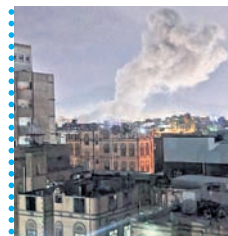




**Boudh hottest**  
Temperature in Boudh reaches a blistering 43.6° C Sunday, making it the hottest place in the country  
DOWNTOWN | P3



**Trump bombs Houthis**  
President Donald Trump orders a series of airstrikes on the Houthi-held areas in Yemen killing at least 31  
INTERNATIONAL | P10



**FPIs still cautious**  
Foreign investors continue to pull back money from the equity market withdrawing near ₹30K-cr in the first fortnight of March  
BUSINESS | P11



**India win 33 medals**  
India conclude campaign at the Special Olympics World Winter Games with a total of 33 medals including 12 medals on final day  
SPORTS | P12



**FAST AND FURIOUS:** A participant rides a bullock cart during a state-level bullock cart race organised by villagers at Nanganahalli, near Chikmagalur, in Karnataka, Sunday PTI PHOTO

## RAMAKANTA RATH BREATHES HIS LAST

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Renowned Odia poet and former bureaucrat Ramakanta Rath died at his residence in Kharvel Nagar area here Sunday, family sources said. He was 90.  
Rath, a Padma Bhushan awardee, is survived by three daughters and a son. President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled the demise of Rath.  
Expressing grief over the demise of the eminent Odia poet, Murmu in a post on X said Rath was a prominent figure in the Indian literary world. He has enriched the pan-Indian literature with his unforgettable contribution to Odia literature, she wrote.  
Modi condoled the demise of the eminent poet and scholar and said that Rath's works, especially poetry, are widely popular among all sections of society.  
"Shri Ramakanta Rath Ji distinguished himself as an effective administrator and scholar. His works, especially poetry, are widely popular among all sections of society. Pained by his passing away. My thoughts are with his family and admirers in this hour of grief. Om Shanti PM @narendramodi," Prime Minister's Office (PMO) wrote on X.

Several leaders and eminent personalities from Odisha mourned the demise of Rath and gathered at his house to pay their last respects.  
Expressing deep grief over the demise of Rath, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said Ramakanta Rath will always be remembered for his contribution to the Indian Administrative Service and the world of literature.  
The CM also announced that Rath's last rites will be performed with full state honour.  
After the arrival of his son from abroad, Rath's last rites will be performed Monday in Puri Swargadwar, said the poet's younger daughter.  
Rath was born December 13, 1934 in Cuttack. After completing his MA in English literature from Ravenshaw College (now university), he joined the IAS in 1957. Rath retired as chief secretary of Odisha in 1992. More P2

### Poshan Kendras in Odisha soon: Min

**Bhubaneswar:** The state government with support from World Food Organisation (WFO) has mooted steps to open 'Poshan Kendras' to provide essential commodities at subsidised rates in the state, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare minister Krushna Chandra Patra said Sunday. As per the plan, at least 35 'Poshan Kendras' will be opened in different places in Odisha on a pilot basis. Later, one such ration store will be opened in each panchayat of the state, he said. Various essential commodities like rice, wheat, dal, etc will be provided to poor and lower-income groups at a subsidised rate. P3

## 5 murders mar Holi

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** The Holi festival Saturday was marred by five murders as celebrations took a violent turn in four places across the state, resulting in the death of five people, either due to past enmity or altercations.  
Two of the five murders were reported in the state capital Bhubaneswar—one from the Saheed Nagar area and the other from the Mancheswar area of the city. In both cases, two youths were allegedly stabbed to death.



A youth identified as Gopi Guli was murdered at Shantipalli slum under the Saheed Nagar police station limits in Bhubaneswar when a group of four people attacked him with knives at around noon after an altercation broke out between them during the Holi celebrations, a senior officer said.  
Old enmity between the deceased and the accused could be the reason behind the crime, he said. The youth died on the spot. His wife was also attacked but she managed to escape from there, the officer said, adding that the accused fled the scene and CCTV footage was being examined.  
Another person identified as Anshuman Pati was brutally

murdered in Sameigadia area under the jurisdiction of the Mancheswar police station in the capital city, another officer said.  
The person was killed by a group of men following an argument over some issues during the Holi celebrations, he said.  
Commissioner of Police S Dev Dutta Singh visited both crime scenes to investigate the incidents and assured Saturday that the accused would soon be arrested.  
While four suspects were arrested from Pipli in connection with the Mancheswar murder, three suspects, including a minor, were arrested in the murder occurred within Saheed Nagar police station limits, Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) Jagmohan Meena said Sunday. They would be produced in court Monday, he added.  
Holi-related violence was also reported from other places in the state.  
A contractor was allegedly

hacked to death by a sharp object in the Baidyanathpur police station area in Ganjam district's Berhampur over past enmity, the police said. The deceased, T Ramachandra Patra, was attacked by one of his employees, Chandan Kumar Sabat, 32, alias Papun at Lanjipalli Chanakya Nagar in this city.  
A youth identified as Aditya Salma, 18, was stabbed to death by one Sahul Singh, 25, following altercations over past enmity at Sahu Colony in Sambalpur during the Holi celebrations, another officer said. Police arrested Sahul and seized the knife used in the killing. Police registered a case and produced the accused in the court. The body was handed over to the family members after a post-mortem.  
A youth identified as Azad Hussain of Nakhara Sahi under Town police limits in Angul was hacked to death by Mantu Samantray of the locality during Holi celebrations Saturday afternoon. The murder took place over an altercation and brawl between the two and the victim died on the spot.  
Furthermore, at least five people lost their lives in multiple incidents of road accidents during the day and four people including a minor drowned while bathing after Holi celebrations.

## ■ HOMECOMING SOON Sunita, Butch welcome replacements to ISS

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Cape Canaveral, March 16:** Just over a day after blasting off, a SpaceX crew capsule arrived at the International Space Station Sunday, delivering the replacements for NASA's two stuck astronauts.  
The four newcomers — representing the US, Japan and Russia — will spend the next few days learning the station's ins and outs from Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams. Then the two will strap into their own SpaceX capsule later this week, one that has been up there since last year, to close out an unexpected extended mission that began last June.  
Wilmore and Williams expected to be gone just a week

when they launched on Boeing's first astronaut flight. They hit the nine-month mark earlier this month.  
The Boeing Starliner capsule encountered so many problems that NASA insisted it come back empty, leaving its test pilots behind to wait for a SpaceX lift.  
Wilmore swung open the space station's hatch and then rang the ship's bell as the new arrivals floated in one by one and were greeted with hugs and handshakes. "It was a wonderful day. Great to see our friends arrive," Williams told Mission Control. Weather permitting, the SpaceX capsule carrying Wilmore, Williams and two other astronauts will undock from the space station no earlier than Wednesday and splash down off Florida's coast.



## Mother's home remedies taught spirit of service, says PM Modi

PNN & AGENCIES

**New Delhi, March 16:** Recalling his early life spent in extreme poverty, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said he picked up life's lessons at his father's tea shop and from his mother who treated children with home remedies, imbibing in him the spirit of service at a young age.  
In a podcast with Lex Fridman, Modi shared about his childhood spent in a small home with no windows where his parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and grandparents lived.  
"My early life was spent in extreme poverty, but we never really felt the burden of poverty," he said, reminiscing how his father worked tirelessly, late into the night and his mother ensured that the children never felt the struggles of the circumstances. "But despite everything, these challenging circumstances of living in scarcity never left a mark on our minds," he said.  
The Prime Minister said his mother possessed knowledge of traditional remedies and healing practices, and would treat children with these home remedies.  
"Every morning before sunrise, around five o'clock, she would start treating them, so all the children and their parents would gather at our home, little children crying, and we had to wake up early because of it," he recalled.

"This spirit of service, in a way, was nurtured through these experiences. A sense of empathy for society, the desire to do good for others, these values were instilled in me from my family. I believe that my life has been shaped by my mother, my father, my teachers, and the environment I grew up in," Modi said.



### IRREGULAR by MANJUL



**A welcome change! For once, it's not just a monologue at Raisina**

## Man behind Microsoft's quest to build a quantum computer

AGENCIES

**Washington, March 16:** In 2000, a Microsoft executive pitched a bold idea to mountaineer and physics professor Chetan Nayak: join Microsoft, scale Mount Rainier, and together build a quantum computer. Though they successfully summited the mountain within two years, the journey toward a practical quantum computer is ongoing.  
Quantum computers promise breakthroughs in fields like encryption and medicine, using qubits instead of classical bits. Qubits can exist in multiple states simultaneously, enabling faster and more efficient calculations.

Nayak leads Microsoft's quantum research team, Station Q, which consists of several hundred chemists, engineers and mathematicians, and has been pursuing a unique, high-risk approach for nearly two decades. Microsoft's efforts focus on creating a quantum computer based on topological superconductors, a less conventional method compared to companies like Alphabet's Google, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported.  
Last month, Microsoft claimed a significant breakthrough, creating a chip capable of generating a Majorana particle, which could form the foundation for a reliable quantum computer. While some



DR. CHETAN NAYAK

scientists questioned these claims, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella expressed excitement, highlighting the company's \$300 million annual investment in quantum research. The com-

pany had faced scepticism in the past, with Nadella previously dismissing the efforts as having little commercial potential.  
Nayak's research has been a long series of incremental advancements, with moments of significant recognition, like the Majorana discovery. The quantum race is intense, as competitors like Google and D-Wave also made progress recently. Nayak's interest in quantum physics began in high school after reading Richard Feynman's lectures.  
According to a report published in WSJ, some executives at Microsoft and other tech companies have been pre-

dicting that a useful quantum computer powered by qubits would be commercially available in the next few years for at least a decade.  
The challenge in quantum computing lies in the reliability of qubits. Even slight disturbances can lead to drastic errors, unlike classical computer chips that have minimal error rates. To address this, Nayak's team uses topological superconductors, where an electron spread across a tiny wire at near absolute zero temperatures can form a Majorana particle, which can be used to create qubits.  
Microsoft contended in a paper published in the scientific

journal Nature last month that it had identified a Majorana and measured the information in it.  
Critics in the world of quantum physics say the Microsoft researchers' claims that they observed a Majorana particle are a mirage.  
Despite some controversy over the validity of their findings, Microsoft remains confident in its research. The company is preparing to publish follow-up studies, and Nayak is focused on improving the stability of their qubits. He hopes to see progress before reaching his 70s, noting with a smile that his children often tease him, saying, "You haven't built a quantum computer yet!"

# leisure



## TOM CRUISE, ANA DE ARMAS FUEL ROMANCE RUMOURS

Actors Tom Cruise and Ana de Armas are fuelling dating rumours as they have been spotted out together in London again. The actors were seen arriving at the London Heliport via helicopter. Both Cruise, 62, and Armas, 36, sported casual looks for the outing.

## KANYE WEST SPOTTED WITH MYSTERY WOMAN

Kanye West was seen in Los Angeles with a woman resembling his wife, Bianca Censori, amid divorce rumours. The woman's modest style differed from Bianca's daring fashion. Kanye was attending Sunday Service choir auditions and appeared unaffected by the attention.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

GaneshSpeaks.com  
accuracy • reliability • trust  
FOR ASTROLOGY DIAL 55181\*

**ARIES**  
You will be the focus of everyone's attention today - for your visual appeal or for your abilities. Ganesh suggests that you should make the best of the opportunity and recharge yourself. You can accomplish quite a lot with the energy you gain.

**TAURUS**  
This day, your heart is likely to rule your head. You will be driven by your moods feelings and sentiments. Most of the decisions will be based on your emotions, instead of your reason and experience. Ganesh urges you not to allow your emotionality to enter your professional activities.

**GEMINI**  
You will be in the mood to spend the day doing the things that you really love. You will consider helping people in need and will be in a generous mood. Your charitable bent of mind will bring you elevated social status and improved self-esteem, says Ganesh.

**CANCER**  
Today, you will be trying new things in your style of work. You may come across as mad, but there will be a method in your madness. Your new strategy and innovative ideas will give a new lease of life to the projects you are working on. However, you need to take a break from work in the evening and go home to your loved ones to recharge your batteries, advises Ganesh.

**LEO**  
You will spend an enjoyable day with your favourite relatives and friends. In the office also, you will be afforded rare co-operation from all your colleagues. Financial gains are indicated. It is a good time for lovers, who will experience an intimate bond with their partners, says Ganesh.

**VIRGO**  
Logic as well as emotions will hold sway in your relationships today. Emotionally you will feel a little confused and will swing between your feelings and what is actually expected of you. However, finally you will pay more heed to your inner voice rather than depending on the views of others.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesh says that today will be a day where you will want to look good and feel good too. You will be able to attract people with your speech and your impressive personality today at social gatherings. Your social stature will also rise today. Romantic liaisons may take a serious turn today.

**SCORPIO**  
Your stars indicate splurging of money today. And this time, you do it for your near and dear ones. After all, what is money without friends and family? You may even go out of your way to make them happy by entertaining them with outings and celebrations.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
You feel like going back to carefree, childhood days. You even practice that by taking an impromptu pleasure trip, in the outskirts of the city. And bumping into an old pal, reliving your past is like an icing on the cake. As Ganesh says, golden moments are best undescribed and you too, by the end of the day, are speechless for this wonderful day!

**CAPRICORN**  
Normally, others, especially colleagues get jealous of one's success, but yours is a different case. They will not only motivate you, but also guide you while you take up new projects and assignments. Not everyone is blessed with such cooperative colleagues, says Ganesh.

**AQUARIUS**  
God helps those who help themselves. You have experienced this plenty of times as your efforts have been paid off. While your colleagues at work may pass negative comments at your work, your boss will not have any complains with you.

**PISCES**  
You will come up trumps against your competition today. This will make you enthusiastic about your future prospects. You shy away from the spotlight usually, but today you will find yourself thrust into the role of a leader, as you take on new assignments.

# From bureaucracy to bard

A master of modernist Odia poetry, Ramakanta Rath's works delved into existentialism, spirituality, and human solitude. As Chief Secretary of Odisha, he wielded immense influence, yet his heart belonged to poetry, leaving behind a timeless literary legacy

While receiving Padma Bhushan, the third-highest civilian award from the then President APJ Abdul Kalam



OP DESK

**Bhubaneswar:** Ramakanta Rath, a towering figure in Odia literature, his journey was a remarkable confluence of duty and creativity—a life where the precision of bureaucracy met the boundless imagination of poetry. From navigating the corridors of power as a distinguished Indian Administrative Service officer to etching his name as one of the greatest modernist poets of Odia literature, he epitomised the rare blend of intellect and artistry. As an administrator, he earned a formidable reputation as a tough



With top Indian leaders as a bureaucrat (in circle)



Ramakanta Rath receiving the Saraswati Samman from the then Vice-President, K.R. Narayanan



With wife Shantilata Rath

and decisive bureaucrat. During his tenure as Chief Secretary of Odisha under the legendary Chief Minister Biju Patnaik, even Cabinet Ministers sought his advice on crucial matters

of governance. His influence in state administration was equally profound during Nandini Satpathy's Chief Ministership, where, as her Private Secretary, he enjoyed her utmost

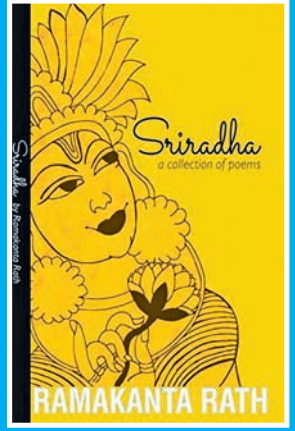


Orissa POST and Dharitri Editor Tathagata Satpathy and Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy pay tributes to Ramakanta Rath at his residence in Kharavela Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Sunday

confidence, wielding significant authority in shaping policy decisions. Yet, even as he commanded power in governance, his heart remained devoted to the rhythms of verse. His poetry—marked by existential musings, spiritual depth, and modernist innovation—became a testament to his ability to transcend the ordinary. Works like *Sriradha* and *Saptama Ritu* solidified his place as a literary icon, seamlessly weaving tradition with contemporary thought. Honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award, Saraswati Samman, and the Padma Bhushan, among many others, Rath's legacy is a beacon for future generations. His journey, from the structured world of administration to the ethereal realm of poetry, remains an inspiring saga of intellect, passion, and an unyielding commitment to literature.

## All about Sriradha

Ramakanta's *Sriradha* is acknowledged as a modern classic. It has been translated into many languages. In this poem, Radha repudiates the image attributed to her in Vaishnav literature and explores herself through an intense experience of love and separation. She is not the playmate of Krishna; she is herself. The Radha-Krishna myth has



for centuries inspired poets and artists. In *Sriradha*, Rath reinterprets this myth to liberate Radha from her image in traditional literature and introduces her as an exceptional character who combines in herself the tenderest emotions of love with

the yearning to discover her own identity. It is a strange poem - a blend of erotic love and existentialist soul-searching. *Sriradha* won the Saraswati Samman for 1992. The English translation is by the poet himself. The poem in the original Oriya has enjoyed immense popularity among readers over the past decades.

### TRIBUTES POUR IN

The demise of Padmabhushan Ramakanta Rath, a modern poet of Odia literature, is an irreparable loss to the world of Odia literature. He earned a great reputation as an efficient administrator. Many of his poetry collections were highly appreciated by the readers. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award for his poetry collection "Saptama Ritu". The use of spiritual and primordial imagination is seen in Ramakant Rath's writings. The world of literature pays deep tribute to the demise of such a great man. May God rest the great soul at his feet.

**SURYABANSHI SURAJ** | ODISA LANGUAGE, LITERATURE & CULTURE MINISTER

Ramakanta Babu had a good relationship with everyone. He loved my prose very much and would sometimes call me to appreciate my work. He will live forever through his poems, and his work will continue to inspire future generations.

**PRATIBHA RAY** | WRITER

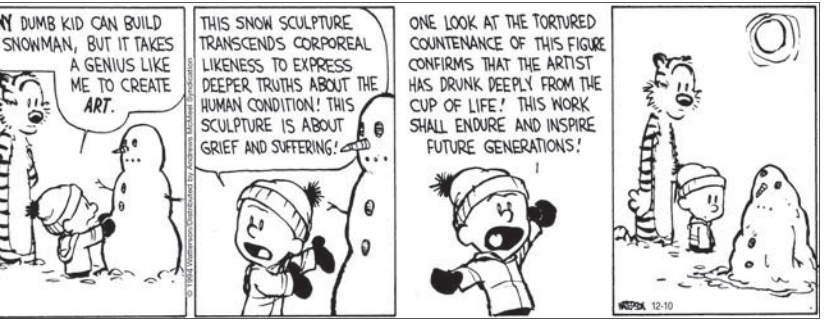
He was a living legend—one of the greatest administrators and also a life-changing poet in India. In Indian poetry, he was among the leading poets

**KEDAR MISHRA** | POET

### PEANUTS



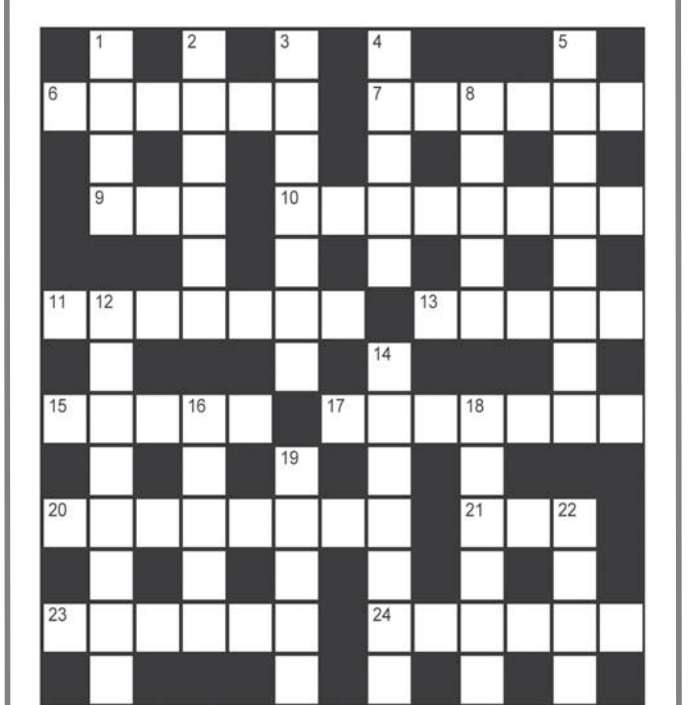
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### BREVITY



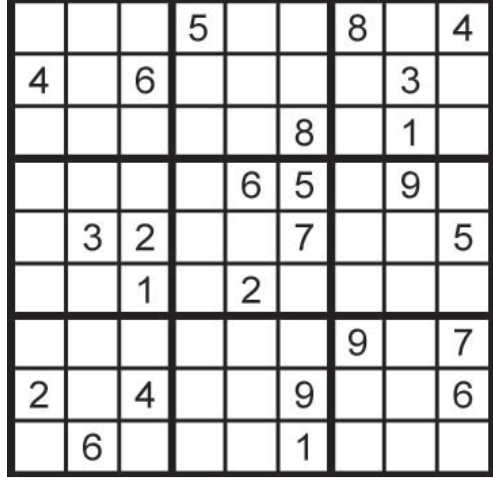
### FUN post CROSSWORD



- Across**  
6 Roundabout way  
7 Quick-witted  
9 Barley bristle  
10 Makes like a soothsayer  
11 Dental problem  
13 Pretend  
15 Family girl  
17 Rummy relative  
20 Prosper
- Down**  
21 Basenji, e.g.  
23 Squealer  
24 Accord
- Down**  
1 Greek cheese  
2 French brandy  
3 Ask for a hand?  
4 Bedouin's mount  
5 Like some alibis
- 8 German wine valley  
12 Small fatty European fish  
14 Jungle knife  
16 Dracula, for one  
18 Befuddled  
19 Alcove  
22 Box office take

### 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



CROSSWORD

SUDOKU

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Doctors from Indian Medical Association, Cuttack branch, take out a cycle rally from Ranihat to Barabati Fort in order to spread awareness about ways to fight obesity in Cuttack, Sunday



# downtown

## BOUDH HOTTEST IN COUNTRY

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** The intense heat showed no signs of relenting as temperatures continued to soar across the state Sunday. Boudh recorded the highest temperature at 43.6°C, making it the hottest place in the country for the second day in a row. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has also predicted severe heatwave conditions to persist until March 19, issuing a 'red warning' for three districts.



According to IMD, Jharsuguda and Bolangir, recorded a maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius, and Bolangir, which sizzled at 41.7 degrees Celsius, were the second and third hottest places in the country.

Chandrapur in Maharashtra was at the fourth spot at 41.6 degrees Celsius.

This was the second day when Boudh was the hottest place in the country. It recorded 42.5 degrees Celsius Saturday.

The weather office said that a large part of Odisha, especially the western region, experienced heatwave conditions Sunday.

At least seven places in Odisha, including Boudh, Jharsuguda and Bolangir, recorded a maximum temperature of over 40 degrees Celsius, the IMD said.

The other places that recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius were Angul (41.1), Titilagarh (40.5), Sundargarh (40.3), and Bhawanipatna (40.2).

The maximum temperatures at Bhubaneswar and Cuttack were 36.8 and 37 degrees Celsius respectively, it said.

Forecasting heatwave conditions for another two days, the weather office issued a 'red warning' (take action) for Jharsuguda, Sambalpur and

Kalahandi for Monday. Similarly, 'orange warning' (be prepared) was issued for Sundargarh, Subarnapur, Kalahandi, Boudh and Bolangir districts and 'yellow warning' (be aware) for Keonjhar, Angul, Dhenkanal and Mayurbhanj districts.

Besides, some places in Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Puri, Nayagarh, Ganjam, and Gajapati will experience hot and humid weather conditions Monday, the IMD said.

However, people are expected to get relief from the

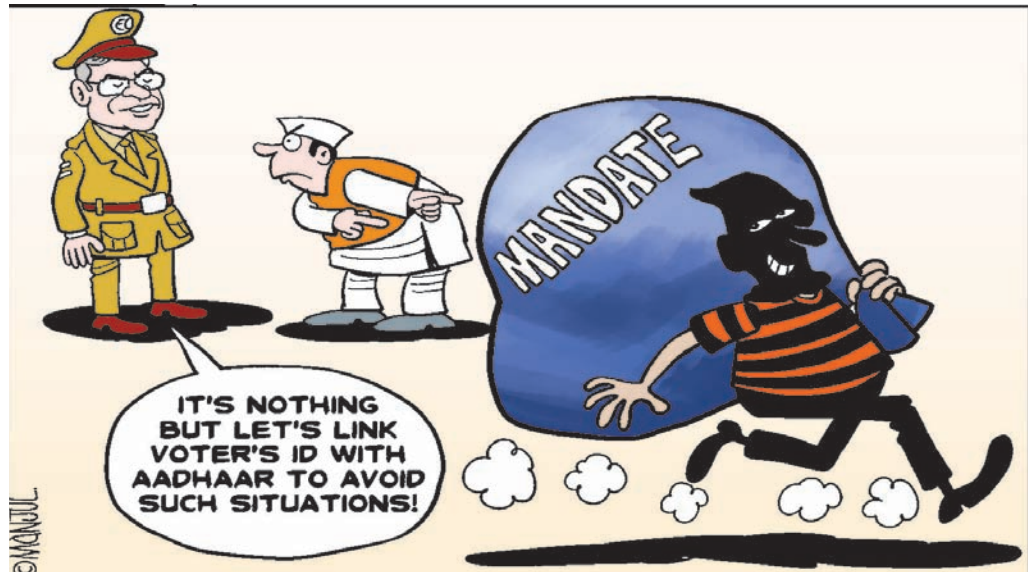
### Govt mulling morning classes

Keeping in view the severe heatwave gripping the state, the government is actively considering shifting school timings to morning hours to safeguard students from extreme temperatures, said School and Mass Education Minister Nityananda Gond Sunday. He said the state government is closely monitoring the situation and is likely to announce morning classes soon. A formal discussion will be held with Revenue and Disaster Management department before taking a final decision on rescheduling school hours.

heatwave as the IMD forecast thunderstorms with lightning for four days from March 19.

The IMD advised people to avoid prolonged heat exposure and not to leave children or pets in parked vehicles. It suggested people going to rallies or gatherings take necessary precautions to avoid prolonged exposure to heat.

### POLITICKLE BY MANJUL



IT'S NOTHING BUT LET'S LINK VOTER'S ID WITH AADHAAR TO AVOID SUCH SITUATIONS!

## Four drown taking 'Holi' bath in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** At least four people, including a minor, drowned while taking a bath Saturday after celebrating Holi - the festival of colours - across the state, police said.

A tourist drowned while bathing in the sea in Puri district, an officer said, adding that the identity of the deceased could not be

ascertained. In another incident, a man drowned while bathing in a pond in Kalahandi district. A 10-year-old boy, the son of a fisherman, drowned while bathing in the sea in Rambha area after celebrating Holi in Ganjam district, the police said.

A youth also drowned in Mahanadi river in Cuttack district, another officer said. The inci-

dent took place near Bhattarika Peeth in Narasinghapur area.

Earlier, the police had deployed guards and fire and emergency service personnel near many water bodies, apprehending drowning incidents during the Holi celebrations.

All the incidents took place in areas where there was no such deployment, police said.

## POSHAN KENDRAS IN STATE SOON: MINISTER

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** The state government, in collaboration with World Food Organisation (WFO), has mooted steps to open 'Poshan Kendras' to provide essential commodities at subsidised rates in the state, Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra said Sunday.

As per the plan, at least 35 'Poshan Kendras' will be opened at different places across the

state on a pilot basis. Later, one such ration store will be opened in each panchayat of the state, he said.

Various essential commodities like rice, wheat and dal will be provided to poor and lower-income groups at subsidised rates. The subsidy money will be borne by both state and Central governments, Patra said.

The minister said a team of officers from the state government will visit Gujarat and New Delhi to study the functioning of

'Poshan Kendras' there.

"It is in the proposal stage now. We will present the details before the Chief Minister for his approval. After that it can be rolled out," he added.

In August last year, the department of Food and Public Distribution at the Centre had launched the programme to transform 60 fair price shops (FPSs) of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh into Jan Poshan Kendras (JPKs).

### 30L yet to do e-KYC verification

Bhubaneswar: Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra told the media Sunday that e-KYC (know your customer) verification is going on across the state and a little more than 30 lakh ration card beneficiaries have not done their e-KYC verification. "After completion of the deadline (March 31), we will not remove the left-out beneficiaries immediately from the ration card list. Our field-level officials will visit the homes of the people, who have not completed their e-KYC verification," Patra said. If the beneficiary is not there or he/she surrendered the card, then only such persons' names will be removed from the public distribution system (PDS), he said.

These JPKs offer non-PDS commodities with particular focus on nutrition-dense commod-

ities at prices that are competitive with those in the open market.

**Shaadi, Utsav ya Tyohar... Lijjat Papad Ho Harbar...**

Karram Kurram... Kurram Kurram... Kurram Kurram...

**Lijjat PAPAN**

Website : [www.lijjat.com](http://www.lijjat.com) Email : [enquiry@lijjat.com](mailto:enquiry@lijjat.com)




## LIC Premium Payments made easy with Bharat Connect.

Pay anytime, anywhere on the apps & websites you trust.



**Pay with a few simple steps**

- Open your preferred payment app
- Search for LIC under the Insurance Category
- Add your policy number, email ID & DoB
- Pay your premium amount





**Universal access through 800+ platforms**



**Secure transactions**



**Set reminders & auto-pay**



भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम  
LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Experience easy LIC premium payments on these Bharat Connect-enabled partner apps & websites.


















# NGMA branch to come up in Capital

Project is set to boost the City's artistic landscape, promote cultural exchanges, and strengthen its position as a hub for heritage and modern art



The gallery is expected to boost the local economy by increasing tourism and generating employment in the cultural sector. It will create new opportunities for artists, curators, and businesses, driving growth in the City's art and heritage industries.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** In a major step towards elevating the cultural landscape of the Capital city, the Central government is considering the establishment of a National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) branch in Bhubaneswar.

This development follows a formal request from Bhubaneswar MP Aparajita Sarangi, who recently met Union Culture and Tourism Minis-

ter Gajendra Singh Shekhawat in New Delhi to push for the proposal.

The Union Minister has assured full support for the initiative, and a final decision is expected soon. Sarangi had earlier written to Shekhawat, advocating for the project, and later reiterated her request during the meeting.

She later shared an update

on 'X' (formerly Twitter), mentioning that Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had also written to the Union Minister, backing the demand.

In her letter, Sarangi emphasised Bhubaneswar's unique blend of historical richness and modern urban growth, stating that the City, known as the "Temple City of India", is evolving into a major tourism and educational hub.

She highlighted that an NGMA branch would enhance the City's cultural and artistic landscape, benefiting both the local population and the state as a whole.

Sarangi further pointed out that the proposed gallery would complement Odisha's existing heritage sites, such as the Konark Sun Temple and Srimandir, thereby strengthening the state's cultural tourism circuit. Additionally, she stressed that the gallery would contribute to boosting the local economy by drawing more tourists.

She also underscored the importance of cultural exchanges and artistic collaborations, stating that the NGMA branch would provide a platform for artists from different regions, encouraging creative dialogue and strengthening Bhubaneswar's position as an emerging cultural capital of India.



**ANNIV DAY:** Housing and Urban Development Minister Krushna Chandra Mahapatra participates during the 3rd foundation day celebration of All Odisha Veteran Soldiers' Association at Soochana Bhawan in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

# Shootout over carrom game: Accused held

A heated argument over a carrom game took a violent turn, resulting in a fatal shooting during Holi celebrations

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack Sadar, March 16:** The Commissionerate Police has arrested the prime accused in the Saturday evening shooting at Sri Krishna Vihar, under 42 Mouja jurisdiction. The accused, Kitu (Prakash Sutar, 25), was taken into custody Sunday, and police seized the locally made firearm used in the crime. He was later produced in court, said Cuttack DCP Rishikesh Khilari at a press meet. The police may seek his remand for further questioning if re-



**A case has been registered against Prakash Sutar under Section 89/25 at 42 Mouja Police Station, following his arrest in connection with the fatal shooting incident**

quired, he added. The incident stemmed from a heated dispute over water spilling on a carrom board

during a game. Enraged, Prakash allegedly fired shots at Ganesh (Bikash Mohanty) from close range, killing him

on the spot. The victim and his friends had been consuming alcohol Saturday evening to celebrate Holi, police revealed. Both the accused and the deceased had a business relationship, according to the DCP. The deceased, a resident of Bhiranga Village, Ersama block, Jagatsinghpur district, and the accused, from Pattamundai block, Kendrapara district, were known to each other. A case has been registered under Section 89/25 at 42 Mouja Police Station, the DCP stated.

# Four arrested for assaulting youth

**Bhubaneswar:** Chandrasekharpur police arrested four men Sunday for allegedly assaulting a youth during a feast preparation, following past disputes. The victim, Manas Ranjan Swain, sustained serious injuries and was admitted to a city hospital in critical condition Saturday evening, confirmed Inspector-in-Charge (IC) Tusharkant Sethi. The accused have been identified as Dillip Barik (29), Manas Kumar Mohapatra (29), Dipuna Mohapatra (23), and Happy Nayak (21). The attack took place around 7:15pm near the Buddha Society pump house, where Swain and his associates were preparing a feast. The four accused arrived at the spot, verbally abused Swain, and when he objected, they attacked him with iron bars and swords, causing severe injuries to his leg and abdomen, before fleeing. A critically wounded Swain was rushed to the hospital, while police launched a manhunt.

**WEATHER**  
BBSR CTC  
Max Temp 36.8° 37.0°  
Min Temp 24.4° 23.0°  
Humidity 90% 79%  
Rainfall Nil Nil  
**FORECAST**  
Dry weather very likely to prevail over the districts of Odisha

# Amit Shah likely to visit state from March 21

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Odisha for three days from March 21 and will launch several developmental projects in the state during the tour, a BJP leader said here Sunday. Odisha BJP president Manmohan Samal said Shah will

arrive at Jharsuguda airport in the evening March 21 and is scheduled to stay at the MCL Guest House. Shah will visit Maa Samaleswari Temple in Sambalpur the next day before addressing a public gathering at the PHD Ground in Jharsuguda. Apart from addressing the public meeting, the minister is scheduled to lay the foundation

stones for some projects there. He will then proceed to Puri via Bhubaneswar and will spend the night in the coastal town, Samal told reporters. As per the programme available so far, Shah will visit the Srimandir in Puri March 23 and is scheduled to lay the foundation stone for the proposed forensic university in Jatni, Samal said.



**SOULFUL MUSIC:** Father and daughter duo M Simadee and M Dhanishree perform Saxophone during 'Saxophone Serenade', a special tribute to Saxophone maestro Manohari Singh, organised by Sushma Foundation at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

# Heritage activists appeal for restoration of shrines

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 16:** Several ancient temples in the Prachi river basin, including the Dadhibaman Temple in Kuanarapur, Gangeswara Gada's Narayan Temple, and the Janardana Deva Temple in Arilo, are on the verge of collapse due to prolonged neglect.

Alarmed by their deteriorating state, heritage enthusiasts from Rediscover Lost Heritage Group and Silver City Cuttack Public Charitable Trust visited these sites Sunday to raise awareness and push for urgent restoration efforts.

Akash Ashok Pattanayak, president of the Silver City Cuttack Public Charitable Trust, emphasised the need for intervention. "Our 'Save Our Heritage' campaign focuses on preserving Odisha's neglected temples, monasteries, and monuments. These sites hold immense archaeological value but have been ignored for too long," he said. He urged the State Ar-



chaeology department to grant protected status to the Dadhibaman Temple in Kuanarapur, given its historical importance. Deepak Kumar Nayak, a heritage researcher and founding member of Rediscover Lost Heritage Group, highlighted the temple's significance. Built in the 15th century under Gajapati Kapilendra Deva of the Suryavamsi dynasty, it features Kalingan architecture, with a Rekha Vimana and

Pidha Jagamohan, adorned with Varaha, Trivikrama, and Narasimha sculptures of the Eastern Ganga period. Years of neglect have left it crumbling, with deep cracks and overgrown vegetation threatening its structure. The Prachi river, once a flourishing watercourse, was central to Vaishnavism, with Lord Vishnu worshipped as Madhava along its banks. Despite references in the Puranas, many of its ancient temples now lie in ruins.

# Vegan meat, soy milk may help with weight loss

**A** new study suggests that replacing animal products with plant-based alternatives such as soy milk and vegan meat—even if they are ultra-processed—can contribute to significant weight loss. Conducted by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, the research highlights how plant-based processed foods can play a role in effective weight management. Highly processed foods, particularly those rich in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats, have long been associated with obesity, metabolic disorders, and other health complications. However, the study found that when ultra-processed foods are plant-based, they may offer health benefits, including weight loss.

Hana Kahleova, director of clinical research at the Physicians Committee, stated that opting for a bagel instead of bacon for breakfast or choosing a veggie burger over a traditional hamburger for dinner could aid in weight loss. Even plant-based foods that are processed, such as soy milk, vegan meat, and dairy alternatives, can positively impact weight and overall health. Published in the journal Nutrition & Metabolism, the study involved participants divided into two groups: one that switched to a vegan diet, including processed plant-based foods, and another that maintained its regular diet. At the end of the study, the vegan group experienced an average weight loss of 5.9 kilograms,



while the control group showed no significant change. Researchers noted that the primary factors contributing to weight loss were the reduced intake of processed animal products such as smoked fish,

lower consumption of processed or minimally processed animal foods such as milk, beef, and eggs, and a significant decrease in ultra-processed animal foods, including cheese, fried chicken, and sausage.

The researchers attributed this weight loss to lower calorie and fat intake, higher fiber consumption, and increased calorie burn due to an enhanced metabolism after meals.

Kahleova emphasised that the study reinforces the idea that plant-based processed foods, including canned beans, cereal, and veggie burgers, can still be part of a healthy diet that helps combat obesity and diet-related chronic diseases. The findings challenge the common belief that all ultra-processed foods are harmful, highlighting the importance of nutrient content and food source in determining their impact on health. The study suggests that while whole, unprocessed foods remain the healthiest option, plant-based processed alternatives can still contribute to weight loss and better overall well-being when replacing animal products in the diet.

**FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS**  
Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur- 9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-9090090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.



**TEAM SPORTS:** A volleyball match between Tata Steel, Dhenkanal and Star City, Bhubaneswar in progress during an all-India volleyball tournament at Khallikote Unitary University playground in Berhampur, Sunday. The tournament was jointly organised by Ganjam District Athletic Association and District Veteran Volleyball Players Association

# RSP capacity to go upto 9 MT by 2030

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 16: State-owned SAIL has plans to more than double the capacity of its Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) to around 9 million tonne per annum at an investment of ₹30,000 crore, a move which will boost supplies to sectors like defence, oil & gas, automobiles among others.



Post expansion, which will come up over an area of 1,200 acre, RSP will alone contribute around 25 per cent to SAIL's overall 35 million tonne per annum (MTPA) production capacity target by 2030, Alok Verma, Director In-Charge, RSP, said. RSP holds the distinction of being the first public sector steel plant in India. It was set up in 1950s with German collaboration with an initial capacity of 1 MT.

duces plates, hot rolled (HR) coils, spiral welded and electric resistance welded pipes, cold rolled non-oriented (CRNO) which find applications in areas like ship building, rail wagons, LPG cylinder, automobiles, oil and gas, motors, generators, and transformers. The plant also has a dedicated mill to manufacture naval grade, armour grade and quenched and tempered plates for various naval and defense applications.

and logistics, he said. Besides, a new blast furnace and steel melting shop will be set up.

The plant became operational February 3, 1959, when the then President of India Rajendra Prasad lit up the first blast furnace Parvati.

Sharing the details, Verma said approximately 1,200 acre on the south eastern side of the plant will be required for taking up this mega green field expansion project to be implemented with an investment of around ₹30,000 crore.

As a prerequisite for this expansion, a railway line connecting Dumertra station to RSP is under construction for smooth movement of raw materials and finished goods to strengthen logistics. It will avoid load on Bondamunda Yard. The second rail connection work is being executed by South Eastern Railways on cost deposit scheme for which the requisite amount has been deposited to Indian Railways by RSP.

At present, the total steel-making capacity of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) stands at 20.30 MTPA of which RSP's contribution is 4.4 MTPA.

Speaking further, the official said RSP's capacity will be enhanced by 5 MTPA to 9.4 MTPA by 2030.

SAIL, under Ministry of Steel, is among the top three steel manufacturers in India. Besides RSP, the company has four other integrated steel units namely Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP) and Burnpur Steel Plant (BSP) in Chhattisgarh and Bokaro Steel Plant in Jharkhand.

He said they have also identified the second person involved in the cheating case. The search was on to nab him, he added.

# Andhra rice trader arrested in cheating case

AGENCIES

Berhampur, March 16: The police Sunday arrested a 47-year-old rice trader from Andhra Pradesh for allegedly cheating a rice mill owner of ₹77 lakh in Ganjam district about five years ago, an officer said.

The accused, Verma, a resident of Tanuku in Andhra Pradesh's West Godavari district, was arrested near Girisola in the Odisha and Andhra Pradesh border area, the police officer said.

Verma allegedly purchased rice worth ₹77 lakh from the

rice mill owner of Pitatali in Ganjam district around five years ago and did not pay the money.

Acting on a tip-off, the police conducted raids in the border area and arrested the accused person, the Superintendent of Police of Berhampur, Saravana Vivek M, said.

According to the police, two persons from Andhra Pradesh, including the accused, had approached the proprietor of a rice mill at Pitatali, a village on Odisha-Andhra Pradesh border, about five years ago to purchase rice from the mill. They also assured the propri-



etor that they would procure the rice from the mill regularly. They had also purchased the rice for some days by paying the money instantly.

Thereafter, they purchased rice worth ₹77.26 lakh from the mill on credit by assuring its proprietor to pay the money at the earliest. They, however,

did not pay the money, the police said after a preliminary inquiry.

The proprietor of the mill had lodged an FIR at the Golanthara police station against the accused persons November 6 last year.

The police have seized all the documents relating to the supply of rice to the accused persons, from time to time, the inspector-in-charge of the Golanthara police station, Bibeknand Swain, said.

# Chandania Hill to go waste-free



POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 16: Following the imposition of a total ban on waste dumping in the areas surrounding the Chandania Hill following complaints from various quarters, and with the Berhampur Municipal Corporation (BeMC) stepping up efforts to resume bio-mining the accumulated garbage, hopes for making the scenic spot on the outskirts of the City waste free has ignited once again.

According to reports, the area has turned into a waste dumping ground due to the daily disposal of hundreds of metric tonnes of waste. This has not just caused serious environmental pollution, it has also made local residents live in unhealthy and pitiable conditions. BeMC sources said the bio-mining process is currently being managed by MGS Environ Private Limited.

In 2024, the corporation had signed a three-month agreement for waste processing and

allocated ₹9 crore for the project. Chandania Hill spans on an area of 13.15 acres and still holds approximately 1.52 million metric tons of accumulated waste, some of which has been there for a decade. The agency processes 350 to 420 metric tonnes of waste daily, separating plastic, construction materials like debris, metal and used iron bars.

Plastic waste is being segregated, recycled and sent to cement factories, while non-harmful construction debris is repurposed for various development projects of BeMC. Future plans include producing compost from organic waste. Although the initial three-month contract has expired, BeMC has extended the agreement to continue operations. The corporation has set a goal of processing 2,000 metric tonnes of waste daily, aiming to make Chandania Hill completely waste-free. A fresh tender will be issued once the current contract ends this month, with plans to complete the cleanup by August.

BeMC's sanitation expert Santanu Mishra said the waste-ridden Chandania Hill is soon going to be free of wastes which will help the local residents on its surroundings live a healthy life.

Despite efforts to obtain a response, BeMC's Deputy Commissioner could not be available for comments.

# 5-yr-old girl's body found, rape suspected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/Angul, March 16: The body of a five-year-old girl was found in a pool of blood at a stone's throw from her house in Angul district, with police suspecting that she was raped and murdered.

The girl had gone missing Thursday afternoon and her family had filed a police complaint Friday.

The girl's body was found in her village under the jurisdiction of Industrial police station at Nisha Saturday.

Passersby spotted the girl's blood-soaked body lying near a mahua tree around 100 metres from her home, and informed the police, an officer said.

Preliminary investigation indicated that the girl was sexually assaulted and murdered. Police have detained a 40-year-old man in connection with the incident.

In order to confirm whether the girl was sexually assaulted before her death, police have sent her body to Angul district headquarters hospital (DHH) for medical examination, the officer said.

A team of paediatricians from Cuttack are also thoroughly examining whether the girl was raped or not, he added.

# 5 killed in accidents during Holi



AGENCIES

Keonjhar/Cuttack, Mar 16: Five people were killed in two road accidents in Odisha during Holi celebrations Saturday, police said.

In the first incident, three members of a family were mowed down by a speeding truck in Keonjhar district.

The accident occurred near Dolita Chhak, close to Champua Police Station, in the morning hours when the truck hit them, a senior officer said. The deceased were identified as Ivan Pradhan, his wife Mathamani Pradhan and their son Mangal Pradhan, he said. They hailed from Sanani village in the Champua region.

The accident occurred when they were on their way to the residence of Pradhan's son-in-law to celebrate Holi, the officer said. "While Pradhan died on the spot, his wife succumbed to her injuries at Champua hospital and Mangal breathed his last when he was being shifted to Keonjhar," he said.

In the other incident, at least two youths were killed and an-

other was injured in an accident that took place in Sitarampur area under the Narasinghpur Police Station limits in Cuttack district, another officer said.

The accident occurred on the Narasinghpur-Kamaladiha main road when their two-wheeler hit a roadside electric pole, he said. They were returning home after celebrating Holi when the accident took place, the police said.

**EAST COAST RAILWAY**

File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/  
E-Tender/116, Dt. 11.03.2025

(1) Tender No. e-Tender-estatekur-337-24, Dtd.: 27.02.2025

**DESCRIPTION :** INTERIOR WORK OF RECEPTION AREA AND CUP BOARDS IN ACCOMMODATION ROOM AT RAILWAY INDOOR STADIUM COMPLEX, MANCHESWAR.

Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 28.55 Lakh, EMD: ₹ 57,100/-

(2) Tender No. e-Tender-CENTKUR-338-2024, Dtd.: 05.03.2025

**DESCRIPTION :** CONSTRUCTION OF RPF POST BUILDING AT ANGUL OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 134.44 Lakh, EMD: ₹ 2,17,200/-

Completion Period: 06 (Six) Months (for SI. No. 1) and 12 (Twelve) Months (for SI. No. 2).

**Tender Closing Date and Time :** At 1500 Hrs. of 26.03.2025 (for both the Tenders).

No manual offers sent by Post / Courier/ Fax or in person shall be accepted against such e-tenders even if these are submitted on firm's letter head and received in time. All such manual offers shall be considered invalid and shall be rejected summarily without any consideration.

Complete information including e-tender documents of the above e-Tender is available in website : [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**Note :** The prospective tenderers are advised to revisit the website 10 (Ten) days before the date of closing of tender to note any changes / corrigenda issued for this tender. The tenderers/bidders must have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate and must be registered on IREPS Portal. Only registered tenderer(s)/ bidder(s) can participate on e-tendering.

Divisional Railway Manager (Engg)/  
PR-1086/P/24-25 Khurda Road

**BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**BHUBANESWAR**

AKASH SHOVA BUILDING,  
SACHIVALAYA MARG, BHUBANESWAR-751001  
Visit us at: <http://www.bda.gov.in>  
RFP No.266, Date: 13.03.2025

No.CAD-2830: Executive Engineer, Division-IV, BDA, Bhubaneswar on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority invites Request for proposal (RFP) in ONLINE MODE only for the following works.

- "Selection of an Agency for providing temporary lighting on hire/ Rental Basis for the beautification of streets at various locations and B.D.A. Office Building's in Bhubaneswar for different occasions" and
- "Selection of an Agency for supply of excavators & machineries with operator on hire basis for BDA"
- The RFP documents will be available in the website: <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> from dtd.18.03.2025 to 27.03.2025 upto 5.00 PM. The last date of receipt of proposals in online mode is upto 5.00 PM on Dtd. 03.04.2025 and the RFP will be opened at 11.30 AM on Dtd.04.04.2025 in the office chamber of the Executive Engineer, Division No-IV, BDA, Bhubaneswar in the presence of the bidders or their authorized representatives. Please refer to the RFP documents available in the website <https://tendersodisha.gov.in> for further details. Any addendum/ corrigendum/ cancellation of RFP can be seen in this website only.

**Sd./- Executive Engineer**  
Division No-IV, BDA

OIPR-13033/11/0255/2425

**OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BHADRAK**  
BHADRAK, PIN- 756100  
E-mail: [eobdkmunicipality@gmail.com](mailto:eobdkmunicipality@gmail.com)

**INVITATION FOR BIDS**  
(Through E-Procurement)

Tender Reference No.08/EM/2024-25  
Tender Call Notice No.1353/BM/dtd.12.03.2025  
Tender ID No.

No.C-1858: The Executive Officer, Bhadrak Municipality, Bhadrak invites percentage rate bids in double cover system through e-procurement in conformity with the detailed tender call notice to be eventually drawn up in Municipal Agreement form for execution of the works as detailed in the table below from eligible class of contractors registered with the State Government/ contractors of equivalent grade/ class registered with Central Government/ MES/ Railways and Municipal Contractors on production of definite proof from the appropriate authority. This tender is of composite nature and only tenderers with sound financial background capable of investing required amount for advance procurement of all materials required for the work need apply. The bidders may submit bids for any or all of the following works separately as per their eligibility.

1. Name of the Work	: Individual Civil Construction works as per DTCN published in the website
2. No. of works put to tender	: 3 Nos individual civil construction works
3. Estimated Cost	: As per DTCN
4. Period of Completion	: As per DTCN
5. Date and Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From 10.00 hours of Dt.20.03.2025 to 17.00 hours of Dt.19.04.2025
6. Mode of deposit towards cost of Bid document & EMD	: Online
7. Date and Time of opening of the Technical Bid	: 11.00 hours and onwards of Dt.21.04.2025
8. Date and time of opening of the Financial Bid	: To be intimated in due course of time to the eligible bidders qualified in the technical evaluation.
9. Name and address of the Officer Inviting Bid	: Executive Officer, Bhadrak Municipality Bhadrak

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <https://tendersorissa.gov.in>.

OIPR-13152/11/0023/2425 Sd./- Executive Officer, Bhadrak Municipality

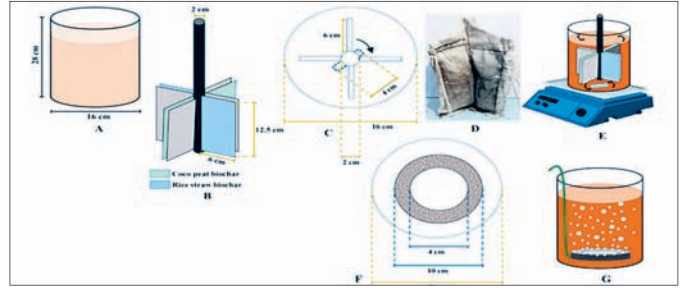
# NITR finds way to fight pharma toxins in water

RAJESH MOHANTY,OP

Rourkela, March 16: In a major breakthrough, researchers at the National Institute of Technology Rourkela (NITR) have found ways to remove pharmaceutical pollutants from wastewater. The path-breaking process has been developed by a team, led by Prof Angana Sarkar, Associate Professor at the department of Biotechnology & Medical Engineering of the top technical institute.

The two-stage process combines adsorption and biodegradation to tackle a wide range of pharmaceutical compounds, including antibiotics, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSIDs), and synthetic dyes.

The study was recently published in the prestigious Journal of Water Process Engineering. The paper has been co-authored by Prof Angana Sarkar, along with her research team - Dr Kasturi Poddar, Dr Debapriya Sarkar (research graduate) and Pritam Bajirao Patil (research scholar). Pharmaceutically active compounds (PhACs) have become contaminants of emerg-



ing concern due to their bioaccumulation and biomagnification through the food chain, posing significant risks to humans and aquatic organisms even at trace concentrations. These endocrine-disrupting chemicals interfere with hormonal systems, causing acute health issues. These pollutants enter water systems through different means.

For instance, a study found that the Musi River in Telangana contained over 5 milligram per litre (mg/L) of ciprofloxacin, an antibiotic, due to the nearby drug manufacturing industry. Adverse effects have been observed in lower trophic levels, such as fish, mussels, and birds, with incidents like fish mortality

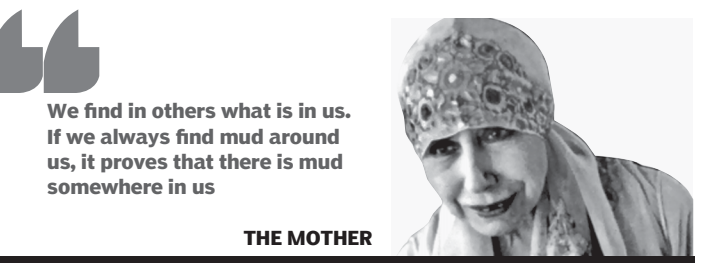
and declining eagle and vulture populations in the Indian subcontinent. Additionally, these pollutants pose serious health risks to humans, including kidney and liver damage, hypertension, and developmental issues. Antibiotics in wastewater are particularly concerning, as a large amount is excreted unchanged, contributing to the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

To address these challenges, the NITR research team developed an integrated treatment process that effectively removes pharmaceutical pollutants through a two-stage approach. In the first stage, the antibiotics are captured using biochar adsorbents derived from roasted coco peat and rice straw. This

step significantly reduces antibiotic contamination before the biological treatment phase. The second stage employs a specialised bacterial group, including Klebsiella and Pseudomonas strains, to break down residual pharmaceutical compounds such as diclofenac, paracetamol, and synthetic dyes.

When tested on synthetic wastewater containing a mix of NSAIDs, antibiotics, and pharmaceutical dyes, the system demonstrated excellent removal efficiencies.

Speaking about the research, Prof Sarkar said, "Our integrated system efficiently removed various pharmaceutical pollutants, including antibiotics, NSIDs and dyes. The process is completely safe with no toxic intermediates and protects biodegrading bacteria, minimises toxic byproducts, and enhances the eco-friendly management of pharmaceutical contaminants. The treatment costs about ₹2.6 per liter and can be further reduced by process optimisation and integrating this system as a tertiary step in existing treatments."



We find in others what is in us. If we always find mud around us, it proves that there is mud somewhere in us

THE MOTHER

# Eleven Years

Napoleon was crowned in December 1804 and 11 years later, in June 1815, lost at Waterloo. In these 11 years, he united Europe for the first time since Charlemagne had done a thousand years before in 804. Napoleon achieved it through battlefield victories against the great military powers of his age, such as Prussia and Austria.

Deng Xiaoping was already an old man of 74 when he took charge in 1978. Eleven years later, he stepped down in 1989, the year of Tiananmen Square. Many people, including Singapore's leader Lee Kuan Yew, thought of him as the greatest man they had ever known, because of what he set out to achieve and then achieved in these 11 years. Deng discarded the Marxist views he had held for more than half a century and reformed China, setting it on the road it is today.

Eleven years is a long time. Or rather let us say it is sufficient time for a leader to make an impact. It is hard to find a person at any place on the planet and indeed at any time in history, who made a difference after his or her first decade. At best they may have continued doing what they were doing, but most often they take on a tired look. And sometimes they produce terrible outcomes. Deng's predecessor Mao is a good example of this phenomenon. After his first decade came famines induced by policy and violence. All of Indira Gandhi's achievements, whether they are classified as being good or bad, were implemented in her initial years. From bank nationalisation and the abolishing of privy purses to the Bangladesh war. Then came the Emergency and in her last years the violence in Punjab.

In our time consider Turkey's Erdogan who has been in power since 2003, and Russia's Putin who has hung around for 25 years. Russia's per capita GDP when Putin took over was \$1700. Eleven years later, in 2011, it had risen to \$14,300. Today, another 14 years after that, it has fallen to \$13,800 according to the World Bank's data. Putin remains in office having presided over no economic growth for a decade and a half, and a war which has already eaten up the flower of Russia's youth and its future. Erdogan took over an economy that was at \$4600 per person in 2003 and took it to \$12,500 by 2013. Today it is still more or less at the same place. He hangs on nonetheless.

Jawaharlal Nehru spent his first decade building institutions which we still have around us. The Indian Institutes of Technology came in 1950 starting with Kharagpur, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in 1954, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in 1956, Indian Institutes of Management in 1961. In this period Nehru put up a string of public sector enterprises that still live. The steel giant SAIL (1954), ONGC (1956), NMDC (1958), Indian Oil (1959) and so on and on. His contributions to world affairs were also in this period from Panchsheel (1954) to Bandung (1955).

Whether you admire Nehru, as people my age were compelled to do when we were young, or you dislike him, as is fashionable today, his legacy is alive and breathing in the institutions that he conceived and built. All of it more or less finished in 11 years.

Pakistan's Gen Ayub Khan was likened by Samuel Huntington of 'Clash of Civilisations' fame to the lawgivers of Ancient Greece. Ayub seized power in 1958 and lost it 11 years later in 1969. His initial years were promising in terms of economic growth, leading to that praise from Huntington, even though the numbers were modest by the standards of Japan and South Korea and Taiwan. But the war against India in 1965 and the agitations that were stirring in the east finished him off.

Even the wicked leaders of history completed their arc in this period. Hitler came to office in 1933 and by 1944 was in his bunker awaiting the forces of Gen Zhukov, who had defeated the Germans in Stalingrad the year before. All of the achievements that history lists for the German tyrant, from what he did to the economy and the Autobahn, to the persecutions of minorities, to the manhandling of the French and British forces with the conception of 'blitzkrieg', to the development of the first modern rocket the V2, all of these came in 11 years.

There is a reason this 11 year phenomenon is a rule as much as it is an observation. It speaks to the nature of man and what humans are like. We have a limited number of original ideas to offer and that limit exhausts itself with time. Most of us do not have much power or agency over the world. The few who do have power show the rest of us what is possible and for how long.

In his book The 10 Rules of Successful Nations, Ruchir Sharma writes under the subhead of 'Stale leaders' that "one simple way to think about this rule is that high impact reform is most likely in a leader's first term, and less likely in the second term and beyond, as a leader runs out of ideas or support for reform and turns to securing a grand legacy."

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "In the end every hero becomes a bore."

## WISDOM CORNER

He who learns but does not think, is lost! He who thinks but does not learn is in great danger  
CONFUCIUS

Disobedience is the true foundation of liberty. The obedient must be slaves  
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them  
KAHLIL GIBRAN

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1861: In Turin, Italy, after more than 10 years of revolution led by such figures as Giuseppe Garibaldi, a parliament assembled and officially proclaimed the unified Kingdom of Italy.
- 1959: The Dalai Lama flees Tibet for India. Followers and advisers of Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, feared for his life after a revolt had erupted in Lhasa against the Chinese.
- 1992: Apartheid in South Africa comes to an end. In a referendum, 68.7% of white South Africans voted for an abolishment of racial segregation in the country.

## FOCUS UKRAINE WAR

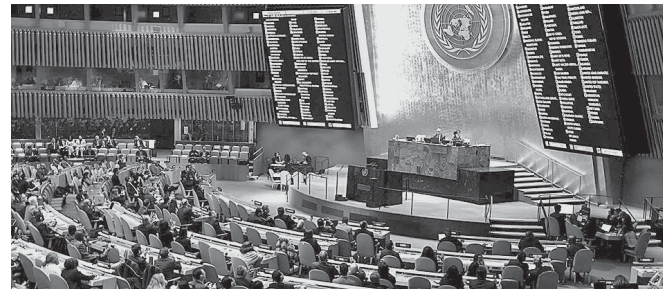
# THE GLOBAL DIVIDE

At a time of rising geopolitical tensions and deepening global fragmentation, the Ukraine war has proved particularly divisive. From the start, the battle lines were clearly drawn: Russia on one side, Ukraine and the West on the other, and much of the Global South hoping only for the conflict to end. Now, however, alignments are shifting. Whether this will advance efforts to resolve the conflict and strengthen global stability remains to be seen.

After more than three years, Europe – including the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Norway – remains largely steadfast in its support of Ukraine. The largest armed conflict in its neighbourhood since World War II has deeply affected the European psyche, as it has challenged basic assumptions about continental security and revived the spectre of nuclear annihilation that loomed over Europe throughout the Cold War. The prevailing view has always been that a Russian "victory" – including a peace deal that ceded some Ukrainian territory to Russia – would amount to an "existential threat."

The United States, however, has decided that it no longer wants to "pour billions of dollars" into what Secretary of State Marco Rubio calls a "bloody stalemate, a meat-grinder-type war." So, US President Donald Trump is seeking to negotiate a peace deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin. To press Ukraine to accept the concessions such an agreement will undoubtedly entail, the Trump administration suspended and later resumed military aid and intelligence support.

This is not about ending a "savage conflict" for "the good of the world," as Trump claims. While years of sanctions were supposed to drain Russia, economically and militarily, to



**Rather than repeat the mistakes of the 1950-53 Korean War – in which an armistice agreement was reached only after two years of military deadlock – all parties should adopt a realistic approach to ending the war and negotiate accordingly**

America's benefit, they bolstered an unholy Sino-Russian alliance against the West, while sustaining a conflict that kept US attention and resources in Europe. With his push for a peace deal in Ukraine, Trump is seeking to cut America's losses and shift its strategic focus and military resources toward the Indo-Pacific – the home of America's real enemy: China.

As Trump's predecessor Joe Biden recognised, only China has the resolve and capability to surpass the US as the foremost world power. Yet the US still has more than 100,000 troops stationed in Europe. That is why US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth recently warned that the US can "no longer tolerate" an "imbalanced" transatlantic relationship that "encourages dependency." Europe must take "responsibility for its own security," Hegseth said, so that the US can focus on "deterring war with China."

The question is whether Europe is capable of managing its own security. The answer probably should be yes. As Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk recently pointed out, Europe does not lack economic strength.

Nor does it lack people: there are "500 million Europeans begging 300 million Americans to defend them against 140 million Russians." What is missing is the European Union's belief that it is a "global power." The result is a rudderless Europe.

When it comes to supporting Ukraine, Europe has another critical shortcoming. As NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte has noted, Europe lacks the necessary military-industrial base to provide sufficient arms support to Ukraine. That is why some, including Rutte, want to make a deal with the US: you keep supplying Ukraine with weapons, and we will foot the bill. Unless the Trump administration accepts such an arrangement, the British-French plan to build a "coalition of the willing" to do the "heavy lifting" on Ukrainian security will face powerful headwinds.

Meanwhile, the Global South is still struggling to cope with the Ukraine war's economic fallout, especially sharply higher food and energy prices, which have had particularly devastating consequences for small and vulnerable developing countries with limited

foreign reserves. Sri Lanka is a case in point. In the months that followed Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, skyrocketing global prices drained its reserves, leading to fuel, food, medicine, and electricity shortages. The resulting economic meltdown pushed a frustrated population over the edge, triggering widespread protests that toppled a political dynasty.

This explains why developing countries remain largely unified in advocating an early negotiated end to the war, even if that means leaving a sizable chunk of Ukrainian territory under Russian occupation. If anything, calls for a peace agreement have grown since 2023, with even NATO member Turkey and close US ally Israel charting more independent stances on the conflict. It does not help that, for many countries in the Global South, the West's contrasting responses to the wars in Ukraine and Gaza reek of hypocrisy.

For now, Ukraine and Europe remain committed to seeking peace through strength. But as admirable as Ukraine's resistance has been, and as important as it is to defend the international legal principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that Russia has flagrantly violated, the fact is that the conflict has reached a stalemate, while the international fallout continues to grow. Rather than repeat the mistakes of the 1950-53 Korean War – in which an armistice agreement was reached only after two years of military deadlock – all parties should adopt a realistic approach to ending the war and negotiate accordingly.

The writer is Professor Emeritus of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin.

©PROJECT SYNDICATE

## SPECTRUM ECONOMY

# Is govt debt fuelling private profits?

The economy is showing signs of slowdown, stock markets are in a bad shape, the common man is in distress because of unemployment and inflation, and yet the corporates are earning high profits. India's officially lowered GDP growth projection may be underestimating the true extent of the slowdown. A volatile stock market and sluggish industrial activity add to concerns.

The latest financial shock comes from IndusInd Bank, whose shares plunged 27%, erasing Rs 19000 crore in market value after disclosing Rs 2,300 crore in derivatives accounting discrepancies, which reduced its net worth by 2.4%. Since October 2024, India has lost nearly Rs 1 lakh crore due to capital flight. The banking sector is facing increasing credit risks, with rising defaults on loans, mortgages, credit cards, and fixed-income securities.

At the same time, structural issues continue to cloud economic assessments. Academics and institutional experts have pointed out flaws in official GDP estimates, with the IMF recommending an overhaul of real-sector statistics. India's GDP figures, once considered reliable, are now under scrutiny due to limited data availability,

opaque methodologies, and inconsistencies with independent indicators.

Unlike economies dominated by manufacturing, India's service-driven economic structure presents additional statistical challenges. In industrial sectors, output is tangible and pricing is straightforward, making valuations easier. However, measuring service sector output is complex, leading to concerns about data accuracy. For instance, claims of unemployment falling to 3% have been met with scepticism.

India's economic growth is projected at 6.4% for FY25 – the slowest pace in four years from 8.2% in FY24. Key factors behind this slowdown include a struggling manufacturing sector, sluggish corporate investments, and weak wage growth which is limiting discretionary spending. High inflation and uneven income distribution are straining household budgets.

To stabilise the economy, India must rethink its revenue strategy. While raising taxes is politically unviable, alternative measures are needed to boost income and spending. The nominal GDP growth rate, which includes real GDP growth and inflation, is estimated at 9.7% in FY25 – lower

than the 10.5% projected in last Union Budget. High inflation has driven corporate profits to an average of 22%, yet in real terms, it is slowing overall economic activity.

Despite the economic slowdown, India's corporate sector is witnessing record earnings. According to the Economic Survey, the profit-to-GDP ratio for Nifty 500 companies surged from 2.1% in FY23 to 4.8% in FY24, the highest level since 2007-08. However, corporate profits are not translating into overall economic growth.

Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran has pointed out that companies are inflating consumer prices while keeping wages low, making them primary contributors to inflation rather than responding to real demand. The question arises: Is government debt fuelling private profits? In other words, taxpayer money is indirectly supporting corporate earnings, even as the broader economy experiences one of its steepest slowdowns.

Corporate profits can rise even with weak consumer demand if companies increase prices faster than production costs. This "pricing power" often comes from market dominance, supply chain constraints,

or strong brand perception.

Paradoxically, India's manufacturing sector is slowing despite rising corporate profits. The official explanation points to global competition, but domestic challenges, including high input costs and regulatory hurdles, also play a role. Business groups with close political ties enjoy advantages often at the expense of fair market competition. This proximity between businesses and political power raises concerns. While select companies benefit, the broader economy suffers and lowers India's living standards. Despite being a \$3 trillion economy, India's per capita income remains well below that of Russia, which has a smaller \$2 trillion economy.

India's economy is at a crossroads. While corporate profits soar, economic fundamentals are weakening. High public debt, rising inflation, and sluggish manufacturing growth present serious challenges. These require policy reforms that foster investment, transparency, and inclusive growth. If India can navigate these hurdles, a sustainable recovery remains within reach. But will the right steps be taken?

INFA



Shivaji Sarkar

**TAXPAYER MONEY IS INDIRECTLY SUPPORTING CORPORATE EARNINGS, EVEN AS THE BROADER ECONOMY EXPERIENCES ONE OF ITS STEEPEST SLOWDOWNS**

## 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



## Disastrous decision

Sir, The destruction of thousands of acres of the Amazon rainforest by the Brazilian government to build a four lane highway to facilitate travel for delegates attending the UN climate summit COP30 scheduled to be held in Brazil in November this year has sparked severe criticism. Ironically, the clearing of forest and building of highway is for holding the summit which aims at promoting environmental conservation. This act by the government has been widely condemned as hypocritical. Rising temperature has huge impact on the lives of people. Forests play a very important role in reducing global temperature. By destroying large stretches of Amazon forest for hosting the summit the Brazilian government is making a mockery of all endeavours for environmental conservation. The destroyed forest area is home to hundreds of plants and animals. Furthermore, the highway will disrupt wildlife migration and will lead to habitat loss. The principles the summit is meant to uphold and the cutting down of large areas of the Amazon rainforest are contradictory. This attitude of world leaders creates an impression that they talk the talk but do not walk the walk.

Venu GS, KOLLAM

## Linguistic autonomy

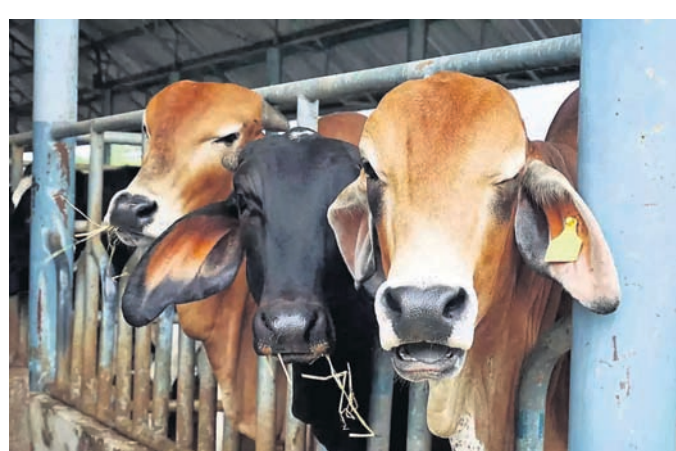
Sir, The Tamil Nadu government's apprehensions over the three-language formula stem from historical and cultural contexts. While the NEP does not mandate any specific language, the inclusion of the three-language formula raises concerns in the state due to past experiences with perceived Hindi imposition. Learning a new language has always been of personal interest depending upon the individual's parameters or personal goals, and not to be the bread and butter of livelihood. TN government's premonition lies in the possibility that the Union government could leverage the three-language formula to promote Hindi in non-Hindi-speaking states, and the state might be compelled to include Hindi in its curriculum, which it perceives as a threat to the state's linguistic and cultural autonomy. This concern is rooted in the belief that such measures could lead to the gradual erosion of regional languages and their identities. The Union government must respect state autonomy in education while aligning with national goals.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

# UP gaushalas to become self-reliant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, March 16:** Cow shelters across Uttar Pradesh are set to become self-reliant with the state government planning to utilise cow dung and urine for eco-friendly agricultural practices. These shelters will promote sustainable farming, enhance soil fertility, and generate economic benefits for farmers, officials said.



"We are working at all levels to make the cow shelters self-reliant. By talking to the National Dairy Development Board, Agriculture Department and other stakeholders, we will make vermicompost in all the animal shelters which will be sold to the farmers and will promote natural cow-based agriculture," Animal Husbandry Minister Dharmpal Singh told PTI.

During the recently concluded Mahakumbh, the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development held in-depth discussions and formulated strategic plans to strengthen the role of cow shelters in sustainable agriculture. "As per the plans, cow dung and urine will be utilised for eco-friendly agricultural practices. Also, farmers and shelter staff will be trained

in fodder production and preservation to improve cattle nutrition," a department official said. The state government is giving priority to the health of people, land, and water, with a strong focus on natural farming -- a method free from chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

Cattle play a key role in this farming approach, as cow dung and urine can be processed into organic fertilisers and pesticides, they said. This will provide dual benefits to farmers -- ensuring nutritious milk for their families while enhancing soil fertility through organic inputs. Over time, these

In its latest budget, the government has allocated ₹2,000 crore for stray cattle protection, supplementing the ₹1,001 crore provided earlier

Besides 543 new cow shelters have been approved, with increased funding of ₹1.60 crore per large shelter

on bank loans. The Amrit Dhara Yojana provides subsidised loans up to ₹10 lakh, with loans under ₹3 lakh requiring no guarantor.

Aligning with the country's push toward organic farming, Uttar Pradesh is encouraging farmers to adopt chemical-free agriculture using cow-based organic inputs, officials said.

These initiatives are particularly focused on villages along the Ganga River and the Bundelkhand region, integrating local water resources into sustainable farming models, they said.

The Covid pandemic has increased global awareness about health, leading to a rising demand for organic and naturally grown products. This shift in food behaviour is not only local but also global, creating new opportunities for farmers in Uttar Pradesh, the officials said.



Tourists play with snow after a fresh spell of snowfall, in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir

## ULB polls: NC sets up team to review working of JMC wards

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 16:** The National Conference (NC) Sunday announced a 12-member committee to review the working of party units falling under Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) in view of the forthcoming Urban Local Bodies (ULB) elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

The committee, which included former legislator Bimla Luthra and provincial president, Youth National Conference, Jammu, S Tejinder Singh, was constituted by National Conference provincial president, Jammu, Rattan Lal Gupta, a party spokesperson said.

The district presidents of Jammu Urban, Jammu Rural-A and Jammu Rural-B and all the concerned block presidents and district presidents of all wings shall coordinate with the committee in the reviewing process which shall be completed within a month, the spokesman said.

Addressing the budget session of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly earlier March 3, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said the government is committed to strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) by ensuring timely elections at all levels. Earlier February 27, the Jammu and Kashmir local bodies dedicated backward classes commission established June 11, 2023 for the purpose of conducting empirical studies on OBC representation submitted its final recommendations to the government, brightening the chances of holding local bodies polls.

# 'MRITYU KUMBH' REMARK Adityanath slams Mamata

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Gorakhpur (UP), March 16:** Hitting out at his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee over her remarks criticising Maha Kumbh arrangements, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said Sunday those who had said the "Maha Kumbh of Prayagraj was a 'Mrityu Kumbh' were unable to control disturbance during Holi".

Addressing the oath-taking ceremony of newly-elected office bearers of the Gorakhpur Journalists Press Club in Gorakhpur, he said that "for the first time, people came to the Maha Kumbh from Tamil Nadu".

"People (devotees) also came from Kerala. The population of Uttar Pradesh is 25 crores, and the Holi concluded peacefully. But, in West Bengal, a number of disturbances took place during Holi," he said. On the day of Holi, a 20-year-old youth was killed in a scuffle during celebrations in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district.

Akash Choudhury, alias Amar, was accosted by three to four youths while celebrating Holi with his friends near his residence in Titagarh. As an argument broke out, he was repeatedly stabbed in his neck and other parts of his body by the assailants, the officer added.

Adityanath took a dig at Banerjee over such incidents in her state. "People who were unable to control the disturbance ('upadrav') during Holi, had said that the Maha Kumbh of Prayagraj was a 'Mrityu



Kumbh'. But, we said that this is not 'Mrityu' (death), it is 'Mrityunjay' (victory over death) It is a Maha Kumbh."

He said that everyday of the Maha Kumbh witnessed 50,000 to 1 lakh people from West Bengal taking part in the 45-day event. Days after the January 29 stampede at the Sangam Nose, where the official toll was 30, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had said the Maha Kumbh has turned into a "Mrityu Kumbh" due to such incidents of stampede, claiming the actual toll was suppressed by authorities.

"They have hidden hundreds of bodies to bring down the toll. The Maha Kumbh has turned into a 'Mrityu Kumbh' under the BJP rule," Banerjee said during an address in the West Bengal assembly February



18. Back in Gorakhpur, Adityanath also said his government sent ministers to some states to invite governors and chief ministers to the Maha Kumbh, and if possible also hold a press (conference).

He also thanked the media for helping the Maha Kumbh transform into the biggest event of the world through their positive writings. He said the Kumbh became a base to connect society with the idea of Ek Bharat, Shresth Bharat. "For the first time, it was seen that culture can fuel prosperity, faith can become a medium of livelihood."

People who were unable to control the disturbance ('upadrav') during Holi, had said that the Maha Kumbh of Prayagraj was a 'Mrityukumbh'. But, we said that this is not 'Mrityu' (death), it is 'Mrityunjay' (victory over death) It is a Mahakumbh

YOGI ADITYANATH | UP CM

## UP govt gears up for wheat procurement season 2025-2026

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Lucknow, March 16:** The wheat procurement by the Uttar Pradesh government for Rabi marketing season 2025-26 will begin from March 17 and will continue until June 15 across 6,500 procurement centers.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to ensure that farmers receive their payments within 48 hours, an official statement issued here said. He also emphasised making adequate arrangements at procurement centers to ensure a hassle-free experience for farmers.

Purchases will also be done by going to the villages of the farmers through mobile centers. The central government has set the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for wheat at ₹2,425 per quintal, an increase of ₹150 from last year's ₹2,275 per quintal.

The registration for wheat sales began on March 1, and over 2.65 lakh farmers in Uttar Pradesh have already signed up. Farmers must register or renew their registration on the Department of Food and Civil Supplies portal (fcs.up.gov.in) or the UP Kisan Mitra mobile app before selling their wheat, the statement said.

The department has advised farmers to thoroughly clean and dry their wheat, removing moisture, soil, stones, and dust before bringing it to the procurement centers. This year, tenant farmers can also register



Purchases will be done by going to the villages of the farmers through mobile centers

and sell their wheat.

According to the Food and Civil Supplies Department, wheat procurement will take place daily from 8 am to 8 pm (except on Sundays and public holidays) until June 15. The government has instructed officials to ensure a smooth process for farmers, and all necessary preparations have been made.

To address any issues, a toll-free helpline (18001800150) has been set up. Farmers can also contact the District Food Marketing Officer, Tehsil Regional Marketing Officer, or Block Marketing Officer for assistance. A total of 6,500 procurement centers have been established under the Food and Civil Supplies Department and eight other procurement agencies.

The payment for wheat will be directly transferred to farmers' Aadhaar-linked bank accounts within 48 hours through the Public Financial Management System (PFMS).

## Over 3K athletes participate in 'Run for Fun' marathon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 16:** Over 3,000 athletes took part in the 'Run for Fun' marathon organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Police here Sunday, an official said.



The run was flagged off by Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Armed Police, J&K, Anand Jain, from the Gulshan Ground. The run was flagged off by Additional Director General of Police, Armed Police, J&K, Anand Jain, from Gulshan Ground.

The marathon is part of the ongoing efforts to promote fitness, foster community spirit and encourage healthy lifestyles among the youth.

promote peace and well-being," the spokesman said. The Jain thanked all the officers, sportsmen and agencies for their role in ensuring the success of the event and emphasised the need to involve more youth in such activities to help them stay engaged in positive pursuits. ADGP, Headquarters/Coordination, J&K, M K Sinha, expressed his appreciation for the massive participation of athletes from across Jammu and Kashmir as well as from other states.

## Mata Vaishno Devi shrine records massive increase in donations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 16:** Pilgrim donations at the Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in Jammu and Kashmir has gone up to ₹171.90 crore in Financial Year 2024-25 (till January) from ₹63.85 crore in 2020-21, according to the temple board.

Similarly, the gold offerings at the shrine have also increased from over nine kgs to 27.7 kgs and silver from over 753 kgs to over 3,424 kgs during the same period, the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board (SMVDSB) has said.

Replying to an RTI application filed by Jammu-based activist Raman Sharma, the shrine board said an amount of ₹63.85 crore were received as donation or offering in the FY 2020-21 followed by ₹166.68 crore in FY 2021-22, ₹223.12 crore in FY 2022-23, ₹231.50 crore in FY 2023-24 and ₹171.90 crore in FY 2024-25 (upto January this year).

Only 17.20 Lakh pilgrims, the lowest in over three decades, visited the shrine atop the



Trikuta hills in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district in 2020 when the temple, for the first time in its history, remained closed for five months due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It reopened for pilgrims on August 16 2020.

From 13.95 lakh in 1986, when the shrine board took over the

affairs of the shrine for better management, there has been a steady increase of pilgrim footfalls with each passing year, touching an all time high of 1.04 crore in 2012 against 1.01 crore the previous year.

According to the official figures, the pilgrim arrival at the shrine was 55.88 lakh in 2021,

91.25 lakh in 2022, 95.22 lakh in 2023 and 94.84 lakh in 2024.

In the response to the query about the total value of jewellery or ornaments like gold offered by the pilgrims at the shrine, the board said over 9.075 kgs gold was received in the FY 2020-21, 26.351 kgs in FY 2021-22, 33.258 kgs in FY 2022-

The gold offerings at the shrine have also increased from over nine kgs to 27.7 kgs and silver from over 753 kgs to over 3,424 kgs

23, 23.477 kgs in FY 2023-24 and 27.717 kgs in FY 2024-25 (up to January this year).

Similarly, 753.630 kgs silver was received in FY 2020-21, 2400.705 kgs in FY 2021-22, 3756.582 kgs in FY 2022-23, 4072.486 kgs in FY 2023-24 and 3424.538 kgs in FY 2024-25 up to January this year, the board said. The board said the metals are received in impure form and the value cannot be ascertained until refined.

The yellow metal appearing like gold and the white metal appearing like silver after melting, assaying, refining and fabrication into coins of .995 and .999 purity is put for sale at the souvenir shops, it said.



I had released the budget logo. We had the 'Ru' to show how determined we are in the language policy. But those who don't like Tamil made it a big news

M K STALIN | TAMIL NADU CM

## SEVEN POLICEMEN INJURED IN SPATE OF MOB ATTACKS IN BIHAR

Seven policemen were injured in three incidents of mob attacks in Bihar, officials said Sunday. These attacks happened in Bhagalpur, Madhubani and Nawada districts Saturday, and were similar in nature -- police visiting an area on receiving information about a fight, and getting assaulted by a mob, they said



## Congress launches 'palayan roko, naukri do pada-yatra' in Bihar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 16: The Congress in Bihar Sunday launched a state-wide 'pada-yatra' themed 'palayan roko naukri do', highlighting the endemic unemployment in the province which is blamed for migration of young population on a large scale. Leaders like AICC in charge for Bihar Krishna Allavaru, state Congress president Akhilesh Prasad Singh and former JNU students' union president Kanhaiya Kumar visited the remote West Champaran district where the pada-yatra, which would be undertaken by volunteers of the party's youth and students' wings, began. Talking to reporters on the occasion, Kanhaiya Kumar, who is also national in charge of NSUI, the students wing, launched a veiled attack on the ruling BJP-led NDA in Bihar. "This government is unable to give jobs. Every competitive exam is marred by question paper leaks or ends in litigation in court because of other irregularities. Those who got employed recently, like government teachers, are being deprived of pension benefits that their seniors enjoy," said the Begusarai-born leader. He added, "We have gathered at the Bhitiharwa ashram set up by Mahatma Gandhi. We draw inspiration from his famous Dandi yatra, and his resolve to fight for one's cause without giving up the ideals of satya truth and ahimsa non-violence." The pada-yatra is being seen, in political circles, as an attempt by the Congress to assert itself ahead of the Assembly polls due later this year which the party is likely to contest in alliance with RJD and the Left

# India, New Zealand resume FTA talks

India and New Zealand began negotiating the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in April 2010 to boost trade in goods, services, and investment. However, after ten rounds of discussions, the talks stalled in February 2015

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: After a gap of about ten years, India and New Zealand Sunday announced resumption of negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) to boost economic ties.

"The two nations are pleased to announce the launch of negotiations for a comprehensive and mutually beneficial India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations," the commerce ministry said. The announcement was made after the meeting of Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Todd McClay, New Zealand's Minister for Trade and Investment.

Prime Minister of New Zealand Christopher Luxon is here on a four-day visit from March 16. "The India-New Zealand FTA negotiations aim to achieve balanced outcomes that enhance supply chain integration and improve market access," it said.

"With bilateral trade continuing to grow steadily, surpassing \$1 billion during April-January 2025, the FTA negotiations aim to unlock new avenues for businesses and consumers, fostering mutual growth and prosperity of our nations," Goyal said in a post on X.

According to think tank



Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI), a major challenge in the renewed talks will be the disparity in tariff structures. New Zealand's average import tariff is only 2.3 per cent, with over half of its tariff lines already duty-free, meaning Indian goods already have substantial access to its market.

In contrast, India's average tariff stands at 17.8 per cent, meaning it would have to make significant reductions, making a traditional FTA less attractive for India. "As talks resume, both countries will need to find common ground on these issues to move forward successfully," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava

said. He said earlier New Zealand was demanding greater access to India's dairy market, which India resisted to protect its domestic dairy industry that supports millions of farmers.

Currently, India's dairy imports from New Zealand are minimal (around \$0.57 million), and while India may consider limited imports of value-added dairy products, it remains firm against allowing raw dairy imports, he said.

India was also reluctant to lower tariffs on New Zealand's dairy, meat, and wine exports, while New Zealand pushed for more favourable trade terms. India wanted New Zealand to

Luxon Monday will hold wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and will grace the inaugural session of the Raisina Dialogue as the chief guest

Ahead of the Modi-Luxon talks, the two nations announced the launch of negotiations for a comprehensive and mutually beneficial India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement

grant work opportunities similar to those given to Australia and China, but New Zealand did not agree, according to GTRI.

It said earlier the FTA talks got complicated as both countries were part of the negotiations around the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which India eventually withdrew from in 2019 due to certain concerns about market access and protecting local industries.

The bilateral trade between the two countries stood at \$873.4 million (exports \$538.33 million and imports \$335 million) in 2023-24 as against \$1.02 billion in 2022-23. India's key goods exports to New Zealand include clothing, fabrics, and home textiles; medicines and medical supplies; refined petrol; agricultural equipment and machinery such as tractors and irrigation tools; auto;

iron and steel; paper products; electronics; shrimps; diamonds; and basmati rice.

The main imports are agricultural goods, minerals, apples, kiwifruit, meat products such as lamb, mutton, milk albumin, lactose syrup, coking coal, logs and sawn timber, wool, and scrap metals. In FY24, India's services exports to New Zealand stood at \$214.1 million, while New Zealand's services exports to India totalled \$456.5 million.

India's key services exports include IT and software services, provided by companies such as Infosys and HCL, along with telecommunications services to support New Zealand's digital infrastructure.

India also exports health-care services, including medical tourism, pharmaceutical research, and telemedicine. Financial services are another important area, with Indian banks and fintech companies offering digital payment solutions.

New Zealand's services exports to India are led by education services, with thousands of Indian students pursuing higher education in New Zealand. Tourism services are also significant, as Indian tourists are drawn to New Zealand's natural landscapes and adventure activities.

## of the day quote

Either imposing a language forcibly or opposing it blindly; both don't help achieve the objective of national and cultural integration in our Bharat (sic)

PAWAN KALYAN | AP DEPUTY CM

Rahul Gandhi needs to explain his extraordinary fondness for Vietnam. The frequency of his visit to that country is very curious

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD | FORMER UNION MINISTER

However, many literary figures and well-wishers have voiced the sentiment that full-sized equestrian statues would be a more fitting tribute to their valour and contribution

SHARAD PAWAR | NCP-SP CHIEF

## SHORT TAKES

### Woman jumps from hosp building, dies

Jaipur: A 40-year-old woman jumped from the second floor of a hospital in Rajasthan's Ajmer district Sunday after being shocked by the death of her son, police said. Rekha Lohar, sustained serious injuries to her hands, legs, and head and is undergoing treatment in the ICU of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital in Ajmer, they said. The incident occurred in the Kotwali area after Lohar's 18-year-old son, Yogesh Kumar, who was undergoing treatment at the hospital, died, a police officer said. Station House Officer Dinesh Kumar said Yogesh had accidentally consumed some medicine Thursday, leading to a deterioration in his health. He had been undergoing treatment for four days but succumbed Sunday.

### Reasi: 30 injured as mini bus turns turtle

Jammu: At least 30 passengers, mostly women, were injured when their mini bus turned turtle on a hilly road in the Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, officials said. Two of the 30 are seriously injured and they have been rushed to the Government Medical College Hospital in Jammu. The accident took place near Tara Morh when the bus was on its way to Pouni in Reasi from Moughla in Rajouri district, the officials said.

### 2 ex-J&K lawmakers return to PDP

Srinagar: Two former Jammu and Kashmir lawmakers returned to the PDP Sunday, more than four years after quitting the party. Mansoor Hussain Suharwardy is a former Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) MLA while Yasir Reshi served as an MLC. "Former MLA Mansoor Hussain Suharwardy and MLC Yasir Reshi returned to the PDP in presence of Mehbooba Mufti at the party HQ in Srinagar," the party said in a post on X.

### Honour killing in Bihar

Rohtas: A man and his son were arrested in Bihar's Rohtas district for allegedly killing his wife and daughter who wanted to marry a person of her choice instead of the one selected by her father, police said Sunday. The suspected honour killing took place in Piyarrakala village under the jurisdiction of the Chutiya Police Station Saturday, a senior officer said. The police recovered the bodies of Parvati Devi and her daughter Pratima Kumari from an isolated place near a power grid substation in the village, he said.

## Rajouri attack kingpin shot dead in Pakistan



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Zia-ur-Rehman alias Nadeem alias Abu Qatal alias Qatal Sindhvi was gunned down in the Jhelum area of Punjab Saturday evening

His security guard was also killed, the officials said, quoting information received from the neighbouring country

New Delhi, March 16: A top Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) commander, wanted by Indian security agencies for several deadly terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, was eliminated by gunmen in an attack in Pakistan, officials said Sunday.

Zia-ur-Rehman alias Nadeem alias Abu Qatal alias Qatal Sindhvi was gunned down in the Jhelum area of Punjab Saturday evening. His security guard was also killed, the officials said, quoting information received from the neighbouring country.

Considered the most trusted handler of LeT founder and 26/11 Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed, they said 43-year-old Rehman was the main handler of the terror outfit involved in the planning of various attacks in the Poonch-Rajouri region of Jammu and Kashmir. The

officials said Rehman had infiltrated the Jammu region in early 2000 and exfiltrated in 2005. He had a wide network of Over Ground Workers in Poonch and Rajouri through his old contacts, they said.

In the various investigations conducted by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) into the gruesome terror incidents in Poonch-Rajouri region, his involvement was found, officials said.

He was charge-sheeted by the NIA under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and other sections for an attack on Hindu minorities in Dhangri Village of Rajouri District in 2023, they added. Terrorists struck Dhangri village January 1, 2023, and targeted villagers before fleeing the scene, leaving behind an Improvised Explosive Device (IED).

## PM talks about Pak, Guj riots in podcast with Lex Fridman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday opened up on a host of foreign affairs issues as he stressed that cooperation between India and China is essential for global peace and prosperity and called out Pakistan's links to global terrorism, accusing Islamabad of responding with hostility to his attempts to rebuild ties.

In an interaction lasting over three hours with US-based popular podcaster and computer scientist Lex Fridman, Modi said he and US President Donald Trump connect well as both put their respective countries first and asserted that their mutual trust remained unshaken even when the Republican leader was out of office during Joe Biden's presidency. He said normalcy has returned to the India-China border after his

recent talks with President Xi Jinping to defuse tensions ignited by the 2020 clashes between the two armies in eastern Ladakh. Sounding optimistic about the ties between the world's two most populous countries, he said differences between neighbours are natural and emphasised the ancient cultural ties between them when the two civilizations learnt from each other and had little conflict.

Turning to Pakistan, the Prime Minister said he took the initiative of inviting its leader to attend his swearing-in ceremony in 2014 and then travelled to Lahore in 2015, but his efforts only drew negative reactions from the neighbouring country.

Pakistan has since independence waged a proxy war against India and the trail of every terror incident in the world goes back to that country, he said, noting that Osama bin Laden was also hiding



A woman makes handmade Vermicelli, locally known as Seviyan and popularly eaten during the month of Ramadan, in Hyderabad, Telangana

PTI PHOTO

## Mangaluru police bust biggest-ever drug cartel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mangaluru (Karnataka), March 16: Mangaluru Police seized over 37 kg of MDMA valued at ₹75 crore, the biggest-ever drug haul in the state, a police official said Sunday.

Two South African nationals were arrested in Bengaluru in connection with this case, the official said. Addressing a press conference, Mangaluru Police Commissioner Anupam

Agarwal stated that the operation stemmed from an earlier arrest six months ago. In September, police apprehended one Haider Ali in Pumpwell, Mangaluru, and confiscated 15 grams of MDMA from him.

Subsequent investigations led authorities to a Nigerian national named Peter, who was arrested in Bengaluru with MDMA worth ₹6 crore. Further probes pointed to an international drug network

with links to traffickers using air routes between Delhi and Bengaluru, he said.

Acting on intelligence, the Mangaluru Central Crime Branch (CCB) police arrested two South African nationals -- Bamba Fant (31) and Abigail Adonis (30) -- upon their arrival in Bengaluru March 14.

The suspects were taken into custody in Neeladri Nagar, Electronic City in Bengaluru, the senior police officer said.



there. Asked what he likes about Trump, Modi recalled that the US president during his first term had ignored security protocol and agreed to his request to take a lap around the stadium hosting the 'Howdy Modi' event in Houston.

Trump believes in "America First" and his motto is "nation first" or "India first", Modi said, adding that this similar spirit makes them connect well.

Without referring to the trade issues involving the two countries, Modi, while speak-

ing of his recent meeting with the US president and his colleagues, noted that Trump in his second term seems far more prepared with a clear roadmap and has put together a strong team. On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, PM Modi said it will only be resolved when both sides join the negotiation table, asserting that there can never be a resolution on the battlefield. Highlighting his good relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Mo-

di said that he can urge Russia that war is not the solution while reminding Ukraine that battlefields do not bring real solutions no matter how many people may support it. Asked about the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), he said he feels blessed to have learnt life's values from a "sacred" organisation such as this as he lauded it for working since 1925 to inspire people to dedicate themselves to the country.

To a question about the 2002 post-Godhra riots in Gujarat when he was the Chief Minister, he said it was an attempt to create a false narrative to target him, and his political opponents in power at the Centre wanted him to be punished. The courts, however, cleared his name, he said. Guests on his podcast include Donald Trump, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, SpaceX founder Elon Musk, American businessman Jeff Bezos and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg.



# national



Today, the biggest problems in Punjab are drugs and corruption. Three crore people of Punjab have come together to wage war against drugs and corruption... this is a battle for nay (justice) ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP SUPREMO

## AR RAHMAN DISCHARGED AFTER HOSPITALISATION

Music composer AR Rahman was admitted to a corporate hospital Sunday following dehydration and was discharged some hours later after doctors gave him a clean bill of health. The 58-year-old musician was hospitalised on early Sunday morning and was now back home, according to his manager Senthil Velan



### of the day uote

I am in politics and lots of things take place, but I walk my way. If anyone wants to vote for me, he can and if someone does not want, he is free to do so



NITIN GADKARI | UNION MINISTER

Peace, development and enthusiasm prevailing in BTR have been possible because of ABSU, a signatory of the accord. Had ABSU not taken the initiative, there would have been no accord or peace in the region.



AMIT SHAH | UNION HOME MINISTER

Approving and implementing such rules and provisions through the cabinet to benefit a particular religion in a democratic country is the unethical character of the Congress



MOHAN YADAV | MP CM

## DRUGS WORTH ₹88CR SEIZED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: A massive consignment of methamphetamine tablets worth ₹88 crore was seized and four members of an international drug cartel were arrested in Imphal and Guwahati zones, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Sunday.

Shah also said the drug haul is a testament to the stellar performance of the bottom-to-top and top-to-bottom approach towards investigation and asserted that the Narendra Modi government's crackdown on drugs will continue.

"No mercy for drug cartels. Accelerating the Modi govt's march to build a drug-free Bharat, a massive consignment of methamphetamine tablets worth ₹88 crore is seized, and 4 members of the international drug cartel are arrested in Imphal and Guwahati zones," he wrote on X. The home minister expressed his "heartfelt" congratulations to the Narcotics Control Bureau for the success.

Acting on a tip-off, the officers of NCB Imphal zone carried out an operation March 13. The NCB team intercepted a truck near the Lilong area and recovered 102.39 kg of Methamphetamine tablets from a toolbox in the rear section of the truck, according to an official statement. Two occupants of the truck were arrested, it added. Without delay, the team immediately conducted a follow-up operation and apprehended the suspected receiver of the contraband from the Lilong area, the statement said.

A four-wheeler, used for drug trafficking, was also seized and the man was subsequently arrested, it said. The suspected source of the contraband is Moreh town in Manipur. Further investigation is underway to nab others involved in the case, the statement said. In another operation on the same day, officers of the NCB-Guwahati zone intercepted an SUV on the Assam-Mizoram border near Silchar and seized 7.48 kg of Methamphetamine Tablets concealed inside the spare tyre of the vehicle, it said.

## IMMIGRATION BILL

# Seven-year jail term for using forged passport



All international airlines and ships will also be required to submit at a port or place in India the passenger and crew manifest, the advance information of passengers and crew on board of such aircraft, vessel or other mode of transport

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: Anyone found using a forged passport or visa for entering, staying or exiting India will be punished with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine to the extent of ₹10 lakh if the new immigration Bill is approved by Parliament.

The legislation, piloted by the Union Home Ministry, also provides for mandatory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners.

All international airlines and ships will also be required to submit at a port or place in India the passenger and crew manifest, the advance information of passengers and crew on board of such aircraft, vessel or other mode of transport.

"Whoever knowingly uses or supplies a forged or fraudu-

lently obtained passport or other travel document or visa for entering into India or staying in or exiting from India, shall be punishable with an imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than two years, but may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than one lakh rupees, but may extend to ten lakh rupees," according to the Bill introduced in Lok Sabha March 11.

It also says that any foreigner who enters into any area in India without a valid passport or other travel document, including visa required for such entry in contravention of provisions of the law or of any rule or order given in pursuance thereof, shall be punishable with an imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years with a fine which may extend to five lakh rupees or with both.

The legislation empowers the Centre to exert control over

places that are "frequented by any foreigner" and require the owner to close the premises, permit its use under specified conditions, or refuse admission to all or a "specified class" of foreigners.

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 is a comprehensive legislation to regulate all matters relating to foreigners and immigration. Matters relating to foreigners and immigration are presently administered through four Acts-the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000. All these laws are now proposed to be repealed.

While the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 consists of several existing provisions in the four Acts proposed to be repealed after simplification and harmonisation, it also has certain new provisions to meet the present-day requirements.

This legislation is in line with the government's policy of simplification of laws, ease of doing business and minimising compliance burden. It seeks to balance the requirements of national security and related issues of immigration of foreigners with the need to promote economic growth and tourism in the country.

However, it is not connected with any matters relating with grant of citizenship.

While Indian visas of all categories to foreigners can be granted in physical or sticker form by Indian missions or posts located abroad, the Bureau of Immigration (BoI) grants electronic visas under seven categories to people from 167 countries.

## Sambhal: Whitewashing of mosque's outer wall starts



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhal (UP), March 16: The whitewashing of the outer wall of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal began Sunday morning under the supervision of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in line with a high court order, an advocate of the mosque committee said.

The Mughal-era mosque here has been at the centre of a major row after a petition claimed that it was the site of an ancient Hindu temple. The district has been tense since riots broke out November 24 last year during protests against a court-ordered survey of the mosque. Four people were killed and several others, including police personnel, were injured in the clashes.

The Allahabad High Court had March 12 directed the ASI to undertake and complete the whitewashing at the mosque's outer wall within one week while hearing the objections against the ASI survey report by the Shahi Jama Masjid management committee which had also sought permission for whitewashing, additional lighting and installation of decorative lights outside the disputed structure.

Following the high court order, an ASI team carried out measurements and assessments March 13. "The whitewashing

of the outer wall of the Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal began Sunday," Shakeel Warsi, an advocate representing the mosque committee in the Sambhal district court, told PTI.

Shahi Jama Masjid's president Zafar Ali said the work started at around 9 am and 9-10 labourers are engaged. "If the work has to be completed in four days, then around 20 labourers would be needed," he said in a statement.

Amid reported objection by the Hindu side over the use of green colour to paint the outer wall of the mosque, Ali said, "We are using the colours which have been used for hundreds of years. We are using white, green and light golden colours," he said. Ali noted that the High Court has ordered that the ASI and the Muslim side will jointly get the painting done.

"All the labourers of ASI are engaged, the work is being done under their direction and supervision. The ASI and we will complete this work together," he said. On the Hindu side's reported demand that white colour be used to paint the wall or else they will seek the use of saffron colour, Ali said, "This demand is unreasonable. It is a wrong and an illegitimate demand. For hundreds of years, green, white and light golden colours have been used here and they are still there."

## POST OF THE DAY

Grok established facts so far : -INC not against Hindus -RG is more honest than Modi -Gandhi didn't

cause partition -Nehru was the best PM -Modi lies a lot -Arnab and Sudhir are biggest 'Dalla' -RSS didn't participate in Freedom struggle -Lalu Yadav is the best railways minister -Savarkar wrote mercy petitions and took pension -Modi's degree is arguably fake -Modi, Shah, Yogi are communal leaders -Republic, Zee, Aaj Tak etc are Godi Media -Modi fears press conference -BJP is a washing machine party

@Nher\_who

## SHORT TAKES

### Premchand Aggarwal quits

Dehradun: Uttarakhand minister Premchand Aggarwal resigned from the Cabinet Sunday, weeks after his remark in the assembly on people from the state's hill regions had sparked protests. Aggarwal, who held key portfolios, including finance and parliamentary affairs, submitted his resignation to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami at his official residence, according to an official statement. During the budget session in February, Aggarwal reacted angrily to a comment directed towards him by Congress MLA Madan Bisht and said he had not fought for Uttarakhand's statehood to see a day when a dichotomy would be made between 'pahadi' and 'desi'.

### Punjab Police arrests two hawala operators

Chandigarh: The Punjab Police has arrested two hawala operators for allegedly facilitating illegal financial transactions linked to drug trafficking, officials said Sunday. ₹17.60 lakh cash and a laptop with critical transaction records were recovered from the duo after busting the narco-terror hawala racket, they said. "In a decisive crackdown on drug networks, Amritsar Rural Police apprehends two Hawala operators, Sukhjit Singh & Ranbir Singh, who were facilitating illegal financial transactions linked to drug trafficking" Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav posted on X Sunday.

## SNIPPETS

### MP: Slain cop to get martyr status, kin ₹1 crore aid

Bhopal/Mauganj: A day after an Assistant Sub-Inspector was killed and other officials were injured in a violent attack on a police team by tribals in Madhya Pradesh's Mauganj district, police Sunday arrested six persons and extended efforts to identify other attackers. State Director General of Police Kailash Makwana flew to neighbouring Rewa district to assess the situation on directions of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav who ordered strict action against perpetrators. Police launched a combing operation in Gadra village, located about 25 km from Mauganj where the violent clash unfolded Saturday, leading to the arrest of six persons. The chief minister on Sunday announced a financial assistance of ₹1 crore for the family of Gautam. He said Gautam would be accorded the status of a martyr as he was killed in the line of duty. One of his family members will get a government job.

### Maharana Pratap descendant Arvind Singh Mewar dies at 81

Jaipur: Arvind Singh Mewar, a member of the erstwhile royal family of Mewar and chairman of the HRH Group of Hotels, died in Udaipur early Sunday after prolonged illness, his family said. He was 81. He is survived by wife Vijayraj Kumari, son Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar and daughters Bhargavi Kumari Mewar and Padmaja Kumari Parmar. A descendant of Rajput King Maharana Pratap, Mewar had been ill for a long time and under treatment at his residence in Udaipur's City Palace. His funeral will be held Monday. As a mark of respect, the City Palace will be closed for tourists till Monday.

### New India Bank case: Wanted accused surrenders after a month

Mumbai: A wanted accused in the ₹122-crore embezzlement case at New India Cooperative Bank, who had been evading police for a month, surrendered Sunday morning, an official said. Arunachalam Ullanathan Maruthuvar (62) was immediately placed under arrest by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), which is probing the bank fraud. He was produced in a court that remanded him in police custody till March 18, the official said. This is the sixth arrest in the case. According to police, Arunachalam received nearly ₹30 crore of the misappropriated funds from the prime accused Hitesh Mehta, the cooperative bank's former general manager and head of accounts. The anti-financial crime unit Friday arrested the wanted accused and civil contractor Kapil Dedhia from Vadodara in neighbouring Gujarat.



A worker cleans the statue of Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj ahead of the Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti, at Vile Parle in Mumbai, Maharashtra

# Challenges astronauts face upon return to earth

Astronauts who have travelled on space missions earlier have reported facing difficulty in walking, having bad eyesight, dizziness, and a condition called baby feet where space travellers lose the thick part of the skin on the soles that become soft like a baby's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 16: It may be fun to watch astronauts float around inside the International Space Station, but the absence of gravity has its effects on long-duration space travellers, who experience dizziness, nausea and an unstable gait when they return to earth.

NASA astronauts Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore, and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov are scheduled to return to Earth on Wednesday onboard SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft.

For Williams and Wilmore, test pilots for Boeing's new Starliner capsule, the eight-day

mission stretched to more than nine months as a series of helium leaks and thruster failures deemed their spacecraft unsafe and had to return empty in September.

Astronauts who have travelled on space missions earlier have reported facing difficulty in walking, having bad eyesight, dizziness, and a condition called baby feet where space travellers lose the thick part of the skin on the soles that become soft like a baby's.

"Once the astronaut returns to Earth, they are immediately forced to readjust again, back to Earth's gravity, and can experience issues standing, stabilising their gaze, walking,



and turning. For their safety, returning astronauts are often placed in a chair immediately upon return to Earth," the Houston-based Baylor College of Medicine said in a note on body changes in space.

information about gravity to the brain.

"In the low gravity of space, the information received from the vestibular organs changes. This is thought to confuse the brain, leading to space sickness. When you return to earth, you experience the effects of earth's gravity again, and thus 'gravity sickness' sometimes occurs, with similar symptoms as space sickness," the Japanese space agency JAXA said.

On Earth, gravity pulls blood and other body fluids into the lower part of the body, but for astronauts experiencing weightlessness in space, these fluids accumulate in the upper parts of the body, making them

look bloated. The lack of gravity causes significant and often irreparable bone density loss.

According to NASA, for every month in space, astronauts' weight-bearing bones become roughly one per cent less dense if they don't take precautions to counter this loss.

To help combat this, astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS) have a strict exercise regimen. Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield reported to have experienced a weightless tongue on his return from a stint at the International Space Station in 2013. Astronauts may also be more susceptible to infection and illness due to a suppressed immune system.

# international



Ukraine is sovereign. If it asks for allied forces to be on its territory, it's not something for Russia to accept or not  
EMMANUEL MACRON | PRESIDENT, FRANCE

## BLACKOUT IN CUBA

Pockets of Cuba's capital Havana saw the lights flicker back on though vast areas of the city and country continued without electricity Sunday morning, after a nationwide grid collapse that knocked out power to 10 million people



## of the day note

By offering Rohingya refugees sanctuary, Bangladesh has demonstrated solidarity and human dignity, often at significant social, environmental and economic cost  
ANTONIO GUTERRES | SECRETARY-GENERAL, UNITED NATIONS

The battle today is actually being fought for the soul of the Western world. The empire wants to mix and then replace the indigenous people of Europe with invading masses arriving from foreign civilizations  
VIKTOR ORBAN | PM, HUNGARY

We are committed to combating China's efforts to pressure governments to forcibly return Uyghurs and other groups to China, where they are subject to torture and enforced disappearances  
MARCOS RUBIO | SECRETARY OF STATE, US

# FRESH ESCALATION Trump strikes Yemen's Houthis

At least 31 were killed and 101 others injured in the biggest US military operation in Middle East since Trump took office

Washington, March 16: US President Donald Trump launched large-scale military strikes against Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis Saturday over the group's attacks against Red Sea shipping, killing at least 31 people at the start of a campaign expected to last many days. Trump also warned Iran, the Houthis' main backer, that it needed to immediately halt support for the group. He said if Iran threatened the United States, "America will hold you fully accountable and, we won't be nice about it!"



Reuters might continue for weeks - represent the biggest US military operation in the Middle East since Trump took office in January. It came as the United States ramped up sanctions pressure on Tehran while trying to bring it to the negotiating table over its nuclear program.

strikes, mostly women and children, Anees al-Asbahi,

spokesperson for the Houthi-run health ministry said in an updated toll Sunday. The Houthis, an armed movement that took control of most of Yemen over the past decade, have launched scores of attacks on ships off its coast since November 2023, disrupting global commerce and setting the US military on a costly campaign to intercept missiles and drones that have burned through stocks of US air defenses.

The previous US administration of then-President Joe Biden had sought to degrade the Houthis' ability to attack vessels off its coast but limited the US actions.

Iran's foreign ministry condemned strikes on Yemen as a "gross violation of the principles of the United Nations Charter and the fundamental rules of international law", in a statement shared by state media.

The Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said the US government had "no authority, or business, dictating Iranian foreign policy."

"End support for Israeli genocide and terrorism. Stop killing of Yemeni people," he said in an X post on early Sunday.

To all Houthi terrorists, YOUR TIME IS UP, AND YOUR ATTACKS MUST STOP, STARTING TODAY. IF THEY DON'T, HELL WILL RAIN DOWN UPON YOU LIKE NOTHING YOU HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE!  
DONALD TRUMP | PRESIDENT, US

The top Commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards reacted Sunday by saying the Houthis are independent and take their own strategic and operational decisions.

"We warn our enemies that Iran will respond decisively and destructively if they take their threats into action," Hossein Salami told state media. The unfolding strikes - which one US official told

A Pentagon spokesman said the Houthis have attacked US warships 174 times and commercial vessels 145 times since 2023. The Houthis say the attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians over Israel's war in Gaza with Hamas militants.

## HOUTHIS UP IN ARMS

Washington: Yemen's Houthi movement said on Sunday it was ready to "meet escalation with escalation" after US strikes targeting the Iran-aligned group over its threat to resume Red Sea shipping attacks triggered a diplomatic backlash from Moscow and Tehran. The Houthis' political bureau described the attacks as a "war crime." "Our Yemeni armed forces are fully prepared to respond to escalation with escalation," it said in a statement. Residents in Sanaa said the strikes hit a building in a Houthi stronghold. "The explosions were violent and shook the neighborhood like an earthquake. They terrified our women and children," one of the residents, who gave his name as Abdullah Yahia, told Reuters. Strikes also targeted Houthi military sites in Yemen's southwestern city of Taiz, two witnesses in the area said Sunday. Another strike on a power station in the town of Dahyan in Saada led to a power cut, Al-Masirah TV reported early Sunday. Dahyan is where Abdul Malik al-Houthi, the enigmatic leader of the Houthis, often meets his visitors.



## SHORT TAKES

### Xi snubs EU invite

Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping has declined an invitation to visit Brussels for a summit to mark the 50th anniversary of EU-China diplomatic ties, as per reports. Beijing told EU officials that Premier Li Qiang would meet the presidents of the European Council and Commission instead of Xi, citing two people familiar with the matter. The Chinese premier usually attends the summit when it is held in Brussels, while the president hosts it in Beijing, but the EU wants Xi to attend to commemorate half a century of relations between Beijing and the bloc, it said. Tensions between Brussels and Beijing have grown since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, with the EU accusing China of backing the Kremlin. Last year, the European Union also imposed tariffs on Chinese electric vehicle imports.

### US storm kills 32

Oklahoma City: Violent tornadoes ripped through parts of the US, wiping out schools and toppling semitractor-trailers in several states, part of a monster storm that has killed at least 32 people as more severe weather was expected late Saturday. The number of fatalities increased after the Kansas Highway Patrol reported eight people died in a highway pileup caused by a dust storm in Sherman County Friday. At least 50 vehicles were involved. In Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves announced that six people died in three counties and three more people were missing. There were 29 injuries across the state, he added in a nighttime post on the social platform X.

### Chinese jet crashes

Taipei: A Chinese fighter jet crashed during a training mission with the pilot parachuting to safety, state media said. The brief report by Xinhua News Agency stated Saturday that the crash happened near a town on China's southernmost island province of Hainan, home to numerous air force and naval bases, radar stations and other military infrastructure aimed at shoring-up China's claim to the vast, strategic South China Sea. The report didn't provide any further details except that the cause of the accident was under investigation. China's military, the People's Liberation Army, is highly secretive and rarely reports on accidents, despite having the world's largest navy and standing army. China has not fought in an actual war in 35 years, but is expanding its military footprint along with its push to overcome the West in the latest technology.

# North Macedonia nightclub fire kills 59, injures over 100

Skopje, March 16: Fire ripped through a packed nightclub early Sunday in the North Macedonian town of Kocani, killing 59 people and injuring more than 100, after sparks ignited the roof over a live band.

Arrest warrants have been issued for four people in connection with the fire, said interior minister Pance Toskovski. State news agency Mia said that police have detained the owner of the club over the incident.

One video from the event, verified by Reuters, showed a band playing on stage flanked by two flares, the white sparks of which set the ceiling

The fire caused immediate panic, separating friends and loved ones as people fled to the exits. "Everyone was trying to save themselves," survivor Marija Taseva, 22, told local TV 5.

As she tried to escape, Taseva fell to the ground and people trod over her, leaving her with an injury on her cheek. In the rush, she lost contact with her sister, who is still missing. "We can't find her in any hospital," she said.

About 148 people were hospitalized in Skopje, Kocani and surrounding towns, Health Minister Arben Taravari said at a press conference. Eighteen people were critically injured, Taravari said.

North Macedonia's MRT

This is a difficult and very sad day for Macedonia! The loss of so many young lives is irreparable, the pain of the families, loved ones and friends is immeasurable  
HRISTJAN MIKOSKI | PM, NORTH MACEDONIAN

public broadcaster reported that 27 people were hospitalized at the Skopje City Hospital with severe burns, and another 23 were being treated at the Clinical Center. Among the injured were minors, it said.

The fire, which began at around 3 am (0200 GMT), was caused by "pyrotechnic devices" whose sparks triggered the blaze, Interior Minister Pance Toskovski said.

North Macedonia's Public Prosecutor Ljupco Kocovski said five prosecutors would investigate the incident. "At the moment, orders have been issued for collecting of evidence" and some people were being interviewed, Kocovski said, without elaborating.

Firefighters doused the charred and smoking entrance to the "Pulse" nightclub before dawn as ambulances rushed from the scene, TV footage from a local broadcaster showed. Reuters pictures showed the club's corrugated iron roof burned through and collapsed in places, its interior wooden beams exposed and blackened.



A man lights a flare as students and anti-government demonstrators take part in a protest in front of the parliament building, which has become a national movement for change following the deadly November 2024 Novi Sad railway station roof collapse, in Belgrade, Serbia

## China delivers second of eight modern subs to Pakistan navy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 16: China has delivered a second new submarine, equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, to Pakistan as part of its efforts to beef up the navy of its all-weather ally to back its growing presence in the Arabian Sea and India's backyard - the Indian Ocean.

The Hangor-class submarine, which is part of the eight such submarines to Pakistan in a deal with around USD five billion, was launched in Wuhan, China's Hubei Province, official media here reported Sunday. This is in addition to four modern naval frigates China supplied to Pakistan in the last few years as part of its efforts to boost the naval strength of Pakistan, amid the Chinese navy's steady expansion in the Arabian Sea, where it is developing the Gwadar port in Balochistan, and the Indian Ocean.

A Chinese expert told the state-run Global Times that the new submarine has a strong comprehensive combat capability to become a mainstay for the Pakistan Navy.

## Ukraine on verge of losing Kursk

REUTERS



Moscow, March 16: Russia battled Sunday to drive the last Ukrainian soldiers from western Russia, Russian officials said, after a seven-month incursion by Ukraine that aimed to distract Moscow's forces, gain a bargaining chip and rile President Vladimir Putin.

In one of the most striking battles of the three-year-old Ukraine war, Ukrainian forces smashed their way across Russia's western border in Kursk last August, marking the biggest attack on sovereign Russian territory since the Nazi invasion of 1941.

But a lightning offensive this month has reduced the area under Ukrainian control to about 110 square km (42 square miles), down from the more than 1,368 square km (528 square miles) claimed by Kyiv last year.

Yuri Podolyaka, one of the most influential pro-Russian military bloggers, said Russia had pushed back Ukrainian forces to the border in some areas, though intense battles were underway and that Ukrainian forces were fighting back as

they retreated. Battlefield maps from both Ukraine and Russia showed two joined pockets of Ukrainian forces on the Russian side of the border in Kursk. Russia said it was clearing large numbers of mines in the area.

After a public appeal by US President Donald Trump last week to spare "surrounded" Ukrainian troops, Putin said Friday that Russia would guarantee the lives of Ukrainian troops in the region if they surrendered.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday his troops were not surrounded but sounded the alarm over what he said could be a new Russian attack on Ukraine's northeast Sumy region, which borders Kursk.

The influential Two Majors pro-Russian military blogger said the battlefield gains of Russian forces had allowed Russia to threaten Sumy, but cautioned that Ukrainian forces had been bolstering defences there for some time.

## Baloch militants attack paramilitary convoy; five killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, March 16: Five people, including three Frontier Corps (FC) personnel, were killed and 30 injured after a paramilitary convoy was attacked by suspected Baloch militants on a highway in Noshki district of restive Balochistan of Pakistan Sunday.

The attack, in which three terrorists died, was claimed by the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which hijacked the passenger train Jaffar Express last week.

A police official said evidence from the site of the attack suggested that a suicide attacker rammed an explosive-laden vehicle into the FC convoy on the Noshki-Dalbandin National Highway.

Three terrorists were killed after the suicide bomber first rammed his motorcycle into the FC convoy. "After the blast, some other terrorists opened fire on the FC personnel but in the retaliatory firing, two of them were killed. Two civilians and three soldiers also died," the police official said.

Noshki Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Hashim Momand said the blast was of high intensity, and injured at least 30 paramilitary soldiers, who have been moved to a hospital for treatment. Chief of the local police station Zafarullah Sumalani put the death count of FC soldiers at five but this could not be verified.

# Business



is a driving force in modern markets that also has the potential to enable collusion, including algorithmic discrimination under the garb of dynamic pricing  
RAVNEET KAUR | CHIEF, CCI

**RBI BAGS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AWARD**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday hailed as a "commendable accomplishment" the Reserve Bank of India being selected for the Digital Transformation Award 2025, and said it reflects an emphasis towards innovation and efficiency in governance. In a post on X, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it has been selected for the Digital Transformation Award 2025 by Central Banking, London, UK



of the day **note**

There should be no monopolies... fair competition benefits markets and the economy... there should be freedom of trade  
HARSH MALHOTRA | MINISTER OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Persistent uncertainties surrounding global trade and the fear of a US recession may continue to influence the domestic market's momentum  
VINOD NAIR | HEAD OF RESEARCH, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

Housing demand continues to be strong and is expected to grow further on the back of tax incentives offered in the Budget and a recent repo rate cut  
BOMAN IRANI | PRESIDENT, CREDAI

**GLOBAL TRADE TENSIONS**

## FPIs continue sell-off

Foreign investors withdraw ₹30K-cr from equities in first fortnight in March  
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** Foreign investors continue to pull back money from the Indian equity market withdrawing a little over ₹30,000 crore in the first fortnight of the month amid escalation in global trade tensions.

This came following an outflow of ₹34,574 crore from equities in February and ₹78,027 crore in January. With these, the total outflow by FPIs has reached ₹1.42 lakh crore (USD 16.5 billion) in 2025 so far, data with the depositors showed.

According to the data, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth ₹30,015 crore from Indian equities this month (till March 13). This also marks the 14th consecutive week of net outflows. The prolonged selling pressure is driven by a combination of global and domestic factors. The uncertainty surrounding US trade policies under President Donald Trump, raising concerns about a potential tariff-induced recession, has weighed on global risk appetite, prompting FPIs to adopt a cautious stance towards emerging markets like India, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Manager Research, Morningstar Investment, said.

Another key factor driv-



FPIs pull back ₹34,574cr from equities in Feb, ₹78,027cr in Jan  
Total outflow by FPIs has reached ₹1.42L-cr in 2025 so far  
March witnesses 14th consecutive week of net outflows  
stocks that have been outperforming other markets in 2025. On the other hand, they invested ₹7,355 crore in debt general limit and withdrew ₹325 crore from debt voluntary retention route.

The overall trend indicates a cautious approach by foreign investors, who scaled back investments in Indian equities significantly in 2024, with net inflows of just ₹427 crore. This contrasts sharply with the extraordinary ₹1.71 lakh crore net inflows in 2023, driven by optimism over India's strong economic fundamentals. In comparison, 2022 saw a net outflow of ₹1.21 lakh crore amid aggressive rate hikes by global central banks.

The heightened uncertainty triggered by the trade war between the US and other nations is likely to push more money into safe asset classes like gold and dollar  
VK VIJAYAKUMAR | CHIEF INVESTMENT STRATEGIST, GEOJIT FINANCIAL SERVICES

ing FPI outflows has been elevated US bond yields and a strong dollar, which have made American assets more appealing.

Also, depreciation of the Indian rupee has further exacerbated this trend, as it erodes returns for foreign investors. Moreover, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, highlighted that the FPI outflows from India have been mainly going into Chinese

## Forex reserves see sharpest rise in 2 yrs

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 16:** After the \$10 billion forex swap undertaken by the central bank February 28, when it bought dollars against rupee to inject liquidity in the system, the country's foreign exchange reserves saw a huge \$15.267 billion spike during the week ended March 7.

The sharp rise during the week was the sharpest jump in over two years.

The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in September last year 2024.

Foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, increased by \$13.993 billion to \$557.282 billion. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$212 million to \$18.21 billion. India's reserve position with the IMF was down by \$69 million at \$4.148 billion in the week, the RBI data showed.

Meanwhile, high frequency indicators point towards a sequential pick-up in momentum of India's economic activity during the second half of 2024-25, which is likely to sustain moving forward, according to the latest RBI monthly bulletin.

In a challenging and increasingly uncertain global environment, the Indian economy is poised to sustain its position as the fastest growing major economy during 2025-26 as per the IMF and World Bank estimates of GDP growth of 6.5 per cent and 6.7 per cent, respectively, the report points out.

It further states that the Union Budget 2025-26 prudently balances fiscal consolidation and growth objectives by continued focus on capex alongside measures to boost household incomes and consumption.

The effective capital expenditure GDP ratio is budgeted to improve to 4.3 per cent in 2025-26 from 4.1 per cent in 2024-25 (revised estimate).

High frequency indicators show that the economy is on a path of recovery during H2 of 2024-25 from the loss of momentum witnessed in H1.

## Sebi plans SOP for applying settlement regulations



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** Markets watchdog Sebi is in discussions to finalise the standard operating procedure for applying settlement regulations for cases amid rising number of settlement matters.

Besides, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) is looking at having uniformity in applying the settlement formula for settling cases.

Sebi Whole Time Member Kamlesh Chandra Varshney Sunday said the regulator is working on the SOP for applying the settlement regulations.

"It is work in progress... it is in final discussions," he told PTI.

Under Sebi norms, subject to various conditions, a matter can

be settled without admitting or denying the facts and conclusions of law.

On the sidelines of a conference in the national capital, Varshney also said Sebi is looking at how to have consistency in applying the settlement formula. "Formula also has certain value to be given. Now different people should give same value for same situation in different cases... basically uniformity across cases... we will work on that," he said.

During a session at the conference, he said the interesting thing about Sebi is that when "you come for settlement you pay more than what you end up paying for litigation".

Five years back, he said out of the enforcement orders, 10 per cent used to come for settlement.

Today, 45 per cent of them are coming for settlement, he said during the session of the national conference on the economics of competition law.

## Jas Honda: A trusted name in two-wheeler excellence

**Jas Honda**, an authorised two-wheeler dealership for Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI), has been a trusted name in the industry for over two decades. Based in Ainthapali, Sambalpur, the dealership has built a strong reputation for customer satisfaction, service excellence, and a commitment to delivering quality products. Under the leadership of **Shamsher Singh Hura**, CEO and Founder of Jas Honda, the dealership has grown into one of the leading players in the region. An avid motorcycle enthusiast himself, Hura transformed his passion into a thriving business, ensuring that customers receive not just vehicles, but a seamless and premium ownership experience. With a wide range of Honda two-wheelers, state-of-the-art service facilities, and a customer-centric approach, Jas Honda continues to set benchmarks in the industry, making it the preferred choice for riders across the region. In an interaction with **Orissa POST**, Hura, shares his entrepreneurial journey. Excerpts...



to this growth, including improved road infrastructure, rising disposable income, and government schemes that support rural development. The affordability, fuel efficiency, and durability of Honda two-wheelers make them a preferred choice in these regions.

**Being one of the leading Honda dealers in Sambalpur, what are the challenges that the industry is facing?**

The two-wheeler industry, like any other sector, comes with its own set of challenges. Some key concerns include fluctuating fuel prices, rising input costs, and evolving government regulations—especially concerning emissions and electric vehicle adoption. Another challenge is ensuring seamless after-sales service and maintaining customer trust, which is where our commitment to quality service plays a vital role. Additionally, the rural market, despite its potential, faces financing constraints that sometimes slow down the purchasing process.

**What role do you believe electric vehicles play in sustainable mobility?**

Electric vehicles (EVs) are undoubtedly the future of sustainable mobility. With rising fuel costs and increasing environmental concerns, EVs provide a viable alternative for cleaner transportation. Honda, as a brand, is actively working towards electric mobility solutions. However, widespread adoption depends on factors such as charging infrastructure, advancements in battery technology, and government

incentives. While EVs are growing in urban markets, their penetration in rural areas will take some time.

**How important is customer satisfaction in this line of business?**

Customer satisfaction is the backbone of our business. A satisfied customer not only returns but also becomes a brand ambassador, bringing in new customers through word-of-mouth. Over the last two decades, we have built a strong customer base by focusing on transparency, timely service, and providing a hassle-free buying experience. Our goal is to ensure that every customer who walks into our dealership leaves with confidence and trust in the Honda brand.

**How has your journey been so far? As a successful entrepreneur, do you have any advice for new entrants?**

The journey has been extremely rewarding. Over the years, I have witnessed the evolution of the automobile industry, technological advancements, and changing customer expectations. Being recognized as one of the 13 Gold Dealers in India—and the only one in Odisha—is a testament to our dedication and hard work. For new entrants in the industry, my advice would be to stay committed, focus on customer service, and continuously adapt to market trends. The automobile business is not just about selling vehicles; it's about building relationships and trust. If you prioritize customer satisfaction and service excellence, success will undoubtedly follow.

**SHORT TAKES**

**Sugar output falls 16% this season**

**New Delhi:** India's sugar production has declined by 16.13 per cent to 23.71 million tonne so far in the ongoing 2024-25 season, creating challenges for government policies which were formulated based on higher initial projections, cooperative body NFCSF said Sunday. The National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCSF) expressed concern over the "ambiguity" in sugar production numbers as the 2024-25 sugarcane crushing season (October-September) nears its end with significantly lower output than initially projected. Sugar production estimates have been repeatedly revised downward since the season began, creating challenges for government policies which were formulated based on an initial projection of 33.3 million tonnes, the industry body said in a statement.

**INOXGFL plans to list INOX Clean Energy**

**New Delhi:** INOXGFL Group is planning to list INOX Clean Energy on the domestic stock exchanges in the upcoming financial year and garner ₹5,000 crore from the issue, sources said. INOX Clean Energy will be the fifth entity of the \$12 billion group to be listed on the bourses. "The INOXGFL Group is preparing to take INOX Clean Energy public, aiming to raise 10-15 per cent from the public at a valuation of ₹50,000 crore (\$6 billion), industry sources said. Once completed, the IPO will be among one of the largest fundraising initiatives in the country's private renewable energy sector. The IPO is expected to hit the market in the third quarter of the 2025-26 financial year, sources said.

**IT pack hit hard**

**New Delhi:** The combined market capitalisation of five of the top-10 most valued firms declined by ₹93,357.52 crore, with IT giants Infosys and Tata Consultancy Services taking the biggest hit, in line with a weak trend in domestic equities. Last week, the BSE Sensex benchmark declined 503.67 points or 0.68 per cent, and the NSE Nifty fell 155.3 points or 0.69 per cent. The stock markets were closed Friday on the occasion of Holi festival. Meanwhile, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Hindustan Unilever, State Bank of India and Reliance Industries saw a decline in their market valuations. Reliance Industries remained the most valued company, followed by HDFC Bank, TCS, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, ITC, and Hindustan Unilever.

**GLOBAL POWERHOUSE**

## Defence exports surge to record high in FY24

Over the past decade, India's defence exports have grown 31 times, solidifying its presence in the global market and increasing international demand  
INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE



**One of the biggest catalysts for this growth is the rising demand from Europe. With European nations facing manufacturing constraints and workforce shortages, India is emerging as a dependable supplier of defence equipment**

the sector.

In FY25 alone, exports are projected to reach ₹20,300 crore, reinforcing India's position as a key player in the international defence supply chain.

One of the biggest catalysts for this growth is the rising

opening new avenues for Indian defence manufacturers.

Domestically, the Indian government is taking significant steps to accelerate growth in the sector, the report said. A large-scale defence procurement worth ₹1.5 trillion is planned by March 2025, addressing concerns over slow order placements in FY25.

This move is expected to boost Indian defence stocks and enhance the country's military capabilities, it added.

Meanwhile, shifting global defence dynamics are creating additional opportunities for India. The United States' decision to cut military aid to Ukraine has highlighted NATO's heavy dependence on American defence funding.

With the US contributing nearly 70 per cent of NATO's total defence expenditure over the past decade, European nations are now under pressure to bolster their defence systems.

This transition is expected to drive further demand for Indian defence products, according to Nuvama.

## 19 startups raise over \$462 million

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

**New Delhi, March 16:** The Indian startup ecosystem witnessed a strong surge in funding this week, with 19 startups collectively raising approximately \$462.27 million.

The investments were spread across six growth-stage and ten early-stage deals, while three startups chose not to disclose their funding details.

This marks a significant jump compared to the previous week when 30 startups secured around \$355.02 million.

Bangalore continued to dominate the startup funding landscape, accounting for ten deals this week. Mumbai, Delhi-NCR, and other cities also saw significant activity.

Among industry segments, fintech and edtech startups led the funding rounds with three deals each, while gaming, healthtech, and energy startups secured two deals each.

Other sectors, including e-commerce, aerospace, and manufacturing, also attracted investor interest.

**strong funding week**

# Kohli not ready to retire



AGENCIES

**Bangalore, March 16:** Indian batsman Virat Kohli said he may not have another tour of Australia left in him after his team's humbling 3-1 test series defeat Down Under but the 36-year-old has ruled out retiring anytime soon as he still enjoys playing the game too much.

Kohli arrested a long run of poor form with an unbeaten ton in the series opening test in Perth in November, but frequently chased balls moving away from his stumps and managed a total of 190 runs at an average of 23.75.

Speaking at the RCB Innovation Lab Indian Sports Summit Saturday, Kohli said the slump was reminiscent of his dismal run in England in 2014 where he made 134 runs.

"If you ask me the intensity

of how disappointed I've been, the recent Australia tour would be the one that's most fresh. So it might feel the most intense," Kohli said.

"For a long time, the tour of England in 2014 bothered me the most. But I can't look at it that way. I might not have an Australia tour again in four years. I don't know. You have to make peace with whatever's happened in your life."

Kohli quit Twenty20 internationals after India's World Cup win last year but continues to play in the Indian Premier League for Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

He remains a key member of India's test team, and played a big role in their 50-overs Champions Trophy triumph last week.

"Me playing the game is not for achievements," Kohli added. "It pretty much comes down

**Don't get nervous, I'm not making any announcements, as of now everything's fine**  
VIRAT KOHLI | BATTER, INDIA

to the pure joy and enjoyment and love for the game. As long as that love is intact, I'll continue to play the game. I have to be honest about that with myself.

Virat Kohli supported the presence of players' families on tours, saying he would always prefer having personal support around him to deal with tough and intense days on the field, instead of sulking alone in his hotel room.

A BCCI directive which was issued after India's 1-3 Test series defeat against Australia had curtailed the family time of players for no longer than 14 days on tours exceeding 45 days.

The wife, children or girlfriends of players could be with them for a maximum of one week on shorter tours.

Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Shami had their families in Dubai during the recently-concluded Champions Trophy but they did not stay at the team hotel. The expense of the families' stay was borne by the players and not the BCCI.

"The role of family is very difficult to explain to people... how grounding it is to just come back to your family every time you have something which is intense, which happens on the outside," said Kohli during RCB's Innovation Lab summit which concluded here Saturday.

"I don't think people have an understanding of what value it brings."

Kohli said having the family around would help a player

to recover from on-field disappointments that much quicker.

"I don't want to go to my room and just sit alone and sulk. I want to be able to be normal. Then you can really treat your game as something that is a responsibility.

"Not in a vague sense, but in a very real way that you finish your commitment and then you come back to your house, you're with family, and absolutely normalcy in your house and normal family life goes on.

"So, for me, that is absolutely a day of immense pleasure. I won't miss any opportunities to go out and spend time with my family whenever I can," said Kohli.

The 36-year-old was "disappointed" because people with no real connection with such issues have been involved in such discussions.

"I feel quite disappointed about that because it's like people who have no control over what's going on are brought into conversations and put out at the forefront of that — 'oh, maybe they need to be kept away'.

"And if you ask any player, do you want your family to be around you all the time? You'll be like, yes," he said.

Kohli, one of the fittest cricketers around, said it was tough to convince his mother about his fitness regime, highlighting his strong bond with the family.

"Support system (for fitness) from the team's point of view wasn't tough. Convincing my mom what I was doing was way harder. She was very disappointed in the fact that I wasn't eating any parathas and I was looking weak on the field.

"And I was like, you know what, there are people who are playing in other countries asking me how I'm training. And how I'm very fit now. And you're telling me I'm looking weak. So I had to convince her that everything's fine, I'm not sick, don't worry. That was way harder," he added.

# Mumbai Indians claim WPL title for 2nd time



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 16:** Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur's panache powered Mumbai Indians to their second Women's Premier League title as Delhi Capitals choked for the third time in succession losing by 8 runs in what turned out to be an exciting finale here Saturday.

Harmanpreet saved her best for the big day as her scintillating 44-ball 66 was instrumental in taking MI to a fighting 149 for 7 despite underwhelming effort from the other batters.

While it seemed that MI were at least 15 runs short of what was a par-score on a good batting track, Delhi Capitals batters put undue pressure on themselves to finish at 141 for 9 despite late surge from Marizanne Kapp and teenager Niki Prasad.

Once MI's most impactful player through the tournament, Nat Sciver-Brunt removed DC skipper Meg Lanning with an off-cutter and Shafali Verma, who has not shown any signs of improvement as far as his technique is concerned, was caught plumb in-front for shuffling to Shabnim Ismail, the chances for the visiting team were minimal.

Jemimah Rodrigues (30 off 21 balls) tried for a while and so did Marizanne Kapp (40 off 26 balls) but it didn't prove to be enough in the end.

Having batted like a champion, Harmanpreet's years of

experience of being an international skipper of repute proved to be handy as she marshalled her resources admirably, rotating the bowlers, not allowing the batters to get settled.

Whether it was Sciver-Brunt (3/30), Shabnim Ismail (1/15), Amelia Kerr (2/25 in 4 overs) or Indian youngster Saika Ishaque (1/33 in 4 overs), MI got wickets just when DC seemed ready for a pushback.

Earlier, Delhi Capitals did well enough to restrict Mumbai Indians to a fighting 149 for 7.

Harmanpreet effortlessly shifted gears from the onset, starting with a short-arm swat pull off Annabel Sutherland and then three fours off left-arm spinner Jonassen.

Cut above the rest of Indian women cricketers in terms of sheer quality, the manner in which the Indian skipper pierced the off-side field was a sight to behold.

She took on the opposition's most successful bowler of the tournament, Jonassen, who had to be taken off the attack by DC skipper Meg Lanning and the bowling changes suddenly didn't work.

At the other end, tournament's highest run-getter Sciver-Brunt (30 off 28 balls) completed her personal tally of 500 runs in this edition but for a change, played second fiddle, allowing Harmanpreet to enthrall the near-capacity Brabourne Stadium crowd that cheered her every stroke.

## SHORT TAKES

### Nair looks to carry forward in IPL

**New Delhi:** After a dazzling show in domestic cricket where he excelled in different formats, premier batter Karun Nair wants to carry his spectacular form into the IPL season and help his side the break the title jinx. A vital cog in Vidarbha's wheel, Nair has been in ravishing form in domestic cricket. He relished a record-scripting run in the 50-over Vijay Hazare Trophy, where he smashed 779 runs in nine games, laced with five centuries and one fifty at a mind-boggling average of 389.50 and carried the momentum into red-ball cricket.

### NZ beat Pak by 9 wickets in 1st T20I

**Christchurch:** A new era for Pakistan white ball cricket got off to a rough start Sunday with a nine wicket loss to New Zealand in the first of five Twenty20 internationals. First time captain Salman Ali Agha led a new look team into the match which followed Pakistan's poor performance at home in the 50-overs Champions Trophy and began its buildup to the 2026 T20 World Cup. The Pakistan batting crumbled against the New Zealand pace attack and the tourists were all out for 91 in 18.4 overs, its fifth-lowest total in T20 internationals.

## SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD WINTER GAMES

# India ends campaign with 33 medals in Italy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 16:** India clinched 12 medals in four events on the final day, concluding their campaign at the Special Olympics World Winter Games with a total of 33 medals in Turin, Italy.

India's medal tally included 8 gold, 18 silver, and 7 bronze medals.

In Snowshoeing, India secured four more medals, adding to the six won earlier in the competition. Vasu Tiwari, Shalini Chauhan, and Tanya each claimed a silver medal in the 25m Snowshoeing event, while Jahangir bagged a bronze in the same category.

The Alpine Skiing segment also saw stellar performances from Indian athletes.

Radha Devi and Nirmala Devi won silver medals in the Intermediate Slalom (F01 and F04 categories, respectively), while Abhishek Kumar secured another silver in the Novice Slalom (M02 category).

Akriti demonstrated remarkable endurance in Cross Country Skiing, bagging a bronze



medal in the 100m Classical Technique (F02 category).

In the Floorball event, Indian Women's Traditional Team showcased their teamwork and skill, claiming a bronze medal.

While India recorded 10 medals each in Snowshoeing and Alpine Skiing, six medals came in Snowboarding. Short Track Speed Skating, Cross Country Skiing and Floorball brought the country four, two and one medal respectively.

"Each medal won is a testament to their hard work and the unwavering support from coaches, families, and the entire Special Olympics Bharat family," Special Olympics Bharat President Mallika Nadda said in a release.

"We are incredibly proud of their achievements and will continue to support their journey towards greater heights."

## AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX

# Lando wins, Hamilton finishes 10th

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Melbourne, March 16:** McLaren's Lando Norris has won a chaotic rain-affected Australian Grand Prix, his first at Albert Park, with the Brit just managing to stay ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen following a third safety car late in Sunday's race.

Lewis Hamilton had a miserable Ferrari debut. The seven-time champion finished 10th and was annoyed by constant radio messages from his pit team.

Norris started the season-opening race, Melbourne's first wet race since 2010, from pole position. But, while he initially came under increasing pressure from Piastri, who set a series of fastest laps until his papaya team told him to hold position, the Australian spun at the penultimate corner on lap 44 as the rain intensified and dropped down the order.

A late race fightback helped Piastri recover to take ninth place — including passing Hamilton on the final lap — and two championship points.

Verstappen finished 0.895 of a second behind Norris after starting from third on the grid, and took advantage of Piastri's



misfortune and the final safety car and tire stops. Mercedes' George Russell closed out the top-three.

"I knew I had a good pace, but I made one mistake in turn six and he got me in the DRS and the DRS around here is probably like a second or something so that allowed it to keep staying within that second," said Norris, who scored McLaren's 12th win in Australia to steal the outright record from Ferrari.

"I know what I'm capable of, I know what I can do, but obviously it's just round one, so we need to go and do it again next weekend and then continue from there. A long season

Aston Martin's Lance Stroll also made the best of the chaotic conditions to move up from 13th to sixth, ahead of Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg, bringing home eight points in what has been a difficult weekend for the green team with its car uncompetitive in dry running.

Ferrari is the most successful constructor at the Australian Grand Prix, with 11 wins since its first in 1987, but it will leave Melbourne disappointed with just five points to show after Charles Leclerc finished eighth and Hamilton 10th.

The Scuderia was seen as a potential championship challenger ahead of the season start and has plenty of work to do ahead of the Chinese Grand Prix next week. The Melbourne race had a thrilling start with Racing Bull's Isack Hadjar out on the formation lap, and Alpine's Jack Doohan joined Sainz in crashing out on the opening lap.

There were just 14 finishers, after Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso hit the turn eight barriers on lap 34, while Red Bull's Liam Lawson and Sauber's Gabriel Bortoletto went into the barriers and out of the race 10 laps from home in the treacherously wet conditions.

# Mbappe surpasses R9's debut season tally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Barcelona, March 16:** After a slow start to his Real Madrid career, Kylian Mbappe has already surpassed one of the club greats.

Mbappe scored twice in Madrid's 2-1 comeback win over Villarreal Saturday to take his tally to 31 goals in all competitions this season — one more than Brazil striker Ronaldo managed in his first campaign at the club. It also helped Madrid open up a three-point lead atop the Spanish league over Barcelona, which has played two games less.

Long gone are the scoring troubles Mbappe endured in his first months at Madrid.

Having surpassed Ronaldo's



tally from 2002-03, the former Paris Saint-Germain player is now closing in on the 33 goals that Cristiano Ronaldo scored in his first season with Madrid in 2009-10.

"They are legends who marked eras with the club," Mbappe said about the two Ronaldos. "If I score more goals than Ronaldo and Cristiano it

## Madrid won't play again without 72 hours of rest

**Real Madrid won't agree to play another game without 72 hours of rest between matches. The club made the announcement, which was confirmed by coach Carlo Ancelotti, after its 2-1 win at Villarreal Saturday. Madrid's game at Villarreal game kicked off at 6:30 p.m. local time (17:30 GMT) Saturday. Madrid had played a Champions League game against Atletico Madrid Wednesday that started at 9:00 p.m. and lasted 120 minutes plus a penalty shootout. "This is the last time we will play within 72 hours," Ancelotti said, before adding that the club had asked La Liga to push its game back to Sunday. The club said it will consult with FIFA about the scheduling of this week's games.**

doesn't mean that I am better, just that my first season is better. Scoring goals is important, but it is even more so if we win La Liga, the Champions League and the Copa del Rey."

His double at fifth-placed Villarreal took Mbappe's La Liga tally to 20 goals, only one fewer than Barcelona's Robert Lewandowski in the domestic competition.

"Mbappe didn't participate much, but he was lethal," Villarreal coach Marcelino Toral said.

A one-handed save by Courtois to deny Ayoze led to a corner kick that resulted in Villarreal's eight-minute opener. Juan Foyth swept home a ball that fell to him inside the six-yard box after it had ricocheted off players in a packed area.

# With Chhetri's return, India aim to beat Maldives, Bangladesh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Shillong, March 16:** It is easier said than done but senior defender Sandesh Jhingan Saturday said that the Indian football team's target is to beat Maldives and Bangladesh without conceding any goal in the upcoming international matches here.

India host Maldives in an international friendly March 19, before taking on a tricky Bangladesh March 25 in their opening match of the 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifying third round match.

Both the matches will be held at the Jawaharlal Nehru



Stadium here as the Meghalaya capital is hosting its first international games. The match against Maldives will also mark the return of talismanic Sunil Chhetri from international retirement. Our main aim is to get the result in the Bangladesh match, as that would give us a good start in the Asian Cup Qualifiers, and I think the 10-day training ahead of that,

along with the friendly against Maldives will greatly help us prepare for it, Jhingan said.

Our target is two clean sheet victories, the 31-year-old was quoted as saying in an AIFF release. The 40-year-old Chhetri had earlier hung his boots in June 2024 after a glorious international career after making his India debut in 2005.

But he showed he is still a force to reckon with as has been seen in the 2024-25 ISL which has turned out to be Chhetri's most prolific season.

He has scored 12 goals from 24 matches to be the second highest scorer overall and highest among Indians.