social behaviour. I share those attitudes. Punishment, in my view, should aim at preventing crime, rather than punishing people for their wickedness. Determinism may be true, but that does not alter the fact that people make choices, and need to be held responsible for the choices they make.

*The writer, co-host of the podcast Lives Well Lived, is Emeritus Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE*

### WISDOM CORNER

The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.

CARL JUNG

To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float.

ALAN WATTS

To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1879: German American physicist Albert Einstein, one of the most creative intellects in human history, known for his groundbreaking theories of relativity, was born in Ulm, Germany.
- 1899: German military official Ferdinand, Graf von Zeppelin, received a U.S. patent for a "navigable balloon"; the first zeppelin made its initial flight the following year.
- 1951: United Nations forces recaptured Seoul during the Korean War.
- 1964: In the first courtroom verdict to be televised in the United States, Jack Ruby was found guilty of the murder of Lee Harvey Oswald, assassin of U.S. President John F. Kennedy.

### SPECTRUM CONFLICTS

## People-to-people connections for peace



SK Nag

**GLOBAL INSTITUTIONS THAT WERE INTRODUCED TO PLAY THE ROLE OF BIG BROTHER ARE INCREASINGLY BECOMING IRRELEVANT DUE TO POLITICAL INSTABILITY WORLDWIDE**

World peace has been as elusive as before. Even rapid globalisation due to technological advancement could not bring any change. The world is currently entangled in a web of conflicts, leaving no space for true collaboration and growth. Traditional war, territorial disputes, and economic power games with more and more cybercrimes – the stability of human life is in question.

Global institutions that were introduced to play the role of Big Brother are increasingly becoming irrelevant due to political instability worldwide. The sovereign identity of countries is compromised due to pressure from powerful countries, putting the whole world's harmonious coexistence in question. The ongoing geopolitical conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Israel, and other regions have put the world in a fragile and fractured diplomatic situation. Multilateral or bilateral treaties are becoming weak, making the international peace climate volatile. So-called leading countries, such as the US, Chi-

na, Russia, and the European Union, are finding themselves at odds, resulting in conflict resolution being a complex and prolonged process. Multilateral organisations like the UN instituted to intervene and mediate disputes among countries, are not enjoying the same respect with which they were initiated, and their effective functioning is questionable due to political bias.

Powerful nations, primarily permanent members of the UN, disrespect the mandate of the UN or NATO, exercise veto power, and paralyze and block decisions that aim to establish the required peace in crises. These countries' mandates are forcefully introduced to relatively weaker countries through sanctions, trade restrictions, and economic isolations.

Today, worldwide threats are more from economic and cyber warfare than traditional war. These crimes are a significant challenge to world peace. Cyber warfare has become a new dimension of conflict, where state-sponsored cyberattacks disrupt economies, national security, and democratic processes. The virtual battlefield

of cyber-attacks is quickly replacing traditional battlefields.

Climate change is another serious issue and is increasingly fuelling conflicts. Because of the limited availability and dwindling resources like water, arable land, and energy, these will be a bone of contention in coming years. Without all nations joining hands, this climate change-led resource scarcity will impact us adversely.

Global bodies need immediate structural reforms to expand their membership status, invite more extensive participation, and maintain a judicious power balance to remain relevant and future ready. The peacekeeping agenda must have an accurate funding model that empowers all to function effectively towards a common goal, and no country should be left aside. Furthermore, regional organisations like the African Union and ASEAN must be restructured to mediate local conflicts before they escalate globally. People-to-people connections: Track II diplomacy involving cultural confluence, increased trade ties, and tourism business should be used to improve secondary and

non-diplomatic relations, encouraging economic growth and peace. The EU is successfully practicing this coexistence theory for a sustainable peace process. Similar models could be explored in other regions, fostering cooperation rather than competition.

Pursuing world peace is not the responsibility of global institutions alone; it is a collective obligation of nations, civil societies and individuals. To maintain peace and harmony within the country, aggressive nationalism should be avoided. The media should strictly handle misinformation to avoid 'deep-fakes.' Education should promote and encourage more cross-country exchange programmes. People-to-people connections should be prioritised beyond political necessity for a faster peace-building process.

However, the question is whether our leaders really want it or whether it is just an optic of peace-building or showcasing of power, overlooking the true ambition of peace-building in mind.

*The writer is a Mumbai-based political analyst.*

## 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](mailto:edit@orissapost.com)



### Disruptive policies

Sir, Trump's "America First" trade policy is defined by a strong emphasis on direct negotiations, leveraging US economic and geopolitical power, and prioritising domestic economic interests. This approach aims to reshape global trade relations by focusing on American businesses and workers while reducing dependence on international supply chains. The policy suggests a shift away from multilateral agreements in favour of bilateral deals that the administration views as more beneficial to the US economy. A key component of this strategy is the use of tariffs to address trade imbalances and advance foreign policy goals. Trump's administration may impose tariffs on imports from major trading partners, including Canada, Mexico, and China. Additionally, there could be renewed tariffs on materials like steel and aluminum, which are crucial to domestic industries. These measures are intended to protect American manufacturers but could also lead to retaliatory actions from affected countries, potentially disrupting global trade. Another significant aspect is the review and renegotiation of existing trade agreements. However, such renegotiations could introduce uncertainty for global markets and international supply chains.

*Amarjeet Kumar, HAZARIBAGH*

### India and Bharat

Sir, RSS general secretary, D Hosabale insists that our nation be called 'Bharat,' and 'Bharat' only. He has serious objection to 'India' cohabiting with 'Bharat'. By a long chalk, one can only say that he is lending support to the BJP's stand in its fight with the southern states (Tamil Nadu, in particular), and opposes 'India', in much the same manner as the southern states have been opposing the entry of Hindi. For the record, there are umpteen countries in the world with two, or even more, names. A few that come to one's mind immediately are the Netherlands/Holland, UK/Britain, Japan/Nippon, North Korea/ Democratic People's Republic of Korea- and South Korea/ Republic of Korea. Indians have lived with 'India' ever since we became an Independent nation. One fails to see why the senior RSS functionary has upped the ante against the use of 'India'.

*Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)*



# India's 1st ever exploration licence auction for critical minerals in Goa

The licenses are for the exploration blocks for minerals like REE (rare earth elements), zinc, diamond, copper, PGE (platinum group minerals) and others

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 13:** Union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy Thursday launched nation's first-ever auction of Exploration Licences (ELs) for 13 exploration blocks for critical minerals.

Reddy launched the ELs in the presence of Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant in Dona Paula near here, a major reform aimed to unlock India's untapped critical and deep-seated mineral resources.

The licenses are for the exploration blocks for minerals like REE (rare earth elements), zinc, diamond, copper, PGE (platinum group minerals) and others. The programme also featured a roadshow on the 5th Tranche of Critical Mineral Blocks and the launch of AI Hackathon 2025, a Mineral Exploration Hackathon focused on "Mineral Targeting using AI" (Artificial Intelligence).

Addressing the gathering, Union Minister Reddy said that in the last 10 years, India's mining sector has achieved many milestones and emerged as one of the fastest and most dynamic sectors of the country.

Today marks another milestone in the industry, he said.

"We are laying the foundation for new era in mineral exploration," he said adding that the era is faster, more technologically-driven and globally competitive.

"We have established ourselves as a serious player in the global mineral landscape, it has also opened flood gates of opportunities for the private sector," he said.

Reddy said even greater milestones will be achieved in the coming years and it will pave the way for the rise of India as a global leader.

"Today we are launching 13 blocks for various critical and deep-seated minerals," the



minister said. The exploration possibilities have been contemplated from multiple states like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Karnataka, he said.

The exploration access would be granted exclusively, which would empower private companies to explore up to 1,000 square metres per licence, Reddy said. This new framework will encourage transparency, efficiency, innovation, ensuring that only the most promising areas remain for a detailed exploration, he said.

"In the first 10 years (of Narendra Modi government), we increased the exploration activities manifold. The biggest reform is the introduction of a transparent auction regime and the involvement of private sector," Reddy said.

The minister said India's legal framework for mining exploration was limited until now.

There was a crucial gap. There was no structural mechanism for the private companies. Recognising this, the Government of India introduced amendment to the MMDR Act in 2023. This is a reform that will open doors for a systematic exploration of minerals, he said.

Addressing the gathering, CM Sawant thanked the Union

Mines Ministry for choosing Goa for the roadshow and the launch of the ELs.

Sawant said mining has always been integral part of the economy, contributing significantly for employment, industrial growth and development.

"As we stand at the cusp of a new era of mineral exploration, this initiative reflects the government's firm commitment in self-reliance in critical minerals," he said.

These minerals are an integral part of our electronic industry, green industry and others, Sawant said, adding that a lot of countries are yet to explore for the mineral availabilities. The chief minister said there is a need to increase the pace of exploration in the country.

The amendment in the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act is a bold step which will help to tap the untapped mineral wealth of the country, he said.

Goa will immensely benefit from such an initiative, the CM said. As India moves for a green energy future, securing the supplies of critical minerals will play a key role, he said.

Referring to the Hackathon 2025, Sawant said that Goa, with its mining legacy, stands to benefit from such technology advancement.

# Delhi Police steps up vigil across capital

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** Delhi Police has heightened security across the national capital ahead of the Holi festival and Ramzan's Friday prayers, an official said Thursday.

Over 25,000 police personnel, along with para military forces will keep strict vigil in the city to maintain law and order situation.

The Holi festival March 14 coincides with Friday prayers during the holy month of Ramzan.

Police have identified more than 300 sensitive locations and are keeping an eye on every situation using drones and by monitoring CCTV cameras.

The meetings with Aman committees are also being held regularly at every district of the city. All 15 police districts in the national capital have been directed to increase patrolling, particularly in residential areas and places known for Holi gatherings, police said.

Drone surveillance is being maintained in northeast district to prevent untoward inci-



dents. Security measures are strengthened with constant monitoring, while potential risks are minimised through advanced drone technology, a senior police officer posted in the northeast district said.

Another senior police officer said that the patrolling is being conducted across the district and meetings with the markets welfare associations (MWAs) and resident welfare associations (RWAs) for peaceful conduct of the festivals.

"We are holding meetings with Aman committees in ev-

ery district since the Holi and Ramzan's Friday prayers are taking place on the same day. Both the parties are very cooperative and continuously are in touch with us," the officer said, adding that the meetings will also be carried out before Holi and Friday prayers to promote communal harmony and discourage the spread of rumours.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Traffic Police will hold joint pickets with the local police. Special teams will be deployed at major road intersections to check drunken driving and

red-light jumping. The officer said that strict checking on the day of Holi will be done.

Teams will keep an eye on those people who will be breaking the law. Special checking teams will be deployed at major intersections, drinking points and vulnerable points for the Holi celebrations to detect and prosecute traffic violations an officer of the Delhi Traffic Police said.

Police also suggested the people to celebrate responsibly. Drinking and driving not only endangers one's own life but also puts others at risk. Apart from drunk driving, special teams will be deployed to monitor rash driving, triple-riding on two-wheelers, and stunt biking.

Police said that they are also talking to imams of the mosque and seeking their cooperation also. Police patrolling through motorcycles and mobile vans will be carried out throughout the day. Radar guns will also be deployed to check incidences of over-speeding, they said.

# Goa CM Sawant to present state Budget March 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 13:** Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant will table the state government's Budget for 2025-26 March 26, the last day of the upcoming Budget Session of the legislative Assembly.

The date of the Budget presentation was decided during a meeting of the state Assembly's Business Advisory committee (BAC) held Wednesday.

The meeting was held at the assembly complex in Porvorim even as opposition parties, including the Congress and the Goa Forward Party (GFP) expressed their dissatisfaction over the functioning of the BAC.

The BAC meeting chaired by Speaker Ramesh Tawadkar discussed the agenda for the upcoming Assembly Session to be held between March 24 and 26.

CM Sawant said he would table the state Budget March 26, but it will not be passed during this session.

# Caravaggio's rare piece 'Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy' to come to India for first time

Head thrown back and bathed in an intense light, Mary in the painting is shown to be in the throes of a rapturous vision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** 'Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy', an iconic painting by Italian baroque master Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, will soon be available for Indian art and history enthusiasts for the first time at the Italian Cultural Centre here.

The painting, which was believed to be lost for centuries, will be showcased at the Italian Cultural Centre for a week from April 11, before moving to the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) in Saket.

Caravaggio is believed to



have created the painting in 1606 while in hiding to escape a death sentence. The painting was only known to people for centuries through its copies, it was missing till 2014, Andrea Anastasio, director of Italian

Cultural Centre, told PTI. After restoration and X-ray, the authenticity of the artwork was ascertained, he added.

Anastasio added that the painting's transportation is going to be difficult as it requires a tempera-

ture controlled container.

The painting depicts Mary Magdalen, a follower of Jesus Christ, who lived as a hermit in a cave at Sainte-Baume near Aix-en-Provence following his death.

According to the legends, she ate nothing, her only nourishment being the food of the spirit, for she was transported by angels seven times a day into heaven where she heard, with her bodily ears, the delightful harmonies of the celestial choirs.

Head thrown back and bathed in an intense light, Mary in the painting is shown to be in the throes of a rapturous vision.

Even as the painting remained hidden for more than four centuries, several other paintings inspired by of the original surfaced in the years following Caravaggio's death in 1610, especially Artemisia Gentileschi's work of the same name.

The details of the exhibition at the KNMA are awaited.

# 20-year longitudinal cohort study to diagnose diseases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 13:** The Goa government has launched a 20-year longitudinal cohort study, which will help diagnose chronic and non-communicable diseases in advance.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant launched the study Tuesday at Mantralaya in the presence of officials from the University of Oxford and Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai.

Talking to reporters, Sawant said the study is a historic decision that will benefit Goans in a big way.

He said blood samples of more than 1 lakh people would be collected as part of the study, and the diagnosis report would help understand the onset of various diseases, including chronic and non-communicable ailments.

Chronic illnesses will be diagnosed in advance. It will also help doctors advise patients on how to prevent them, he said.

Sawant said the study will

be conducted over 20 years and will help the next generation.

A senior government official said that the study is a ground-breaking health initiative aimed at tackling chronic and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in the state.

This longitudinal cohort study will assess the risk and epidemiology of NCDs, providing valuable insights into the risk factors and disease patterns in Goa, he said.

The official said the study is a collaborative effort between the Directorate of Health Services (DHS) Goa, the Centre for Cancer Epidemiology Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai, and the Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford.

He said the study is expected to inform policy and interventions to address the growing health concern of NCDs in Goa.

With this initiative, Goa is taking a proactive step towards improving the health and well-being of its citizens, he added.

# Free dialysis services in all Delhi govt hospitals: Min

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** The Delhi government plans to expand free dialysis services under the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme to all state-run hospitals, Health Minister Pankaj Singh said Thursday.

Speaking at an event on World Kidney Day, the minister highlighted the city government's commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the guidance of Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

Announcing plans to expand the free dialysis services, he also said economically weaker sections would be prioritised

in Delhi government hospitals, ensuring the same high-quality care for them as other patients.

Singh urged the medical staff to treat patients with professionalism and compassion, creating a more welcoming and supportive environment in hospitals. He laid stress on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle to protect kidney health and said, "The kidney is an essential organ that helps remove waste materials, regulate blood pressure, support red blood cell production and maintain bone health."

Singh highlighted the rising prevalence of kidney diseases, attributing it to high blood sugar, hypertension, obesity and modern lifestyle, urging people to prioritise healthy habits.

# Shigmo festival: Float parades to display Goa's culture

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Panaji, March 13:** Goa's spring festival, Shigmo, is set to showcase the coastal state's culture and tradition in float parades to be taken out on streets from March 15 to 29, officials have said and appealed to visitors to be a part of the celebration.

Shigmo is a time when Goa's cultural essence comes alive through folk performances, music and stunning float parades, state Tourism Minister Rohan A Khaunte told reporters Wednesday.

"It is an opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves in authentic Goan traditions while exploring the beauty of



our state. We encourage travellers to be part of this unique celebration and discover the many facets of Goa beyond its beaches," he said.

The festivities will commence in Ponda March 15, followed by Margao March 16, Quepem March 17 and Curchorem March 18, all in

South Goa, a senior tourism department official said.

On March 19, the celebrations will reach Shiroda (South Goa) and continue to

Calangute and Bicholim in North Goa March 20, Vasco (South Goa) March 21 and Panaji March 22.

The streets of Mapusa (north Goa) and Sanguem (South Goa) will come alive with cultural celebrations March 23, while Canacona and Cuncolim will host grand parades March 24, the official said.

The processions will move to Pernem (North Goa) March 25, Dharbandora (South Goa) March 26, Valpoi (North Goa) March 27, Sanquelim (North Goa) March 28, and finally conclude in Mandrem (North Goa) March 29, as per the Tourism department.

**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER TELANGIRI CANAL DIVISION, AMBAGUDA (K)**  
**SHORT QUOTATION CALL NOTICE NO.05/24-25, DATE:11.03.2025**  
 No.A-1202: Sealed quotations in plain paper are invited by the undersigned from the reputed authorised firms / dealers or registered agencies for Providing split Air Conditioner & CCTV system for upper Kolab Project Guest House & CCTV system for Upper Kolab Project Guest House at Bariniput as follows, so as sale and receive of quotation shall start from dt:13.03.2025 at 11.00 hr. and to reach in this office at 3.00 PM on dated 20.03.2025 and will be opened on dated 20.03.25 at 3.30 PM in the presence of suppliers or their authorized agents:

Sl. No.	Description of Items	Unit	Quantities
1	Supplying, Installation, Testing		
1	1.5 ton Split Air Conditioner (Carrier)	No	4
2	5 KVA Stabilizer for Air Conditioner	No	4
3	Copper Refrigerant piping with proper insulation	Mtr	4
4	2 mp ip Camera	No	8
5	4 Channel port switch	No	2
6	8 Channel nvr	No	1
7	2 TB Hard Disk	No	1
8	Cat 6 Cable	Mtr	300
9	Security 17 inch monitor	No	1
10	NVR rack	No	1
11	PVC Box	No	8
12	Extension Board	No	1
13	HDMI Cable	No	1
14	Installation Charges	No	8

Further details is available at O/o Superintending Engineer, Telangiri Canal Division, Ambaguda.  
**Sd./- Superintending Engineer**  
**OIPR-32434/11/0003/2425 Telangiri Canal Division, Ambaguda**



The atmosphere across the country is being vitiated. Earlier Holi was celebrated together by Hindus and Muslims like Eid



## KUKI-ZO COUNCIL LIFTS INDEFINITE SHUTDOWN

The Kuki-Zo Council in Manipur Thursday lifted the indefinite shutdown in the hill areas imposed since March 9 midnight, but remains firm in opposing the free movement announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the council said in a statement



## India announces \$1bn fund for creators' economy ahead of WAVES summit

New Delhi, March 13: The Centre Thursday announced a \$1 billion fund to give a boost to the emerging creators' economy in the country and reached out to envoys from over 100 countries seeking their participation in the first World Audio Visual and Entertainment Summit (WAVES) to be held in Mumbai.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis hosted the envoys here and sought their presence at the Roundtable of top media CEOs to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the WAVES summit.

India is positioning WAVES to be held from May 1 to 4 as the first convergence platform for the media and entertainment sector on the lines of the World Economic Forum at Davos, a gathering of international leaders from governance and business.

Fadnavis said Mumbai, the entertainment capital of India, was the perfect permanent venue for the WAVES summit like Davos is for the World Economic Forum and Cannes is for the eponymous film festival.

## Agents paid ₹4-5K for trafficking Bangladeshi girls into India: ED

New Delhi, March 13: A sum of ₹4,000-5,000 per person was being paid by Hyderabad-based flesh trade operators to agents based along the India-Bangladesh international border in West Bengal for trafficking Bangladeshi girls into the country, according to an ED investigation.

The money laundering probe stems from a Telangana Police FIR, a case re-registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), against a flesh trade and prostitution racket being run by two brothels located on the outskirts of the city. The Enforcement Directorate said in a statement Thursday that it has provisionally attached assets worth ₹1.90 lakh as part of this investigation and this includes funds kept in "Paytm wallets and bank accounts" as well as an immovable property of a man named Ruhl Amin Dhali, one of the "most prominent" agents involved in the illegal trafficking of Bangladeshi girls into India.

The accused, according to the ED, were running brothels at various places in and around Hyderabad and they also sent the victim girls to other brothels and agents, on a commission basis. They used "fake and forged" Indian identity documents and opened several bank accounts and online wallets for their illegal activities, the federal probe agency said.

# ISRO achieves de-docking of SpaDeX satellites

The SpaDeX mission was launched December 30 last year when the Indian Space Research Organisation placed in orbit two satellites -- SDX01 and SDX02 -- to demonstrate the docking experiment in space

post on 'X'. "SpaDeX satellites accomplished the unbelievable de-docking. This paves the way for smooth conduct of ambitious future missions including the Bharatiya Antriksha Station, Chandrayaan 4 & Gaganyaan," Singh said. "Congrats team ISRO. And heartening for every Indian," he said.



Later in a statement, ISRO said that after the undocking, it has planned further experiments with satellites.

circular orbit with 45-degree inclination, the space agency explained.

It added that the satellites are now orbiting independently and their health is normal.

With this, ISRO has now successfully demonstrated all the capabilities required for rendezvous, docking and undocking operations in a circular orbit.

ISRO said the in-orbit performance of the docked satellites was extensively analysed and

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Bangalore, March 13: ISRO Thursday said it has accomplished de-docking of the SpaDeX satellites, clearing the way for future missions such as exploring the moon, human spaceflight, and building its own space station.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh announced the successful de-docking of satellites in a

Singh said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's continuous patronage keeps the spirits soaring.

The SpaDeX mission was launched December 30 last year when the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) placed in orbit two satellites -- SDX01 and SDX02 -- to demonstrate the docking experiment in space.

After several attempts, the space agency successfully docked the two satellites January 16.

The undocking of the satellites took place in 460 km

# Parl panel flags poor fund use for water projects

The panel urged the Jal Shakti Ministry to strengthen monitoring and implementation mechanisms



## Over 11,300 habitations in 96 districts hit by water contamination

Parliamentary panel has raised concerns over water contamination issue in the country, highlighting that 11,348 habitations in 96 districts across seven states have not been provided with short-term measures for pollutants such as iron, nitrate, and heavy metals. In its report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday, the Standing Committee on Water Resources has urged the Centre to take swift action to ensure safe drinking water in these vulnerable regions. The report further revealed that uranium contamination remains a pressing issue in Punjab, where 32 habitations across nine districts are affected. Despite interim measures in 22 of these areas, 10 habitations still await any mitigation efforts, it said. The committee has called for urgent and long-term interventions to safeguard public health. "The Committee notes that all arsenic and fluoride affected habitations have been covered by community water purification plants as an interim measure. However, they (panel) further observe that there are 11,348 quality affected habitations (iron, salinity, nitrate, and heavy metals) spread over 96 districts of seven states where short-term measures have not been provided," the report said.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Voicing concern over poor utilisation of funds, a parliamentary panel has said the Department of Water Resource, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, utilised only around 58 per cent of the revised allocation of ₹21,640.88 crore for 2024-25 by the end of December 2024.

The panel urged the Jal Shakti Ministry to strengthen monitoring and implementation mechanisms. In its report tabled in Parliament, the Standing Committee on Water Resources said nearly 40 per cent of the allocated funds remained unspent and highlighted delays in fund disbursement and project execution.

The ministry has attributed the low spending to the fact that expenditure typically picks up after the monsoon season and assured the panel that pending proposals worth ₹3,000 crore were under active consideration.

The report highlighted significant increases in budgetary allocations for key schemes under the Jal Shakti ministry.

The total budget for the department has been raised to ₹25,276.83 crore for 2025-26, an 18.54 per cent increase from the ₹21,323.10 crore allocated in the previous year. The rise is driven largely by higher allocations for groundwater management,

river basin development, and the Polavaram Irrigation Project.

The allocation for groundwater management and regulation has increased by 56.61 per cent to ₹509 crore in 2025-26, reflecting the government's push to strengthen groundwater mapping and management under the National Aquifer Mapping and Management Programme (NAQUIM).

The River Basin Management programme has also received a 56.98 per cent increase, with ₹243 crore allocated for 2025-26. The Brahmaputra Board, which manages flood control and erosion in the

northeast, is expected to take up new initiatives, including preparing master plans for 15 sub-basins.

However, some schemes have faced budget cuts. The National Hydrology Project (NHP) saw a 98 per cent reduction, from ₹661.20 crore in 2024-25 to ₹13 crore in 2025-26, as it is set to conclude in September 2025.

Similarly, the allocation for the Command Area Development and Water Management (CADWM) scheme has been reduced by 39.28 per cent to ₹850 crore, following lower-than-expected expenditure in the previous year due to delayed approval of a sub-scheme.

# Morning walks with faculty to prevent student suicides

The measures come after IIT-Guwahati faced massive protests last semester following back-to-back student suicides

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Ice-breaking sessions for freshers during their first week on campus, morning walks with faculty members, mandatory counselling sessions and comprehensive medical check-ups, and stress escape room workshops are part of IIT-Guwahati's plan to ensure students' mental wellbeing and prevent suicides. The measures come after the institute faced massive protests last semester following back-to-back student suicides.

According to Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Guwahati Director Devendra Jalihal, the institute has chalked out a comprehensive plan to prevent suicides among students.

"We have established a dedicated mental health and counselling system in the form of a Center for Holistic Wellbeing. SAATHI Counselling Club, a

part of this centre consisting of student volunteers, supports fellow students in their mental and overall wellbeing with the help of professional counsellors," he told PTI.

"We are exploring roping in retired army personnel as hostel special stewards who will routinely interact with the students to make them comfortable and share their observations with the counsellors. All of this will be done in a confidential manner and while ensuring that the students do not feel intimidated or there is no violation of their privacy," Jalihal said.

Nutritionists are also being hired to help the students with diets that can help address anxiety and stress, he added.

Faced by cases of student suicide, several IITs are taking different measures to address concerns over their mental health.

The alleged suicide of a third-year Computer Science student



from Uttar Pradesh in September -- the fourth in 2024 -- had sparked protests by IIT-Guwahati students, demanding justice and proper mental health support for all. Perumal Alagarsamy, the dean of student affairs at IIT-Guwahati, is spearheading the mental wellbeing initiatives on campus.

"We have decided that for the first week, when the freshers arrive on campus, there will be no classes but an acclimatisation programme so they do not feel out of place. The students will

be invited for morning walks with faculty members so they are able to build a rapport with each other before entering the classroom," Alagarsamy told PTI.

"The Peer Mentorship Programme aligns with this notion by assigning peer mentors to the new students. These mentors (will) play a pivotal role in providing relevant information, clearing doubts, and assisting with various challenges, serving as guiding lights for the newcomers when they

## Faced by cases of student suicide, several IITs are taking different measures to address concerns over their mental health

feel lost," he added. As soon as the freshers arrive on campus, an ice-breaking session will be conducted to establish a warm and inclusive atmosphere and facilitate connections, Alagarsamy explained.

"These sessions aim to raise awareness about mental health and overall wellbeing while acquainting the students with the resources and the support available through the Counselling Cell and the Center for Holistic Wellbeing," he said.

"These ice-breaking sessions will be conducted within each hostel to help expand the students' social networks, enabling them to connect with their peers through enjoyable games and activities," he added. To help the students cope with the pressure of semester examinations, the SAATHI Counselling Club recently conducted a stress escape room workshop aimed at sharing knowledge on dealing with and manage stress and exploring entrepreneurship and career choices.

The institute has four full-time counsellors while Your Dost -- a start-up incubated at IIT-Guwahati -- has been roped in to provide round-the-clock access to the counsellors.

Mandatory interactions will be scheduled with the counsellors for all students so any early signs can be identified and mandatory comprehensive health checks conducted.

## SHORT TAKES

### Punjab, UAE explore trade opportunities

Chandigarh: Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann Thursday held a meeting with UAE Ambassador to India Abdunnasser Jamal Alshaali to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral trade, investment and cultural exchange. During the meeting, Mann showcased Punjab as a land of opportunities, highlighting its strong agricultural base, industrial potential and rapidly growing business ecosystem, said an official release. He emphasised that Punjab and the UAE share a natural synergy in trade and commerce, which can be leveraged for mutual benefit. Mann pointed out Punjab's stronghold in food production, dairy, and agri-processing, stating that the state can play a pivotal role in meeting UAE's food security needs.

### ED conducts raids in gold smuggling case

Bangalore: The Enforcement Directorate Thursday raided multiple locations in Bangalore and some other places as part of a money laundering probe linked to probe "larger conspiracy" into an alleged gold smuggling racket in which an actor was recently arrested by the DRI in Karnataka, official sources said. A case has been filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) taking cognisance of a recent Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) FIR and a Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) case in which actor Ranya Rao was arrested, the sources said. The probe aims to look at the larger conspiracy of gold smuggling through airports and the generation of proceeds of crime by various people.

### Red alert in Kerala's Palakkad district

Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) declared a red alert in Kerala's Palakkad district Thursday after detecting high levels of ultraviolet radiation. The ultraviolet radiation level in the district has been recorded at an index of 11, measured through the ultraviolet (UV) meters installed at Thrithala and Ponnani for Palakkad and Malappuram districts, an official release said here Thursday. The KSDMA has warned the public to take adequate safety precautions as prolonged exposure to ultraviolet rays can cause sunburn, skin diseases, eye diseases, and other health problems.





After the reorganisation of J-K, the apportionment of assets and liabilities is to be carried out as per the notification issued by the general administration department in October 2020

INDIA, BANGLADESH HOLD NAVAL EXERCISE

India and Bangladesh conducted a naval exercise and coordinated patrol in the Bay of Bengal this week that provided an opportunity for both the navies to develop closer links in tactical planning, coordination and information sharing for undertaking seamless maritime operations.



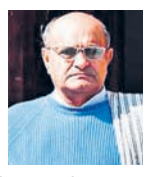
of the day quote

In last eight years, 210 crore plantations have taken place in the entire state and also ensure their survival



YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH

Members of civil society from both countries have every year carried out candle march on March 23 to make the demand. I request you that an NDA delegation should be sent to Lahore



KC TYAGI | JD(0) LEADER

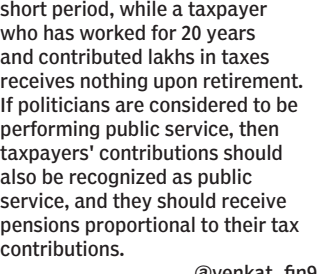
State government has entered into an agreement with global tech giant Microsoft to train two lakh youth in Artificial Intelligence and advanced skills



NARA LOKESH | IT MINISTER, ANDHRA PRADESH

POST OF THE DAY

I find it difficult to understand why India provides lifelong pensions to politicians who serve for a relatively short period, while a taxpayer who has worked for 20 years and contributed lakhs in taxes receives nothing upon retirement.



@venkat\_fin9

SHORT TAKES

7 killed as gas tanker collides with 2 vehicles

Dhar (MP): Seven persons were killed and three injured after a gas tanker collided with a car and a jeep in Madhya Pradesh's Dhar district, police said Thursday.

Family of 4 found dead in Chennai

Chennai: Four members of a family including two teenage sons were found dead in their residence here Thursday, police said.

Man strangled to death for refusing Holi colours

Jaipur: A 25-year-old man was allegedly strangled to death in Rajasthan's Dausa district for trying to stop three men from applying colour on him ahead of Holi, police said Thursday.

REVISITING MGNREGA

CONGRESS PUSHES FOR CRUCIAL REFORMS

Cong highlights recommendations of Parliament panel calling for MGNREGS wage revision

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: The Congress Thursday highlighted the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, including a revision of the MGNREGS wage rates and making Aadhar-Based Payment System optional under the flagship scheme.

In its report, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development said the suspension of funds to West Bengal under MGNREGS and other schemes has led to "severe consequences", including a sharp increase in distress migration and disruptions in rural development initiatives.

The panel, headed by Congress MP from Odisha Saptagiri Ulaka, also said there is stagnation of funds in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

Congress General Secretary (In-charge, Communications) Jairam Ramesh said, "The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, under the chairmanship of Saptagiri Ulaka, has released its Demand for Grants report for 2025-2026."

"It has made some key recommendations - Revision of the wage rates due under MGNREGA and a move away from the CPI-Agricultural Laborers Index to determine the hike in MGNREGA wages. The release of all funds due to West Bengal under MGNREGA and other



The panel, headed by Congress MP from Odisha Saptagiri Ulaka, said there is stagnation of funds in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

schemes," Ramesh said. He also highlighted the panel's recommendation to avoid delays in the payment of wages and material under the MGNREGA, which as of February 15 amount to ₹12,219.18 crore in wages and ₹11,227.09 crore in material components.

He said the panel has also recommended Aadhar-Based Payment System must be made optional for payment of MGNREGA wages and there should be an increase in guaranteed working days under MGNREGA from 100 days to 150 days.

The panel has also called for dilution of the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Act 2013 by States need to be discouraged.

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17 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bijapur, March 13: Seventeen Naxalites, nine of them collectively carrying cash rewards of Rs 24 lakh on their heads, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Thursday, a senior police official said.

The cadres, including a couple, turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here, he said.

The Naxalites cited disappointment with the "hollow" and "inhuman" Maoist ideology, exploitation of innocent tribals by senior cadres and increasing influence of security forces, Bijapur Senior Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Yadav said.

They were also impressed with the 'Niya Nellanar' (your good village) scheme under which security forces and administration have been striving to provide basic amenities and carry out development works in interior areas, he said.

good village) scheme under which security forces and administration have been striving to provide basic amenities and carry out development works in interior areas, he said.

All the surrendered Naxalites were active in different capacities in the Gangaloor area committee of the outlawed Maoist organisation, he said.

Of them, Dinesh Modiam (36), a divisional committee member of Maoists, was wanted in 26 cases in Bijapur district and carried a reward of Rs 8 lakh, the senior police official said.

Modiam's wife Jyoti Tati, alias Kala Modiam (32), and Dula Karam (32), both active as area committee members, carried a reward of Rs 5 lakh each, he added.

Six of the surrendered cadres carried a bounty of Rs 1 lakh each on, he said. District Reserve Guard, Bastar Fighters, Special Task Force, CRPF and its elite unit CoBRA (Commando Battalion for Resolute Action) played a crucial role in the surrender of these Naxalites, Yadav said.



Devotees perform 'Holika Dahan' as part of Holi festival celebrations, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, Thursday

BEFORE SAMBHAL

When a train was halted for Holi and Haj pilgrims

The festival falls on a Friday during Ramzan and the administration in various states, particularly in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh, is on its toes to ensure 'jumma' prayers and Holi pass off peacefully

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: It was Holi of 1999, the very day Haj pilgrims were to take a train from Uttar Pradesh's communally sensitive town of Mau to Delhi. The situation was fraught - till the administration imposed prohibitory orders to temporarily stop the train so the pilgrims in white didn't come face to face with the drenched in colour revellers.

Twenty-six years later, it is another Holi and another coincidence. The festival falls on a Friday during Ramzan and

the administration in various states, particularly in Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh, is on its toes to ensure 'jumma' prayers and Holi pass off peacefully.

That spring of 1999 and the predicament of the authorities in Mau has been recalled in detail in former Uttar Pradesh director general of police (DGP) OP Singh's book "Through My Eyes: Sketches from a Cop's Notebook".

The authorities in Mau served the prohibitory order on loco pilot (train driver) after the Railways refused a request from the authorities to delay the afternoon train by a few hours till Holi festivities end, he writes.

"It was the first time in India's history that an order under section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), a law typically used to prohibit unlawful assemblies and prevent disturbances, was invoked not to control a mob, but to stop a moving train," the former state police chief says in the chapter titled



"The Train under 144 CrPC".

The former DGP says that Mau, a region known for its rich yet delicate communal fabric, had found itself at the heart of an unprecedented administrative decision in 1999.

A seemingly routine train schedule had the potential to disrupt peace, but an extraordinary step ensured that harmony prevailed.

That particular year, he recounts, Holi coincided with the

departure of a sizable population of Haj pilgrims who were scheduled to board a train from Mau to Delhi, their first stop before flying to Mecca.

"The train was scheduled to arrive at noon, exactly when Holi celebrations would be at their peak. Streets would be filled with revelers throwing coloured powders and water, the air thick with the scent of festive sweets and burning pyres of Holika

Dahan from the previous night," the officer writes.

The Muslim pilgrims, the chapter says, dressed in white clothes and symbolizing purity and devotion, would have had no way of passing through without being inadvertently caught in the revelry and the district administration foresaw the problem.

Sensing that any "unintentional provocation" may "ignite tempers" in the district that had a history of communal skirmishes, the authorities sought the help of the Railway authorities "with a simple request: delay the train by a few hours".

The country's largest public transporter refused, stating that train schedules could not be altered for local events, no matter how sensitive the situation was and that "operational punctuality" was foremost for the Railways.

"Faced with an inflexible railway system and the looming risk of communal discord, the district administration took a

bold and unprecedented step." "The prohibitory order was served directly to the train driver, legally preventing the train from proceeding beyond a designated railway station in a neighboring district," the former DGP says.

Police and other government authorities were deployed alongside the train that, as per Singh, remained "stationary for a few hours", not due to technical failure or scheduling delays, but by the sheer force of law.

The Holi celebrations "died down slowly" and the pilgrims boarded the train without disturbance, their white robes unstained, their hearts set on their spiritual voyage, he writes.

While the decision to delay the train was "extraordinary and controversial, it demonstrated a profound understanding of ground realities an acknowledgment that sometimes, rules must bend to uphold peace and coexistence", Singh says.

The dignity of these exams is the right of our children and it has to be protected at all costs

RAHUL GANDHI | LEADER OF OPPOSITION



RAHUL GANDHI | LEADER OF OPPOSITION

Future of 85L children in 6 states at risk: Rahul

RAHUL SLAMS BJP OVER EXAM PAPER LEAKS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 13: Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi Thursday said examination paper leaks were a "systematic failure" and asserted that the "serious problem" would be eradicated only when all political parties and governments forget their differences to take strict steps together.

The former Congress chief said the future of 85 lakh children in six states is at risk as paper leak has become the most dangerous "padmavyuh" for our youth.

"Paper leaks put hard-working students and their families into uncertainty and stress, taking away the fruits of their hard work. It also sends the wrong message to the next generation that dishonesty can be better than hard work, which is completely unacceptable," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

"It has not even been a year since the NEET paper leak shook the country. After our protest, the Modi government hid behind a new law and called it a solution, but so many recent leaks have proven that to be a failure as well," he said.

This serious problem is a systematic failure, Gandhi asserted. It will be eradicated only when all political parties and governments forget their differences and take strict steps

together, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"The dignity of these exams is the right of our children and it has to be protected at all costs," Gandhi asserted.

Using the 'chakravyyuh' metaphor as a leitmotif, Gandhi had last year claimed that an atmosphere of fear prevails all around with a group of six trapping the entire country in a 'chakravyyuh' he promised would be broken by the INDIA bloc.

Chakravyyuh' refers to a multi-layered military formation aimed at trapping a warrior by opponents placed strategically in an alignment resembling a lotus-shaped labyrinth. Gandhi had said the 'chakravyyuh' is also called a 'padmavyuh' for its resemblance to a lotus (BJP's election symbol) formation.

# international



I think we live in a global economy. Everything is interlinked. And obviously, one of the great advantages of having a situation of free trade is to create the conditions for all countries to benefit. When we enter into a trade war, I believe all will lose  
ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY GENERAL, UN

**12TH ANNIVERSARY OF PAPACY**  
Pope Francis marked the 12th anniversary of his papacy Thursday with increasingly positive medical updates four weeks into his hospitalisation for double pneumonia. The pope spent another tranquil night, the Vatican said



## of the day quote

America threatens with military action, but in my opinion, this threat is irrational. Iran is capable of delivering a reciprocal blow, and it will certainly do so  
AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI | SUPREME LEADER, IRAN

Military operations are never the solution to problems. Even major wars have been resolved through negotiations and efforts for peace and stability  
IMRAN KHAN | JAILED FORMER PM, PAKISTAN

Three years of war against Russia have made Ukraine's armed forces one of the strongest in Europe. At the same time, the country has accumulated extensive experience in defending itself against Russia  
ANTTI HÄRKÄNEN | DEFENCE MINISTER, FINLAND

## SHORT TAKES

### Genocide allegations

**Geneva:** United Nations-backed experts Thursday accused Israel of "the systematic use of sexual, reproductive and other gender-based violence" in its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Israel's mission to the UN in Geneva rejected the allegations and accused the Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was created by the UN-backed Human Rights Council, of relying on "second-hand, single, uncorroborated sources." Israel has refused to cooperate with the commission, accusing it and the council of being biased against it. In its report released Thursday, the commission examined the widespread destruction of Gaza, the use of heavy explosives in civilian areas and Israeli attacks on hospitals and health facilities. It said all three led to "disproportionate violence against women and children."

### India's aid to Lanka

**Colombo:** India has donated urgently-needed medicines to Sri Lanka responding to an urgent request from Colombo, the Indian High Commission said here Thursday. India gifted 50,000 ampoules of Furosemide injection 20mg/2ml to cater to its shortage at Sri Lankan hospitals in the immediate term. These were handed over by Santosh Jha, the High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, to the Minister of Health and Mass Media Nalinda Jayatissa. "India has been a reliable friend and first responder for Sri Lanka during times of difficulties and shortages, including in the health sector," a release from the Indian High Commission said.

### Oz flexes muscle

**Hong Kong:** Australia is scrambling to deploy new long-range missiles as the recent arrival of powerful Chinese warships off the Australian coast delivers a sharp reminder of Beijing's growing naval muscle. In a move to boost military firepower, Canberra plans to arm Australian soldiers with anti-ship missiles and advanced targeting radars to protect the country's vast maritime approaches, according to contract announcements as well as a flurry of recent official speeches and ministerial statements. Two new types of advanced anti-ship missiles for the army fired from mobile launchers are under evaluation with a decision expected by the end of the year, the government has said.

## BALUCHISTAN TRAIN ATTACK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Islamabad, March 13:** Pakistan accused India of "sponsoring terrorism" Thursday without directly implicating it in the Balochistan train attack that killed 21 passengers.

Foreign Office spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan at the weekly press briefing was asked several questions about the deadly attack on Tuesday, which led to a hostage situation lasting for more than 24 hours.

"Terrorists were in direct communications with Afghanistan-based planners throughout the incident," he said, adding that Pakistan has repeatedly asked Afghanistan to deny the use of its soil for terrorist groups like the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) for their attacks against Pakistan.

"We urge Afghanistan to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers, of this reprehensible act of terrorism accountable

## Pak accuses India of 'sponsoring terrorism'

and cooperate with the government of Pakistan to bring all those who are concerned with this attack, including the real sponsors of terrorism to justice," he said. When asked about any change of policy because India was blamed in the past for any activity by the BLA, while this time finger was pointed towards Afghanistan, the spokesman said there was no change in the policy.

"There is no shift in our policy. And again, the facts have not changed. India is involved in sponsoring terrorism against Pakistan. What I was referring to was, in this particular incident, we have evidence of calls being traced to Afghanistan. This is what I said," he responded.

To another question, he said that India has been trying to destabilise its neighbouring countries and running a global assassination campaign.

"In our region, unfortunately, we have many forces against



India is involved in sponsoring terrorism against Pakistan. What I was referring to was, in this particular incident, we have evidence of calls being traced to Afghanistan  
SHAFQAT ALI KHAN | FOREIGN OFFICE SPOKESPERSON, PAKISTAN

peace who do not want to see Pakistan reap the dividends of its unprecedented and sincere efforts in counter-terrorism and in building a peaceful region. The latest terrorist attack against Jaffar Express near Sibi Balochistan was also orchestrated and directed by terrorist ring leaders operating from abroad," he said.

Responding to another question, he said that the "Indian media is kind of glorifying the BLA which itself reflects the Indian policy, in some ways, if

## COMMUNAL TENSIONS

### India's remarks on B'desh unwarranted, says Foreign Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Dhaka, March 13:** Bangladesh Thursday termed the recent remarks by the Ministry of the External Affairs on the country as "unwarranted" and amounting to "interference" in another country's domestic affairs.

Last week, India voiced concern over Bangladesh releasing certain "violent extremists" and underlined that it is the responsibility of the interim government in Dhaka to protect Hindus and other minorities as well as their religious institutions.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mohammad Rafiqul Alam said Dhaka took note of the MEA's comments concerning Bangladesh's elections, law and order situation and matters related to minorities.

"Bangladesh firmly believes these issues are entirely its internal affairs, and such remarks are unwarranted and tantamount to interference in another country's domestic matters," he said in his weekly media briefing.

Alam, who also serves as the ministry's public diplomacy wing director, said New Delhi's comments were misleading as well as those did not "reflect the reality on the ground".

## Russia reclaims Sudzha

Moscow says it has retaken Kursk's biggest town as Putin advisor says truce would help Ukraine

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Moscow, March 13:** Russia claimed Thursday that its troops have driven the Ukrainian army out of the biggest town in Russia's Kursk border region, as a senior Kremlin official said that a US-proposed 30-day ceasefire in the war three years after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine would help Kyiv by giving its weary and short-handed military a break.

The Russian Defence Ministry's claim that it recaptured the town of Sudzha, hours after President Vladimir Putin visited his commanders in Kursk and wore military fatigues, could not be independently verified. Ukrainian officials made no immediate comment on the claim.

The renewed Russian military push and Putin's high-profile visit to his troops came as US President Donald Trump presses for a diplomatic end to the war. The US Tuesday lifted its March 3 suspension of military aid for Kyiv after senior US and Ukrainian officials made progress on how to stop the fighting during talks held in Saudi Arabia.

Trump said Wednesday that "it's up to Russia now" as his administration presses Moscow



The Ukrainian army's foothold inside Russia has been under intense pressure for months from a renewed effort by Russian forces, backed by North Korean troops. Ukraine's daring incursion last August led to the first occupation of Russian soil by foreign troops since World War II and embarrassed the Kremlin

to agree to the ceasefire. The US president has made veiled threats to hit Russia with new sanctions if it won't engage with peace efforts.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday that US negotiators were on their way to Russia, but he wouldn't comment on Moscow's view of the ceasefire proposal.

they haven't started yet, it would be wrong to talk about it in public," he told reporters.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News that national security adviser Mike Waltz spoke Wednesday with his Russian counterpart. She also confirmed that Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff will head to Moscow for talks with Russian officials,

possibly including Putin.

Russian news agencies reported Thursday that Witkoff's plane had landed in Moscow. It wasn't immediately possible to verify the reports.

Senior US officials say they hope to see Russia stop attacks on Ukraine within the next few days.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign policy adviser, complained in televised remarks Thursday that a ceasefire would grant a "temporary break for the Ukrainian military."

Ushakov said that Moscow wants a "long-term peaceful settlement that takes into account Moscow's interests and concerns." His comments came a day after his phone call with Waltz.

Ushakov's comments echoed statements from Putin, who has repeatedly said a temporary ceasefire would benefit Ukraine and its Western allies.

The US still has about \$3.85 billion in congressionally authorized funding for future arms shipments to Ukraine, but the Trump administration has shown no interest so far in using that authority to send additional weapons as it awaits the outcome of peace overtures.

## Armenia, Azerbaijan agree to end nearly 40 years of conflict



REUTERS

**Tbilisi, March 13:** Armenian and Azerbaijani officials said Thursday that they had agreed the text of a peace agreement to end nearly four decades of conflict between the South Caucasus countries, a sudden breakthrough in a fitful and often bitter peace process.

The two post-Soviet countries have fought a series of wars since the late 1980s when Nagorno-Karabakh, a region in Azerbaijan that had a mostly ethnic-Armenian population at the time, broke away from Azerbaijan with support from Armenia.

Armenia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Thursday that a draft peace agreement with Azerbaijan had been finalised from its side.

"The peace agreement is ready for signing. The Republic of Armenia is ready to start consultations with the Republic of Azerbaijan on the date and place of signing the agreement." In its statement, Azerbaijan's

Foreign Ministry said: "We note with satisfaction that the negotiations on the text of the draft Agreement on Peace and the Establishment of Interstate Relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia have been concluded."

However, the timeline for signing the deal is uncertain as Azerbaijan has said a prerequisite for its signature is a change to Armenia's constitution, which it says makes implicit claims to its territory.

Armenia denies such claims, but Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has said repeatedly in recent months that the country's founding document needs to be replaced and has called for a referendum to do so. No date has been set.

Russia's TASS state news agency cited Pashinyan as telling journalists Thursday that the agreement would prevent personnel from third countries deploying along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border.

That provision would likely cover a European Union civilian monitoring mission that Baku has criticised, as well as Russian border guards who police parts of Armenia's frontiers.

The outbreak of hostilities in the late 1980s prompted mass expulsions of hundreds of thousands of mostly Muslim Azeris from Armenia and Armenians, who are majority Christian, from Azerbaijan.



A boy throws ice into the sea in Nuuk, Greenland

PTI PHOTO

## UK PM declares war on red tape, abolishes health body

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**London, March 13:** British Prime Minister Keir Starmer Thursday declared a war on red tape and bureaucracy, announcing the abolition of an "arms-length body" that manages the taxpayer-funded National Health Service (NHS) among some efficiency measures in his mission to "reshape" government.

In a major policy speech during a visit to Hull in northern England, Starmer said the NHS England will be phased out to bring the country's health service entirely under "democratic control" of the



A bloated and inefficient bureaucracy cannot be justified. We have been left with two large organisations doing the same roles with an enormous amount of duplication  
WES STREETING | HEALTH SECRETARY

as the NHS should be taken by an arms-length body, NHS England," said Starmer.

"And I can't in all honesty explain to the British people why they should spend their money on two layers of bureaucracy. That money could and should be spent on nurses, doctors, GP appointments," he said.

"So today I can announce we're going to cut bureaucracy

## Israel bombs Syrian capital



REUTERS

**Damascus, March 13:** Israel carried out an air strike on the Syrian capital Damascus Thursday, targeting what the military said was a command centre belonging to the Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad, used to direct 'terrorist activities' against Israel.

A nine-second video released by the military, purportedly showing the air strike, captured what appeared to be an explosion at the edge of a building followed by thick plumes of smoke.

The military said the command centre was used to plan and direct 'terrorist activities' by Islamic Jihad against Israel.

Islamic Jihad spokesperson Muhammad al-Haj Musa denied the targeted building was a command centre, writing on Telegram that it was an empty house.

Two Syrian security sources told Reuters that target was a Palestinian person. It was not immediately clear if there were any casualties. Syria's state news agency said the building was located at the edge of Damascus.

## European Parl under corruption probe

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Brussels, March 13:** Belgian federal prosecutors announced Thursday the arrests of several people as part of a corruption probe linked to the European Parliament amid reports in local media that Chinese company Huawei bribed EU lawmakers.

About 100 federal police officers carried out 21 searches in Brussels, the Flanders and Wallonia regions, and Portugal, the federal prosecutor's office said.

The suspects were arrested for questioning in "connection with their alleged involvement in active corruption within the European Parliament, as well as for forgery and use of forgeries," prosecutors said. "The offences were allegedly committed by a criminal organisation."

According to an investigation by Le Soir newspaper and other media, lobbyists working for Chinese telecoms giant Huawei are suspected of bribing current or former European Parliament members to promote the company's commercial policy in Europe.

Huawei public relations representatives in London did not respond to an emailed request for comment and could not be reached by phone.

The European Parliament said only that the assembly "takes note of the information" and when requested, "always cooperates fully with the judicial authorities."

Huawei, which makes cell-phones and is the biggest maker of networking gear for phone and internet carriers, has been caught in tensions between the United States and China over technology and trade.

across the state... I'm bringing management of the NHS back under democratic control by abolishing the arms-length body NHS England. That will put the NHS at the heart of government where it belongs," he added.

In wider civil service reforms, Starmer noted that the state had become "bigger, but weaker" and not delivering on its core purpose of getting things done for the British people. "The need for greater urgency now could not be any clearer. We must move further and faster on security and renewal. Every pound spent, every regulation, every decision must deliver for working people," said Starmer.



**We deeply regret this measure. Tariffs are taxes. They are bad for business, and even worse for consumers**  
URSULA VON DER LEYEN | PRESIDENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

## HEFTY DISCOUNTS BY OLA ELECTRIC

Ola Electric Thursday announced limited-time Holi flash sale offers for its S1 range of electric scooters. Under this sale, customers can avail discounts of up to 26,750 on S1 Air and ₹22,000 on S1 X+ (Gen 2), with the models now starting at ₹89,999, and ₹82,999, respectively, the company said in a statement. The flash sale began March 13 and ends March 17



## of the day uote

**Our data costs are a fraction of what they would be in Europe, the US, or any other developed country. When we combine low-cost data with the high-quality talent that India possesses, we have a revolution awaiting us in the field of creativity and technology**

PUNJ GOYAL | COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER

**Employers must invest in skilling, mentorship, and leadership pipelines tailored for blue-collar women. Increasing women's participation today is more than just about diversity, it's an economic necessity**

SASHI KUMAR | HEAD OF SALES, INDEED INDIA

**The financial services industry has moved beyond innovation pilots to real-world implementation in 2024-25. Firms are integrating GenAI with core banking systems, including CRM, loan origination, card management platforms, among other areas**

PRATIK SHAH | PARTNER AND NATIONAL LEADER (FINANCIAL SERVICES), EY INDIA

## ECONOMIC RISKS LOOM

# \$1tn jolt: Stocks selloff burns investors

Uncertainty about the impact on global growth from a burst of policies under US President Trump adds to worries over weak domestic earnings and persistent foreign outflows

REUTERS

**Bangalore, March 13:** As India's longest equity slump in nearly three decades wipes out roughly \$1 trillion in market capitalization, the major blow to retail investors is denting consumer spending and threatening to further slow growth in the world's fifth-largest economy.

Investors trying to catch their breath may have to wait longer for the selloff to ebb, analysts say.

**The equity market correction could result in a moderation of household investment and urban consumption demand, and that could possibly weigh on economic growth**

GAURA SEN GUPTA | ECONOMIST, IDFC FIRST BANK

That spells more trouble for consumer spending and the broader economy, which is expected to grow at its slowest pace in four years in the current financial year due to weak urban demand. Consumer spending, already hurt by sluggish income growth and high inflation, makes up half of India's gross domestic product.

Sonal Varma and Aurodeep Nandi, economists at Nomura, concurred, cautioning that "income struggles and balance sheet stress" will drag on urban consumption and growth.

The income strains have intensified for many investors including 31-year-old Mum-



**Investors cut spending, raising more risks for economic growth**  
**Nifty 50 down 14.5% from September peak; Sensex off 13.9%**  
**Small, mid-caps in bear market grip, drop 20% from record highs**  
**Retail, large investors face stiff losses**  
**Market fall hits trading volumes, hurts online brokerages**

bai-based Vilas Sahay, after the benchmark NSE Nifty 50 and BSE Sensex indices tumbled about 14% since September; the retail-focussed small-cap and mid-cap indices have fared even worse, dropping over 20% and confirming a bear market last month.

Lured by a dizzying rally in the benchmark indices, which more than doubled since the Covid-19 pandemic until the third quarter of last year, Sahay is among nearly 100 million new investors who took to trading stocks and equity derivatives via low-cost trading platforms.

Sahay invested his ₹1,00,000 (\$1,150) savings in equities in January 2024, doubling his

money by August, which encouraged him to borrow funds for riskier options trading.

When markets tumbled, he suffered losses and borrowed more on hopes of a rebound, trapping him in debt.

"The thing with option trading is that the gains are massive, but I was underprepared to face the loss," he said. Sahay and his family have slashed spending to a bare minimum.

Reuters spoke to two dozen retail investors across many major cities, including Mumbai, Chennai and New Delhi. Most, rattled by the sharp fall in markets, said they were considering pausing or cutting their overall spending including reducing investments in

markets in the near term.

Puneet Goyal, a 36-year-old from Udaipur in Rajasthan, is delaying plans to buy a house, after the market downturn wiped roughly 14% or ₹2 million off his portfolio's peak value. He was hoping to cash out from the markets to make initial payments for the home.

There are also early signs of the market slump impacting auto sales.

Two-wheeler sales fell 9% in February, data from an auto industry body showed, while passenger vehicle dispatches grew a modest 2%, which Nomura analysts partly blamed on weak consumer sentiment from market volatility.

**DIMINISHING RETAIL INTEREST**  
An extended market slump risks slowing the steady flow of retail money that has helped cushion losses during foreign investor sell-offs, fund managers said.

Retail and high-net-worth individual (HNI) ownership, opens new tab in all listed companies on India's National Stock Exchange hit a record 18.2% by December-end, surpassing foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) for the first time since 2006.

But many investors are now rethinking their bets.

"I am thinking whether to pause the investments or continue," 29-year-old Mansoor Khan, who started investing in 2019, said.

He is considering moving investments to safer assets, such as gold, and pausing Systematic Investment Plans (SIP) - an in-

## FIRM GLOBAL CUES

### Gold reclaims all-time high level of ₹89,450

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** Gold prices climbed by ₹600 to revisit the all-time high of ₹89,450 per 10 grams in the national capital Thursday amid a firm global trend, according to local marketmen.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had settled at ₹88,850 per 10 grams Wednesday.

Gold of 99.5 per cent purity advanced by ₹600 to reclaim its all-time high level of ₹89,050 per 10 grams. It had settled at ₹88,450 per 10 grams.

The yellow metal of 99.9 and 99.5 per cent purity inched up by ₹50 to hit an all-time high of ₹89,450 and ₹89,050 per 10 grams February 20.

Silver prices also rallied by ₹1,000 to hit nearly a five-month high of ₹1,01,200 per kg. The white metal had finished at ₹1,00,200 per kg in the previous market close.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange, gold contracts for April delivery rallied by ₹210 or 0.24 per cent to hit a record high of ₹86,896 per 10 grams in the evening session.

"Gold prices surged to a new record high in the domestic market, while in the international market, spot gold rallied to near-record highs buoyed by safe-haven demand and cooler-than-expected US consumer inflation data, which supported the case for further Federal Reserve monetary easing this year," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HD-FC Securities, said.

## Sensex drops for 5th session in row

Benchmark BSE Sensex reversed its early gains to close lower by 200 points Thursday, marking its fifth straight session of losses due to selling in the realty, IT and auto counters. The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 200.85 points or 0.27 per cent to close at 73,828.91 with 22 of its constituents ending lower and eight with gains. The index opened higher and hit a high of 74,401.11 in the late morning session. However, it failed to hold onto gains due to persistent selling in select blue chips and shed 259.17 points or 0.35 per cent to hit a low of 73,770.59 later. The NSE Nifty fell 73.30 points or 0.33 per cent to settle at 22,397.20.

In the session, the benchmark declined by 93.15 points or 0.41 per cent to hit an intraday low of 22,377.35. As many as 2,457 stocks declined while 1,518 advanced and 130 remained unchanged on the BSE. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms declined by ₹1,71,623.67 crore to ₹3,91,12,994.41 crore (\$4.49 trillion).

restment mechanism for India's retail investors that has drawn a monthly average of \$1.8 billion into equity markets over the past four years.

The number of individual investors participating in the cash market slipped to a nine-month low in January, NSE data showed.

Angel One, India's largest listed retail broker, reported a 26% month-on-month drop in client acquisitions, opens new tab in February.

## LG Electronics India to float ₹15K-cr IPO

*This will be the second South Korean company to tap the Indian stock market following the listing of Hyundai Motors India Ltd in October last year*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** LG Electronics India Ltd, a subsidiary of the South Korean chaebol LG, has received markets regulator Sebi's approval for its ₹15,000 crore initial public offering (IPO), people familiar with the matter said Thursday.

In December, LG Electronics India filed preliminary papers with Sebi for an IPO where in the parent company will sell over 10.18 crore shares, amounting to a 15 per cent stake.

Now, the company has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to float its public issue, people familiar with the matter said.

The company did not disclose the total issue size, but they said the pegged IPO size is ₹15,000 crore.



Since the public issue is completely an offer for sale (OFS), LG Electronics India will not receive any IPO proceeds. The funds raised will go to the South Korean parent.

Last month, LG Electronics started roadshows for the upcoming IPO of its Indian unit.

LG Electronics India is a leading player in major home appliances and consumer electronics. The company products are sold to both B2C and B2B customers in India and abroad. It also provides installation, repair, and maintenance services for all its products.

The company manufactures and sells products, including washing machines, refrigerators, LED TV panels, inverter air conditioners, and microwaves. It has manufacturing units in Noida, Uttar Pradesh and Pune, Maharashtra.

## India to be 3rd largest economy by 2028, says Morgan Stanley

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** India will be the world's third-largest economy by 2028 as it becomes the world's most sought-after consumer market and gains share in global output, driven by macro stability influenced policy and better infrastructure, Morgan Stanley said.

From a \$3.5 trillion economy in 2023, the Indian economy is projected to expand to \$4.7 trillion in 2026, which will make it the fourth largest in the world behind the US, China and Germany.

In 2028, India will overtake Germany as its economy will expand to \$5.7 trillion. According to Morgan Stanley, India was the 12th largest economy in the world in 1990, slipped to 13th position in 2000 before rising to 9th rank in 2020 and 5th in 2023.

India's share in the world GDP is projected to rise from 3.5 per cent to 4.5 per cent in 2029. It projects three scenarios for India's growth - Bear - where the economy expands to \$6.6 trillion by 2035 from \$3.65 trillion in 2025, Base - where it grows to \$8.8 trillion and Bull - where the size balloons to \$10.3 trillion.

## PV despatches show resilience

**The total passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 3,70,786 units in February 2024**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** Domestic passenger vehicle despatches from factories to company dealers rose 1.9 per cent year-on-year to 3,77,689 units in February amid slowing demand, industry body SIAM said Thursday.

The total passenger vehicle wholesales stood at 3,70,786 units in February 2024.

"Passenger vehicles segment remained resilient and posted its highest ever sales of February in 2025 of 3.78 lakh units, with a growth of 1.9 per cent as compared to February 2024," Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) Director General Rajesh Menon said in a statement.

Total two-wheeler despatches, however, witnessed a decline of 9 per cent year-on-year to 13,84,605 units last month.

Scooter sales declined marginally to 5,12,783 units in February this year as compared to 5,15,340 units in the year-ago period.



**Upcoming festivities of Holi and Ugadi in March is likely to continue to drive demand, thereby closing FY 2024-25 on a reasonably positive note**

RAJESH MENON | DIRECTOR GENERAL, SIAM

Motorcycle despatches to dealers declined 13 per cent year-on-year to 8,38,250 units last month as against 9,64,362 units in February last year.

Moped sales declined 18 per cent year-on-year to 33,572 units in February.

Two-wheeler wholesales stood at 15,20,761 units in February last year.

Total three-wheeler despatches to dealers rose 5 per cent year-on-year to 57,788 units last month as compared to 55,175

units in the year-ago period.

Passenger carrier three-wheeler sales rose to 46,111 units last month as compared to 43,173 units in February last year.

Goods carrier three-wheeler despatches stood at 10,603 units in February as against 10,013 units sold in the same month last year, registering an increase of 6 per cent.

E-rickshaw despatches declined 51 per cent year-on-year to 741 units in February.

## MASSIVE SETBACK JLR shelves EV plan at Tata plant

The British luxury car unit's decision is expected to delay Tata's India EV plans

REUTERS

**New Delhi, March 13:** Jaguar Land Rover has shelved plans to build electric vehicles at parent company Tata Motor's upcoming \$1 billion factory in southern India, four people with knowledge of the matter said.

The British luxury car unit was unable to find the right price-quality balance for locally sourced EV parts, three of them said, adding that the decision also reflects slowing demand for electric cars.

"For India, all the work (on JLR electric vehicles) has stopped. Everything has been suspended since about two months," said a supplier source.

Global car brands are re-vamping their electrification

«JLR had plans to source parts locally for EVs, sources say»  
«There were problems with price-quality mix in procuring parts, sources say»  
«Tata making design changes to Avinya EV range, sources say»



plans amid stiff competition from Chinese players, a shift in demand in favour of hybrids and as governments ease timelines to meet emission rules and EV sales targets.

JLR's decision is also expected to delay plans for Tata Passenger Electric Mobility, Tata's

local electric car unit, to launch the first of its premium Avinya models, the sources said.

The cars are to be built on the same platform as JLR's electric vehicles and some components were to have been jointly sourced.

Tata began construction of

the new factory, which will also assemble vehicles other than EVs, in September. The plant is slated to produce over 250,000 cars a year when it reaches full capacity in about 5-7 years.

The shelved plans called for JLR to manufacture more than 70,000 electric cars there and Tata's EV unit to build 25,000, the sources said.

Tata said in a statement to Reuters that the production timelines and choice of models to be built at the new factory in the state of Tamil Nadu will be aligned with Tata and JLR's broader strategy and market requirements.

Tata, the biggest seller in India's nascent EV market, faces growing pressure from rivals like JSW MG Motor and Mahindra and Mahindra which have

launched new, feature-rich models with longer driving ranges.

Tesla is also finalising plans to launch EVs in India, which is the world's third-largest car market with 4 million vehicles sold annually. EV sales currently account for about 2% of total car sales.

Tata's EV unit had planned to firm up orders with some suppliers by the end of January but is now making changes to its designs as the economics of its plan are not working without JLR, sources said.

Tata in January pushed back the launch of its Avinya EV to 2026-2027 from an earlier plan for this year. It was not immediately clear if the current situation will cause further delays.

## Patanjali Ayurved, DS Group to buy Magma General Insurance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 13:** Yoga Guru Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved and Rajnigandha maker Dharampal Satyapal Group (DS Group) will acquire Magma General Insurance at a valuation of ₹4,500 crore from Sanoti Properties LLP, a company statement said Thursday.

Magma General Insurance is jointly held by Adar Poonawalla and Rising Sun Holdings.

Sanoti Properties has approved the sale of its insurance subsidiary Magma General Insurance (erstwhile Magma HDI General Insurance Company), along with Celica Developers and Jaguar Advisory Services, as per the share purchase agreement with Patanjali Ayurved and DS Group, the statement said.



The deal is "at a valuation of ₹4,500 crore, subject to regulatory approvals", it added.

Magma General Insurance, with over 70 products across various categories, offers insurance to secure all major risks in the general insurance sphere.

WORLD PARA ATHLETICS GRAND PRIX

# INDIANS DOMINATE

Athletes lead the medal tally with an astounding haul of 145 medals -- 45 gold, 40 silver, and 49 bronze

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, Mar 13:** Three-time Paralympic champion long jumper Vanessa Low of Australia lived up to her top billing as she easily clinched gold in T61-64 class while India's Paris Games medalist Preethi Pal bagged a bronze in T35-38 class 200m race on the concluding day of the World Para Athletics Grand Prix here Thursday.

India finished on top of the medal tally with a total haul of 134 -- 45 gold, 40 silver, and 49 bronze. Around 150 Indians had competed in the Grand Prix while around 100 were from other 19 countries.

Vanessa, one of the few top stars taking part in the three-day event, cleared a distance of 4.96m in her third attempt, to stand on the top of the podium.

Zhanna Fekolina, a Neutral Paralympic Athlete, and India's Bhavani Munniyandi took home the silver and bronze respectively with efforts of 4.13m and 3.51m at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here.

T61-64 classification is for those athletes who are competing with prosthesis affected by limb deficiency and leg length difference.

"I am happy with my performance. It's fun moments here in India. I will be coming back here for the World Para Athletics Championships (in September)," Vanessa said after the event. She also said she will take part in the 2026 edition of the event.

India has signed a four-year contract with the World Para Athletics to host the Grand Prix annually till 2028. Meanwhile, the 24-year-old Preethi, who had earlier secured a silver



Odisha's para athlete Suchitra Parida clinching gold in the Women's F-55 Javelin throw with a remarkable 15.93m throw



Odisha's Jayanti Behera on bagging bronze medal in the women's 100m T-47 category

in the 100m run, added another medal by winning bronze in the women's 200m T35-38 final, clocking 31.50 seconds. Rhiannon Clarke of Australia won gold with a timing of 26.76 seconds while Margarita Goncharova, a neutral paralympic athlete, took the silver with a time of 27.00 seconds.

Preethi had created history during the Paris Paralympics in 2024 as she became the first Indian woman track and field athlete to win two medals at

the Paralympics by clinching a bronze each in the 100m and 200m T35 category.

T35 classification is meant for athletes who have coordination impairments such as hypertonion, ataxia and athetosis.

"Clocking 31.50 seconds is all right because I had trained for just over a week. It was off season going on, I was not to compete but still I competed," she told PTI after her event.

"My goal is to win gold in World Para Athletics Championships here in September. I

am hoping to compete outside the country at least once. I am in TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme), so let us see."

Indians swept all the medals in the men's shot put F11-F20 category, as Sagar clinched gold with a throw of 11.47m, followed by Janka Singh with silver with 9.91m and Balaji Rajendran with bronze with 9.89m. In the women's long jump T20-T37 event, Irina Sapanzha won gold with a leap of 5.35m while Valentina took silver with 5.16m and India's Bhuvni Agarwal secured bronze with an effort of 4.16m.

In the men's shot put F40-F41 event, Denis Gnezdilov, a Neutral Paralympic Athlete, took the gold, followed by Aiaal Sivtsev with silver, while India's Ravi Rangoli secured bronze.

The men's 200m T35 event saw Dmitrii Safronov, a Neutral Paralympic Athlete, taking gold with a time of 24.20 seconds. India's Vinay and Abhishek Babasaheb Jadhav claimed silver and bronze respectively with 29.58 seconds and 31.55 seconds. In the men's 200m T37, Neutral Paralympic Athletes displayed exce

ALL ENGLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Satwik-Chirag pair enters 2nd round in men's doubles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Birmingham, March 13:** India's Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty advanced to the second round of the men's doubles competition at the All England Championships, registering a straight-game victory over Denmark's Daniel Lundgaard and Mads Vestergaard.

Returning to the court after his father's loss last month, Satwik, along with his doubles partner Chirag, put on an impressive display, securing a 21-17, 21-15 win in just 40 minutes late Wednesday.

Moments after sealing the victory, Satwik raised his finger to the sky, his gaze fixed skyward -- perhaps reaching out to his father, searching for him in the beyond.

It's tough, but that's how life is, said Satwik. It wasn't expected.

The 24-year-old from Amalapuram expressed his gratitude to his partner for being there during this challenging time.

During hard times he (Shetty) came to my home town, we practised there a bit, and for that I'm thankful. He was there during my injury; his parents came down and our coach also came down to my home town.

My father always wanted to bring them there.

Reflecting on the sudden turn of events in the past fortnight, Chirag said Credit to Satwik, what he's gone through and how he's come back and decided to play here, nobody could do that.

Kudos to him, he's a strong-willed person to come out of it, and keep it all aside, because that's what his dad would've wanted him to do. I'm proud to be his partner.

The duo, seeded 7th, will next take on China's Hao Nan Xie and Wei Han Zeng in the round of 16 Thursday.

In other matches involving



## LAKSHYA STUNS CHRISTIE

India's Lakshya Sen stunned world no. 2 Jonatan Christie of Indonesia in straight games in a superlative display to enter the men's singles quarterfinals of the All England Championships here Thursday. Lakshya just took 36 minutes to beat Christie 21-13 21-10 in a one-sided contest. The win reduced Lakshya's head-to-head record against Christie to 3-4. This was the first time Lakshya played Christie, seeded third in this event, after the Paris Olympics. Lakshya dominated Christie from the word go in a fluent show of skills. The Indian used his energy and superb court coverage to fox the Indonesian and raced to a narrow 11-7 lead at the break in the first game. But after the break Christie tried to forge his way back into the contest latching on to Lakshya's unforced errors to bring it level to 12-12. Thereafter, Lakshya upped his game as Christie struggled as the Indian forced his way into the quarterfinals with consummate ease.



Indian players, Lakshya Sen will face Indonesia's Jonatan Christie, while Malvika Bansod takes on Japan's third seed Akane Yamaguchi, a two-time World Champion.

Malvika had earlier stunned Singapore's Yeo Jia Min in her debut match at the prestigious tournament.

World No 9 Treesa Jolly

and Gayatri Gopichand, who reached back-to-back semifinals at this event, will meet the eighth-seeded Korean pair of Hye Jeong Kim and Hee Yong Kong.

Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde will square off against the fifth-seeded Chinese duo of Yan Zhe Feng and Ya Xin Wei.

SHORT TAKES

### PKF invited India for three-nation tourney

**Karachi:** The Pakistan Kabaddi Federation (PKF) on Thursday said it has invited its Indian counterparts to send their national team for a three-nation international tournament in the country in April. Chaudhary Shafay Hussain, the president of the PKF, said after a general council meeting that the tournament, named Guru Nanak Friendship Cup, would be held in Lahore next month. "We have also invited India to send its team to Pakistan for this event," he said. Iran would be the third side in the tournament, he added. "We believe that sports can play a big role in improving relations between Pakistan and India," Hussain said.

### India win 5 medals

**New Delhi:** India secured two gold, two silver, and one bronze medal across two sporting disciplines to extend their medal tally to nine on the second day of the Special Olympics World Winter Games in Turin, Italy. Snowboarding, which brought India four medals on the opening day of the tournament, added two more accolades to the tally Wednesday. Bharti (division F25) clinched a gold medal in the Novice Slalom Final, while Harshita Thakur (division F26) secured a bronze in the same event.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

# Real beat Atletico on penalties



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Madrid, March 13:** Real Madrid beat Atletico Madrid in a Champions League penalty shootout -- again -- to keep its title defense alive Wednesday and advance to the quarterfinals.

Defender Antonio Rudiger scored the decisive spot-kick in a 4-2 shootout win after two

Atletico players missed. Marco Llorente's shot struck the bar after Julián Alvarez's score despite slipping was disallowed on video review because he touched the ball twice.

Madrid also beat Atletico in a shootout to win the 2016 final -- part of a streak of eliminating its city rival in the knockout rounds for four straight years. That hard-luck run started with

the 2014 final when Atletico gave up an equalizing goal in stoppage time.

Madrid moves on to the quarterfinals to face Arsenal, which also advanced Wednesday along with Aston Villa and Borussia Dortmund.

The quarterfinals lineup was completed with Madrid's win in a tense derby that had ended 2-2 on aggregate score.

Atletico led 1-0 after 90 minutes and extra time in a typically tenacious performance at its Metropolitan Stadium to cancel out Madrid's 2-1 advantage from the first leg last week.

"When you get knocked out, it is not easy to digest," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said, "but I go out with a feeling of peace."

Two key incidents defined regulation time. Atletico Madrid scored within 30 seconds and Real Madrid missed a penalty in the 70th minute.

Atletico took the lead with its first attack when England midfielder Conor Gallagher pounced on the ball from close range when a cross by Rodrigo De Paul was deflected into the goalmouth.

Madrid star Vinicius Júnior blazed a penalty kick high over the Atletico goal when he could have sent the 15-time champion through. He was substituted in extra time for his teenage fellow Brazilian, Endrick.

Kylian Mbappé and Jude Bellingham stepped up to score Madrid's first two spot-kicks, and Fede Valverde also scored before Lucas Vazquez's kick was saved by Jan Oblak.

## Vedanta's para judo athlete bags two bronze medals

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 13:** Being supported by Vedanta Aluminium, para judo athlete Mohan Sahu from Odisha's tribal-dominated Kalahandi district clinched two bronze medals at the 13th National Para Judo Championship 2025 while representing the state.

Blessed as a talented athlete, Mohan demonstrated his prowess in the Junior JI (66 kg) and Senior JI (64 kg) categories.

He is now preparing to represent India at the prestigious Asian Para Judo Championship 2025 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

In his reactions, an elated Mohan Sahu said, "I'm immensely grateful to Vedanta Aluminium for their support that has given me the confidence to compete at the highest levels. Their encouragement and assistance have been invaluable in my journey as a para-athlete. I'll strive to make my country and supporters proud."

Emphasizing the company's dedication to nurturing local talents, Sunil Gupta, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Vedanta Aluminium, stated, "We believe in the power of sports to inspire and transform lives. Supporting athletes like Mohan Sahu is



part of our larger commitment to inclusivity and community development. We're proud to stand by him as he takes on new challenges at the national and international levels."

Notably, Vedanta Aluminium's mines team is supporting Mohan Sahu in realizing his dreams of earning laurels at national and international events. For his recent participation in the national event held in Lucknow, the company provided him with the necessary equipment and financial aid. With the resources he needed, a fully-equipped Mohan Sahu competed alongside India's top para-athletes to showcase his potential and perform his best.

Also need to be mentioned that, Vedanta Aluminium has previously supported two Kabaddi players from Odisha's another tribal-dominated Rayagada district when the duo represented India at the International Kabaddi Tournament in Nepal.

## PCB revises match fees after flak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Karachi, March 13:** The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Thursday increased the players' match fee for the National T20 Championship after its decision to enforce a pay cut faced severe backlash.

The PCB had earlier reduced the match fees to Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,000 for players and reserves, forcing its chairman Mohsin Naqvi to issue orders to review the decision.

Finding itself in a corner after widespread criticism, PCB has now increased the match fees of players to Rs 40,000 and reserves to Rs 20,000.

Pakistan's domestic cricket schedule and structure has



been under discussion this season after the board abruptly stopped the National Under-19 Championship after just one day's play.

The decision to reduce the match fees was earlier taken on the orders of Naqvi after complaints of selection of over-age players and other issues.

Interestingly, the National junior event, which is seen as the best platform for new talent, has

still not been held this season. There have also been reports of the domestic department cutting facilities for players in domestic cricket like termination of contracts and lowering hotel and travelling standards.

PCB sources claim that the expense cuts have been executed because of the increased domestic cricket events this season which were earlier not included in the budget.

## Wolff says he's not looking to sign Verstappen

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Melbourne, March 13:** Mercedes team principal and chief executive Toto Wolff has denied rumors on the eve of the Australian Grand Prix weekend that he's still seeking to sign reigning F1 world champion Max Verstappen for 2026.

Mercedes, which has a new driver lineup this year that sees rookie prospect Andrea Kimi Antonelli join George Russell, is hoping to emerge from its recent lean spell in F1 that has seen it score just five wins from the last three seasons, four of which came in 2024.

But while Verstappen was reportedly on Mercedes' shopping list last year as a top-gun

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replacement for its then-outgoing star Lewis Hamilton, Silver Arrows' team boss Wolff says extending Russell's contract beyond 2025 is the priority.

"I think we've said it pretty clearly last year, and (Verstappen) said the same, we need to concentrate on our driver line-up, we need to do (the best with) that we have," Wolff said



Thursday in Melbourne.

"I don't flirt outside if I'm in a good relationship, and that is true for this year, too. So, at the moment that is not on any, let's say, radar and I don't plan to shift my concentration away from these guys and make sure that George has a contract (extension) pretty soon and we agree on the final things."

Plenty of decisions to come-Wolff's future driver lineup came into focus this week after McLaren extended its deal with Australian Oscar Piastri, which puts him out of reach during the sport's next big expected grid shuffle in 2027.

"We have had a chat (with Russell) a few weeks ago about what the right timing would be to liaise, and I'm -- naively or not -- someone that sticks to what he says," Wolff said.

"These three (including reserve driver Valtteri Bottas) are the combination that I want to go forward with Mercedes, and I have no reasons to doubt that. We're going to find some time, I guess, before the summer."