

SHORT TAKES

PM Modi joins Truth Social

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Monday joined Truth Social, a social media platform owned by Trump Media and Technology Group. Modi's debut on Truth Social came on a day when US President Donald Trump shared the PM's podcast with Lex Fridman on his social media handle. "Delighted to be on Truth Social! Looking forward to interacting with all the passionate voices here and engaging in meaningful conversations in the times to come," Modi wrote in his first post on the platform.

Wildfire claims woman's life

Kamakhyaganagar: A woman was burnt alive while trying to put out a raging forest fire at Gobari village on the fringes of a forest under Kankadahada block and Mahabirod police limits in Dhenkanal district Monday. The deceased was identified as Budhuni Mohanta. According to sources, the fire broke out in a nearby forest for unknown reasons and quickly spread to the surrounding areas. As the flames approached her house, Budhuni tried to douse the inferno by climbing onto a canal embankment and using water from her home and a stick. However, she lost her footing and fell into the raging fire. Cops from Mahabirod police station reached the spot and began a probe.

2,603 villages lack mobile connectivity

Bhubaneswar: A total of 2,603 villages in 167 blocks of Odisha do not have any mobile network, while 10 panchayats lack broadband connectivity, Electronics & Information Technology Minister Mukesh Mahaling informed the Assembly Monday. He said 375 villages in Kandhamal district have no mobile network, followed by Rayagada (274), Gajapati (241), Koraput (223), Malkangiri (216), Kalahandi (203) and Nayagarh (184). The minister was replying to a query by BJD MLA Arun Kumar Sahoo in the House.

Maruti Suzuki, Tata announce price hike

New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki India and Tata Motors Monday announced plans to increase vehicle prices from April, the second time in this year, in order to partially offset the impact of rising input costs.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



Write a report about my achievements. And use ChatGPT, not Grok

WHILE WE TALK



An Olive Ridley turtle entangled in fishing net at Puri dies a painful death

PHOTO: CHANDRA PRASAD/@VISIONCHANDRA

Ex-Union minister Debendra Pradhan passes away



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/ New Delhi, March 17: Veteran BJP leader Debendra Pradhan, the father of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, died Monday morning due to age-related ailments.

Pradhan, 84, served as a minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government and was a three-time president of the BJP in Odisha. He breathed his last at his son's official residence at Teen Murti Lane in New Delhi.

Condoling his death, President Droupadi Murmu said on X, "My heartfelt condolences to his son and Union Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, other family members and admirers."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid floral tributes to Pradhan's mortal remains, and hailed his efforts in strengthening the BJP in Odisha. "Dr Debendra Pradhan Ji made a mark as a hardworking and humble leader. He made numerous efforts to strengthen the BJP in Odisha. His contribution as MP and Minister is also noteworthy for the emphasis on poverty alleviation and social empowerment. Pained by his passing away. Went to pay my last respects and expressed condolences to his family. Om Shanti," Modi posted on X.

₹6,117cr projects get state govt nod

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: In a major fillip to industrial expansion in the state, the 135th State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) meeting, chaired by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, Monday approved 19 major projects worth ₹6,117 crore that are

expected to generate more than 17,000 jobs, an official statement said.

The approval was given to projects spanning 10 sectors that included biofuel, shipbuilding, food processing, chemicals and apparel. These projects will be implemented in 11 districts, including Bolangir, Cuttack, Ganjam, Kalahandi and

Kandhamal, it added.

Among the major proposals were Transpacific Engineering Pvt Ltd's ₹900-crore bio coal plant in Sambalpur, Hindustan Petroleum's ₹868-crore investment for setting up diesel and petrol pipelines in Rayagada, Bolangir, and Kalahandi, and Zoho Corporation's ₹306.50-crore data centre in

Khurda, the statement said. SapigenBiologix will set up a ₹854.32-crore vaccine manufacturing unit at Odisha Biotech Park in Khurda.

Approval was also given to ARCL Organics' proposal to invest ₹500 crore for setting up a specialty chemicals manufacturing unit in Jagatsinghpur. P3

Hema Malini in eye of the storm



Hema Malini coming out of Srimandir in Puri after having darshan of the sibling deities Saturday

POST NEWS NETWORK

Puri, March 17: Actor-turned-politician Hema Malini found herself in the eye of the storm after a religious outfit in Puri demanded action against the BJP MP from Mathura for allegedly hurting the sentiments of Hindus through her 'illegal' entry into Srimandir during Holi celebrations Saturday.

Priya Darsan Pattnaik, convener of Shree Jagannath Sena - a religious organisation dedicated to safe-

guarding Jagannath culture - Monday approached the Singhadwar police seeking stringent action against the 'non-Hindu' parliamentarian for her act which has hurt crores of Sanatani Hindus.

Pattnaik, an advocate by profession, demanded that she be prosecuted under Sections 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, and 61(2) of BNS as she entered the 12th century shrine despite being aware of her religious status (a Muslim) in violation of a host of legal provisions. MORE P3

Ruckus over law & order

In the aftermath of the violence that rocked the state during Holi when seven brutal murders turned the festive spirit sombre, Opposition BJD and Congress cornered the government in the Assembly Monday over its alleged failure to maintain law and order in the state. Congress members, who staged a protest near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly premises over the suspension of party MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati, accused the government of being oblivious to the rising crimes against women in the state. The BJD, on the other hand, demanded Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to consider vacating his Home portfolio claiming that law and order situation in the state has collapsed ever since the saffron party assumed power nine months ago

to maintain the law and order situation in the state.

Amid the pandemonium, Speaker Surama Padhy adjourned the House till 12:15pm.

Following the adjournment, Congress MLAs sat on a dharna near the Mahatma Gandhi statue on the Assembly premises.

Congress MLA Ashok Das said the state government must be awakened from slumber to act against rising crimes against women.

BJD MLA Goutam Budha Das said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi should give up the Home portfolio as the law and order situation has deteriorated in the last nine months since the BJP came to power.

When the House reassembled after the adjournment, BJD members participated in the Budget discussion, but Congress members again trooped into the well, raising slogans.

Besides targeting the government over the alleged rise in crimes against women, the Congress members were protesting the one-week suspension of senior party MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati.

The Opposition lawmakers were seeking a statement from the Chief Minister over the multiple murders in the state during Holi celebrations, and cases of atrocities against women.

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 17: Chaos reigned supreme in the state Assembly Monday with MLAs of the Opposition BJD and Congress protesting over the deteriorating law and order situation in the state.

As soon as the House assembled for the day, BJD and Congress members trooped into the well of the House with placards, raising slogans, alleging that the BJP government has failed

ଧାରତ୍ରି | OrissaPOST

BUSINESS EMINENCE AWARDS

5th Edition

5 April 2025
Bhubaneswar

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Blue dragons swarm Puri coast

RATAN KUMAR PRADHAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 17: Its bright blue underbelly on a slippery silvery-gray back is quite inviting. But looks can be deceptive. Any attempt to touch the blue dragon, a tiny insect-like sea slug seen crowding the beaches at Puri, Astaranga and Konark these days, may leave the curious onlooker with an unpleasant experience. Because, its sting can cause a host of emergencies - from nausea, pain, vomiting, acute allergic contact dermatitis to post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation.

Though the phenomenon of a large number of these deep sea residents sweeping to the coasts in Puri district has generated curiosity

among locals, climatologists have attributed it to a fall-out of possible rise in sea surface temperature accentuated by global warming and climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Significantly, the development comes barely five days after scores of blue button jellyfish were spotted near the shoreline in Puri.

Blue dragon, or 'glaucus atlanticus' - as it is called by zoologists - is a type of mollusk or sea slug that are normally found on the surface of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian oceans in temperate and tropical waters throughout the world.

Climate activist and UN-India YuWah Advocate 2022-24



Lead, Soumya Ranjan Biswal, said, "Scores of blue dragons are floating ashore near Astaranga and Konark beaches along Puri coast. This is happening because of rising sea surface temperature due to climate change, posing a challenge to all of us."

Biswal also warned of staying away from the beau-

tiful but potentially painful creature. A section of wildlife activists believe that appearance of blue dragons in Puri coast is very recent development which could be on account of climate change.

Biju Patnaik Wildlife Award winner Bichitrans and Biswal said, "For the first time in 31 years of my fieldwork, I saw blue dragons at Devi River mouth in Astaranga last year. This year too summer marked their arrival in Puri coast. This is due to rising ocean temperatures which is harming marine life."

He said the phenomenon is a matter of serious concern. "Climate change is disrupting the ocean's balance, which is critical for humans since most of Earth is water."

leisure



HELEN MIRREN WANTS TO DO A DNA TEST ON HARRISON FORD

Hollywood star Helen Mirren shares she wants to do a DNA test to see if she is related to Harrison Ford because they get on so well in 1923. The Oscar-winning star last worked with Ford on *The Mosquito Coast* in 1986, reports *femalefirst.co.uk*.

ED SHEERAN BREAKS INTO IMPROMPTU STREET SHOW

English singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran has not just released his new song but also left his fans pleasantly surprised in New Orleans with a pop-up performance. The 34-year-old Grammy winner stepped out of a black SUV in the city's historic French Quarter sporting a tie-dyed tee and blue pants, reports *People* magazine.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today you may try to make your loved one happy, and perhaps even try to woo the person in a fresh manner. You may not be too satisfied with your friends and relatives, but, Ganesha says, you can expect to go to a party in the evening and make new friends.

TAURUS
This opt a good day for being too firm or demanding. Ganesha advises you to steer clear of conflicts, arguments disputes. If you cannot avoid confrontation be sure you are the one who will have to step back. Loss of face and self esteem may be unavoidable. You need to face the fact that this is not your day. Don't meddle in extraneous issues. Maintain a low profile and stick to your own work. Don't meddle in extraneous issues. Be calm and composed.

GEMINI
You will be in the mood to pursue your heart's many desires today. You will want to spend more time with your family and your children. You need to translate desires into action by better managing your schedule, says Ganesha.

CANCER
It is likely that you will reach an important milestone in life today. Keep in mind that your success may be a cause of envy for a few people, some of whom may want to harm you. You are left with two choices: either try to help them out of their troubles and miseries, or prepare for a battle.

LEO
Forget the weather. Today, the only thing shining bright are your chances of spending some quality time with your near and dear ones. Going along these lines, Ganesha wonders how long has it been since you last did the same. So, make the most of this lucky day. Chances are that you shall make new friends, who might turn out to be very supportive in the future.

VIRGO
Business acumen is natural to you. Your management skills are immaculate. Move with imagination, innovation and motivation to further your enterprise, advises Ganesha. Feel free to express and exercise your sense of judgement, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
Ganesha says you will be more aware about your beauty and outward appearance and try to enhance it by going to a beauty parlor. You will spend most of your time looking after your external beauty. Due to this you will not be able to pay attention to anything else other than your looks.

SCORPIO
Retail therapy with your loved ones is a perfect recipe to have a good time! You will be more than willing to buy things of their choice. Haggling will be a trait you have closeted today as you go about being lavish in your expenses, says Ganesha.

SAGITTARIUS
Staying away from home, for a long business trip may be painful. But, when you strike great deals, it's worth it. Besides good returns from business, Ganesha also has many other surprises in store for you. Be hopeful!

CAPRICORN
You will walk down the memory lane, cherish those lost moments and later on feel an urge to meet or contact old friends, says Ganesha. Expectations of your near and dear ones, however, may seem burdensome. You will still see the brighter side of everything, and spending quality time with your sweetheart will certainly re-energise your powers to deal with difficulties.

AQUARIUS
You will finally end today and you will enjoy the fruits of your hard-work. You are very good at considering all the pros and cons of every situation/project, drawing a plan on paper and distribution of responsibilities, however, execution of those plans is a problem area for you. Be practical to be successful, assures Ganesha.

PISCES
In spite of the hardships that you will encounter on your way, your high spirits, enthusiasm and innate confidence will overcome all obstacles. And no matter how troubled the day starts, it ought to end on a cheerful note, says Ganesha.

LABANYA NATYA MAHOTSAV - DAY I

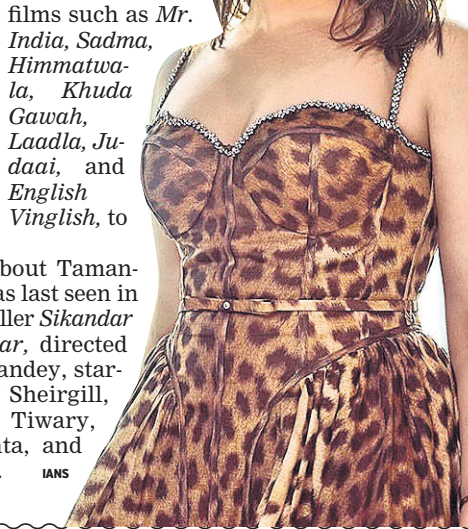


Members of Arpan, a theatre troupe from Bhubaneswar, performed Odia play *Shagadia* on the inaugural evening of the three-day event at Bhanjakala Mandap, Monday. Written by Godabarisha Mohapatra, the play was designed and directed by Gobinda Jena.

MUMBAI: Actress Tamannaah Bhatia says she would like to play late star Sridevi on screen because she was "super iconic."

Tagged as the 'first female superstar' of Indian cinema, Sridevi worked in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, and Kannada language films. Her career spanned over 50 years in a wide range of genres. The actress worked on memorable films such as *Mr. India*, *Sadma*, *Himmatwala*, *Khuda Gawah*, *Laadla*, *Judaai*, and *English Vinglish*, to name a few.

Tamannaah aspires to play Sri on screen



of the iconic actress, who passed away in 2018 due to accidental drowning.

Talking about Tamannaah, she was last seen in the heist thriller *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*, directed by Neeraj Pandey, starring Jimmy Shegill, Avinash Tiwary, Rajeev Mehta, and Divya Dutta.

"It would be Sridevi, ma'am. I think she was super iconic, and she's somebody I always admired," Tamannaah told this agency.

Sridevi broke stereotypes, portraying a wide range of characters across diverse genres, from comedy to drama.

Two is company, three is a crowd or carnival, depending...

The implementation of the 3-language formula in Tamil Nadu has stalled in its track because apparently for some, this two (English and Tamil) is precious company but three (spoiler Hindi) becomes a crowd. Unfortunately, it also stalls the flow of precious education funds to the state.

(telecom giants- Airtel and Jio). Well, who needs a third anyway! The tech mogul perhaps takes his cue from his current boss (both likened to two peas in a pod) who believes in the company of two and hence wishes to acquire Greenland alongside Canada.



Musk's satellite internet service Starlink will enjoy being ushered into *Viksit Bharat* in the company of two biggies

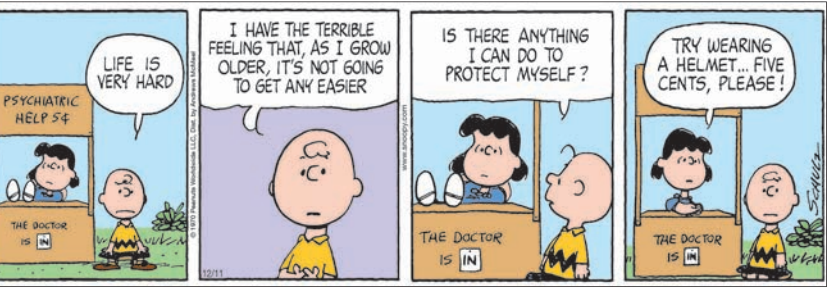
and make it a party of three take-overs. Who says that it takes two to

tango as Sire manages to tango simultaneously with multiple

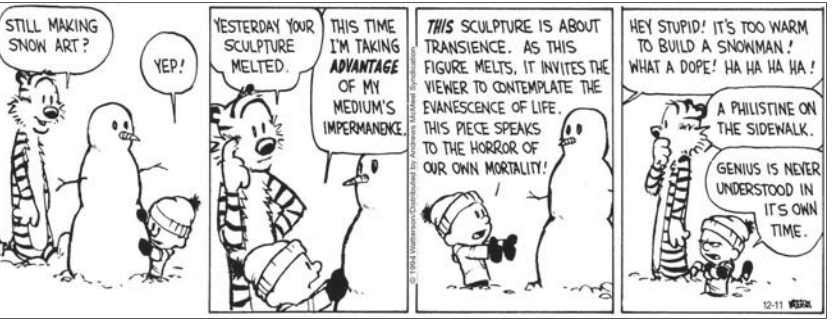
nations over tariffs, blaming us for not showering enough love on Kentucky's American bourbon (despite slashing tariff from 150% to 100%) as we have on its fried chicken. Last heard, WHO has pronounced alcohol as a group-1 carcinogen, in the league of tobacco and its consumption is injurious to health as are the tariffs to our country's wealth. This latest company of two (fried chicken with alcohol) may be a recipe

for heart-attack Sire!
As a late Holi gift, we could send Sire a company of two shipments for twin satiety, namely-gulaal to smear on Zelensky and whoever he can lay his hands on and desi-liquor-filled *pichkaris* that shall give him a kick so high that he can continue kicking out illegal immigrants. In reciprocation, we expect our gifts be made duty-free. With warm greetings from India-Namaste!

PEANUTS



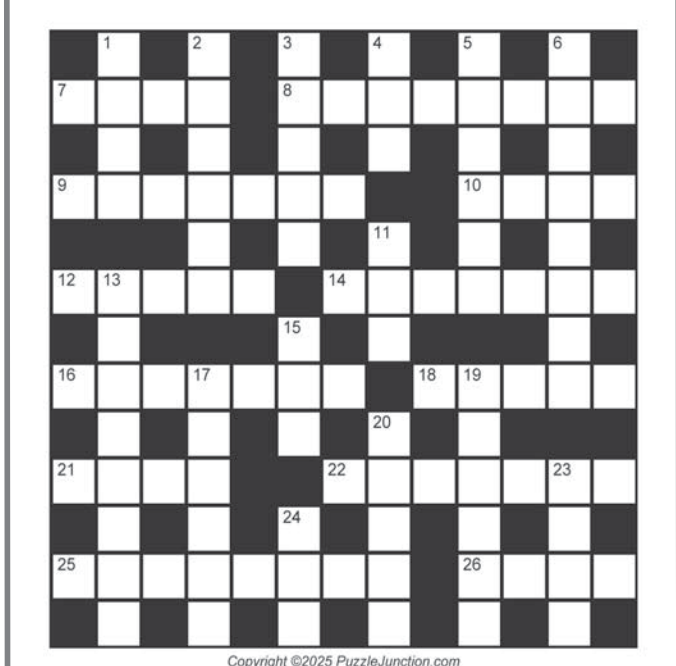
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



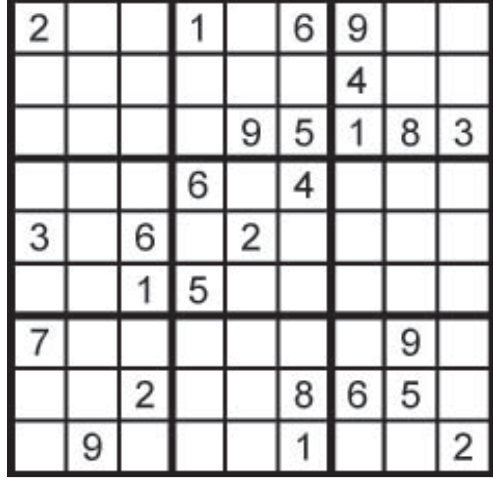
FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Picker-upper
 - 8 Port-of-Spain locale
 - 9 Japanese warrior
 - 10 Diehard
 - 12 Banded stone
 - 14 King Arthur's capital
 - 16 Seaport
 - 18 World-weary
 - 21 Visored cap
 - 22 German city
 - 25 Backbone
 - 26 Goatee site
 - Down**
 - 1 Rum-soaked cake
 - 2 Stately 17th century court dance
 - 3 Shopper's delight
 - 4 One-horse carriage
 - 5 Desert sight
 - 6 Between tenor and bass
 - 11 Lose resilience
 - 13 Appreciative
 - 15 Razor-billed bird
 - 17 Dirigibles
 - 19 Andes wool source
 - 20 Redhead's dye
 - 23 Egyptian fertility goddess
 - 24 Humour

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Amid soaring daytime temperatures, a roadside vendor puts up terracotta water pots for sale near Barabati Stadium in Cuttack, Monday



downtown

CM: Over 20K people missing in 9 months

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 17: As many as 20,060 missing person cases were registered across the state between June 2024 and February 2025, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the Assembly Monday.

In a written reply to a query by Congress MLA Sofia Firdous, Majhi, who holds the Home portfolio, said of the total cases, 7,048 people were traced, while 13,012 remain untraced.

The BJP came to power in the state June 12, 2024.

Informing the reasons for the delay in resolving the pending cases, Majhi cited several challenges. He said missing reports are often delayed by relatives due to social stigma, ignorance or other reasons.

Many people leave the state for work without informing their families, leading to false missing reports, he added.

"A significant number of cases involve minor girls eloping, where they evade police notice due to fear of criminal prosecution against their partners. In several cases, families and informants hesitate to disclose

complete information to police, leading to delays in investigations," he added.

The CM said while the Ministry of Women and Child Development had launched the Mission Vatsalya portal to track and reunite missing children with their families, its effectiveness is hindered by the failure of Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to upload relevant data.

The Chief Minister stressed the need to integrate facial recognition software into the portal, which could help in identifying and reuniting children with their parents.

He added that steps were being taken to fill vacancies in the Integrated Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (IAHTU), Special Juvenile Police Unit (SJPU), and police stations to improve response times in missing person cases. The CM said the government has also proposed financial allocations to enhance rescue operations.

"A total of ₹ 3.24 crore has been set aside to strengthen SJPU by hiring vehicles with drivers for transporting rescued children back to their families.

Additionally, ₹2.61 crore has been allocated for Investigative Units on Crimes Against Women (IUCAW) in 29 districts for similar purposes," he said.

The government has proposed providing ₹19.47 crore to Mahila (women) and Sishu (children) desks of all 649 police stations to cover food and other expenses related to the rescue of the missing women and children.

"Each desk will receive ₹25,000 per month to cover expenses such as food and other necessities for rescued women and children," he added.

In a separate written reply, Majhi said 1,35,074 cases were registered across various police stations over the last eight months, with the highest number of cases recorded in Ganjam district. He assured that the law and order situation remains under control and reaffirmed the government's commitment to maintaining peace.

"Whenever any law and order situation arises, police immediately intervene and take necessary action against the accused as per law," Majhi added.



CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

Local involvement crucial for success: Satpathy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: Local involvement is crucial for long-term success of both environmental and community welfare, said Adyasha Satpathy, Chief Executive of Dharitri and Orissa POST.

Attending a panel session at a conference on 'Learnings for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation from Tribal Communities' at the Regional Museum of Natural History here Monday, Satpathy said many conservation efforts of

ten fail as they don't involve local communities. She cited the example eco-friendly approach of beekeeping by tribals - which not only helps them generate income but also keeps elephants at bay by utilizing the giants' natural fears - to reduce human-elephant conflicts and support local communities by deterring elephants from crop raids.

At the panel discussion titled 'addressing the challenges of balancing growth goals with conservation needs using tips from indigenous peoples practices', Satpathy also pointed

out the issue of inconsistent policy implementation due to changing officers, and urged the youth to stay connected with their communities.

Addressing the conference, Padma Shri Jamuna Tudu of Jharkhand, also known as the Lady Tarzan of India, shared her perspective on the sacred relationship between humans and nature, and urged everyone to protect forests. She likened trees and jungles to deities, asserting that they provide life, peace, and fulfill

ment if cared for genuinely.

In his address, Australian Consul General in Kolkata and the chief guest on the occasion, Hugh Boylen, expressed pride in being associated with the project, recognizing indigenous communities as a valuable source of biodiversity knowledge that could significantly contribute to addressing climate change. The event was organized by FORCE Trust as part of the Australian Aid-supported project, "Voices of the Earth - Youth and Indigenous Wisdom in Climate Action."

Conditional bail for Hanshita, Anil

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, March 17: The Orissa High Court Monday granted conditional bail to Hanshita Abhilipsa and her husband Anil Mohanty, who were arrested in connection with a case of impersonation of government officials and cheating.

Justice RK Pattanaik allowed their release upon furnishing bail bonds of ₹50,000 each with one solvent surety of the like amount. The court, while granting bail, noted that a prima facie case was made against the duo for impersonating influential government officials.

The case was initiated following an intimation from the Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), which raised suspicion over the couple's claims during a visit. Investigation revealed that Hanshita had 'morphed' photographs with top bureaucrats to establish false credentials.

Hanshita was also found to have a 'past criminal record' and allegedly concealed her identity while obtaining a passport.

Mortal remains of Ramakanta Rath consigned to flames

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 17: The mortal remains of renowned Odia poet and former bureaucrat Ramakanta Rath were consigned to flames at Swargadwar in Puri Monday.

Rath's son Pinaki lit the funeral pyre after the Odisha Police accorded full state honours to the poet, who was a recipient of Padma Bhushan.

Earlier in the day, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi visited Rath's residence in the City and paid floral tributes to the poet. Rath breathed his last Sunday. He was 90.

Majhi, who returned to the state capital from a visit to Delhi Sunday night, reached Rath's residence in the City Monday morning and offered floral tributes. Deputy Chief Minister Pravatī Parida and Culture Minister Suryabanshi Suraj also paid tributes to Rath.

"The state has lost a great son of the soil. Poet Ramakanta Rath was a frontline writer of modern



Odia literature. He was also an able administrator and took the responsibilities as chief secretary from 1990 to 1992," Majhi said, adding that Rath's 'Sri Radha' poetry would remain a classic in Odia literature.

In his condolence message, Leader of Opposition and BJD president Naveen Patnaik said, "I am saddened to learn about the demise of the renowned poet and literary figure Ramakanta Rath. He has made a valuable contribution to enriching modern Odia literature. He will remain immortal in the hearts of readers for his unique style of writing. At this

time, I express my condolences to the bereaved family and pray for the eternal peace of his soul."

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Haribabu Kambhampati and many others mourned the demise of Rath Sunday.

Some of the major poetry collections of Rath include Kete Dinara (1962), Aneka Kothari (1967), Sandigdha Mrugaya (1971), Sap-tama Rutu (1977), Sachitra Andhara (1982), Sri Radha (1985), and Sreshtha Kavita (1992). Some of his poetry has been translated into English and other languages.

Rath was honoured with the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977, the Sarala Award in 1984, the Bishuva Samman in 1990, and the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship in 2009.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to literature, he was conferred with the Padma Bhushan in 2006.

He also served as the vice president of the Kendra Sahitya Akademi from 1993 to 1998 and president of the Akademi from 1998 to 2003.

SLSWCA okays 19 projects worth ₹6,117cr

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: The State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA), led by Chief Secretary Manoj Ahuja, Monday approved ₹6,117 crore worth 19 projects, which have a potential to generate over 17,000 employment opportunities.

Transpacific Engineering Private Limited's proposal to set up a Biocoal plant in Sambalpur got the state government's nod. With an investment of ₹900 crore, the plant is expected to provide jobs to over 630 people. The SLSWCA also approved the proposal of Sai Sudha Motors Private Limited for a ₹68.58-crore solar module manufacturing unit in Khurda with a potential to create 350 jobs.

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited will invest ₹868 crore for high-speed diesel and petrol pipeline across Rayagada, Bolangir and Kalahandi, generating 168 jobs. Zoho Corporation Private Limited's

proposal to establish a ₹306.50-crore data centre in Khurda, which is expected to provide jobs to 90 people, also got the approval.

Sapigen Biologix Private Limited will set up a ₹854.32 crore vaccine manufacturing unit at Odisha Biotech Park in Khurda, while ARCL Organics Limited will establish a ₹500-crore specialty chemicals manufacturing unit in Jagatsinghpur. Both the facilities are expected to provide jobs to a total of 1,575 individuals. The state government approved the proposal of RCC Laboratories India Private Limited to set up a preclinical testing and animal breeding facility in Khurda. With an investment of ₹55.36 crore, the facility would provide jobs to over 130 people.

Among others, Somolo Eco Resorts Private Limited's proposal to develop a ₹110 crore luxury eco-resort in Ganjam and Tavasya Hospitality Private Limited's plan for ₹52.20 crore worth eco-resort in Kandhamal also got the state government's approval.

Hema hurt Hindu sentiments: Pattnaik

A collage of images and text related to the controversy. It includes a notice from Shree Jagannath Sena Central Office, Puri, dated 17/3/2025, and a photograph of Priya Darsan Pattnaik speaking at a podium. The notice mentions a meeting with the MP Hema and discusses the conversion of the temple to a mosque.



Following the conversion, Dharmendra was renamed Dilawar Khan Keval Krishna, while Hema took the name Aisha Bi Chakravarti, Pattnaik alleged.

"Their Nikah was solemnised by Maulana Kazi Abdulla Fauzabadi August 21, 1979. Both Hema

and Dharmendra even pledged Rs 1,11,000 as Mehr. The matter came to light when Dharmendra filed his nomination for the Bikaner Lok Sabha seat," the outfit's convener said in his complaint.

Hema visited Srimandir, offered prayers, and later participated in Holi celebrations March 15. Therefore, Pattnaik said, the police should serve a notice to Hema for investigation under relevant provisions of law. "If the allegations were found true, the MP should be arrested," he said.

Since Puri MP Sambit Patra was aware of Hema's religious status, he preferred to accompany her till Dolabedi, he alleged.

Pattnaik also held the Shree Jagannath Temple Administration and Puri district administration responsible for facilitating entry of Hema into the revered shrine despite being aware of the illegalities they were committing while doing so.

Advertisement for LIC's Nivesh Plus insurance plan. The ad features a couple playing chess and text that says "Your SMART move can Secure your Joyous future". It lists benefits like Life Risk Cover, Flexibility to choose type of Sum Insured, and a policy that can be surrendered after 5 years. Contact information for LIC is provided at the bottom.

FROM P1... In his complaint, Pattnaik said Hema married Dharmendra after both converted to Islam at a Mumbai mosque to circumvent

the penal provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 as Dharmendra was already married to Prakash Kaur, and the couple had four children.

Boudh hottest for 3rd consecutive day

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 17: Boudh district in the state remained the hottest place in the country for the third consecutive day Monday, recording the maximum temperature of 43.5 degrees Celsius, IMD sources said.

Bargarh, which recorded 42 degrees Celsius, was the second-hottest place in the country, while Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh was at the third spot, sizzling at 41.3 degrees Celsius.

Severe heatwave continued to sweep Boudh, which had recorded 42.5 degrees Celsius Saturday and 43.6 degrees Celsius Sunday.

Other places that recorded temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius were Angul (40.7), Titlagarh (40.5) and Malkangiri (40.2), the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.



The maximum temperatures hovered between 39 and 40 degrees Celsius at nine places - Jharsuguda, Bolangir, Sambalpur, Subarnapur, Talcher, Bhawanipatna, Hirakud, Sundargarh and Khurda. The maximum temperatures at Bhubaneswar and Cuttack were 36.7 and 37 degrees Celsius, respectively, it said. The weather office issued a heatwave warning for six districts for Tuesday. It issued an 'orange warning' (be prepared) for Jharsuguda and Boudh, and a 'yellow warning' (be aware) for Bol-

angir, Sundargarh, Angul and Kalahandi districts.

Similar hot weather conditions would continue to prevail in Odisha for another day, it said. Thunderstorms with lightning were expected in some places of Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj districts Tuesday. Bhubaneswar Meteorological Centre Director Manorama Mohanty said the state was going to get relief from the heatwave from March 20 onwards.

The IMD, in a release, said that heatwave conditions were likely to abate from east central India, except interior Odisha, from Tuesday onwards.

"Light to moderate rainfall accompanied by thunderstorms, lightning, gusty winds and hailstorms are likely over east central India from March 19-23, with peak activity March 20 and 21," the IMD said.



GRACEFUL MOVE: Artistes perform at Guru Pankaj Utsav & Mahari Award Ceremony organised by the Guru Pankaj Charan Odissi Research Foundation at Rabindra Mandap in Bhubaneswar, Monday

PI-C BIKASH NAYAK

Australian envoy visits CSIR-IMMT

Focus on Indo-Australian collaboration in critical minerals, technology development, and sustainable resource processing



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: Australian Consul General in Kolkata, HE Hugh Boylan, visited CSIR-IMMT here Monday, engaging with director Ramanuj Narayan and researchers to discuss advancements in critical minerals technology development.

During his visit, Boylan toured key facilities, including the Advanced Minerals Processing Pilot Plant and the Seabed Minerals Extractive Metallurgy Pilot Plant. He also

participated in a tree plantation initiative on the campus.

Expressing appreciation for growing Indo-Australian collaborations in critical minerals, Boylan highlighted the potential for enhanced partnerships in skill development, training programmes, and commercial technology development.

Chief scientist and head of business development Kali Sanjay detailed CSIR-IMMT's ongoing collaborations with

leading Australian institutions, including the University of South Australia, Adelaide, under the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund, and CSIRO, Australia, to advance critical minerals research.

In a significant step towards strengthening ties, CSIR-IMMT recently signed a research and development agreement with CSIRO at the Dr RP Das Centre for Hydro, Bio, and Electrometallurgy. The

partnership aims to develop technology for recovering titanium dioxide from titanium minerals and extracting vanadium from vanadium-bearing titanium minerals of Indian origin.

Narayan emphasised the need for more collaborative projects on critical minerals, aligning with the National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM). He stressed the importance of ensuring a sustainable long-term supply of critical minerals through advanced beneficiation, processing, and recovery from end-of-life products.

The Indo-Australian joint initiative will focus on developing processing technology to extract titanium and vanadium from ilmenite and vanadiferous magnetite ores, which are abundant in both India and Australia.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

I, Jeba Bibi, D/o-Alabaksh Khan, At-Patapur, Muslimbasti, PO/PS- Nimapara, Dist-Puri- 752106 declare by this affidavit No.1944, Dated 17.03.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Jobeda Khatun for all future purposes.

I, Sri Chitta Ranjan Mishra, resident of the village Erein, P.O. - Charampa, Dist - Bhadrak, PIN - 756101, declare that the Admission Card, the Statement of Marks and the Pass Certificate issued by the CISCE, New Delhi in the ICSE Examination, 2023 the mother's name of my daughter 'Chinmayee Mishra' wrongly printed as 'Pravamayee Mishra' disavow with the relevant documents as "Pravamayee Mishra" produced before the Executive Magistrate, Bhadrak for redressal vide Affidavit no.- 2413 dated 11.03.2025.

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Paralakhemundi, Gajapati, Odisha, dated 12 March 2025, I, Gulibindala Ranjit Kumar, S/o- Gulibindala Chiranjeebulu, Village-Radhu, P.O.-Derigam, District- Rayagada, Odisha, PIN-765024 declare that for all purpose I am known as Gulibindala Ranjit Kumar as recorded in my Board Certificates, in my Aadhaar and Pan Card my surname has been recorded as Gulibindal instead of Gulibindala. Both Gulibindala Ranjit Kumar and Gulibindal Ranjit Kumar is one and the same indicate to me only.

Aspirants protest for age limit extension



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: Hundreds of job aspirants Monday staged a protest outside the Assembly, demanding an extension of the age limit for recruitment in the India Reserve Battalion (IRB), Odisha Special Armed Police (OSAP), Fireman, and Police Motor Transport (PMT) Driver positions.

The protest was organised by Students Against Corruption (SAC) and led by NSUI state general secretary Bibhuti Bhusan Mohapatra. The aspirants, holding placards and banners, expressed their frustration over the state's recruitment policies, which they claim have unfairly disqualified many candidates.

The maximum age limit for these positions is 23 years, and the last recruitment drive was conducted in 2018. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, recruitment was halted for three years, delaying the process until 2024. As a result,

many aspirants aged out and approached the Orissa High Court, which temporarily raised the maximum age limit to 34 years.

Despite being allowed to appear for the written exam, over-aged candidates were barred from the physical test, with only those within the original age limit permitted to proceed. This decision sparked outrage among aspirants, who accused the government of misleading them.

Mohapatra criticised the state's recruitment policies, stating, "When the rest of the country follows a different system, why is Odisha enforcing such restrictive rules? This injustice will not be tolerated." Aspirant Deepak Kumar Rout (29) added, "Thousands of candidates are affected. The government must permanently extend the age limit to ensure fairness." The protesters warned of intensified demonstrations if their demands were not met.

11th KLF to take place March 21

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: The 11th Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) is set to take place from March 21 to 23, 2025, across three venues in Bhubaneswar—Mayfair Lagoon, Guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre, and Utkal Mandap.

The announcement was made during a press meet Monday in the presence of KLF Advisors Padma Vibhushan Sudarshan Sahoo, Jatindra Kumar Nayak, and Upendra Nath Behera, along with KLF Patron and CEO Ashok Kumar Bal and Founder-Director Rashmi Ranjan Parida. Nayak said the festival will



bring together over 400 writers, thinkers, and cultural leaders from across the globe, representing more than 25 languages.

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati will attend as the chief guest, while Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Indonesian Ambassador Ina Hagniningtyas Krisnamurthi, and other dignitaries will be present as guests of honour. The festival will recognise lit-

erary excellence by honouring Mamata Kalia with the Kalinga Literary Award, Jatindra Kumar Nayak with the Kalinga Literary Award (Translation), and Buddhiasagar with the Kalinga Literary Award (Youth). Additionally, Srinuruddhs Dash and Mamata Mishra will be awarded the Kalinga International Literary Award.

KLF Patron and CEO Ashok Kumar Bal described the festival as more than just an event, calling it a vibrant confluence of ideas, traditions, and voices from around the world. Founder Rashmi Ranjan Parida echoed this sentiment, stating that each edition of the festival reinforces its commitment to literary and artistic heritage.

Chitrabarnali 2025 opens

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 17: The 5th edition of Chitrabarnali 2025, organised by the Utkala Photography Foundation, was inaugurated at Lalit Kala Akademi, here Monday. Curated by Founder and Managing Trustee Srikrishna Das, the week-long exhibition celebrates photography as an artistic and storytelling medium.

Bhubaneswar MLA Ananta Narayan Jena, the chief guest, emphasised the importance of wildlife photography in capturing nature's beauty and raising awareness. Former Mumbai Police Commissioner Arup Patnaik and Corporator Ranjulata Ray attended as guests of honour.

GHW revives forgotten glory of fort, ancient temple

POST NEWS NETWORK

Jajpur, March 17: In a bid to reconnect with Odisha's rich cultural heritage, Gadamadhpur hosted an inspiring heritage walk Sunday, drawing 60 passionate enthusiasts from across the region.

Titled "Gadamadhupur Walks," the event was mentored by Queen Aparna Singh, who guided participants through the historic corridors of Gadamadhpur Fort and the ancient Jagannath and Radhakrusjna temples, bringing to life the stories of a forgotten past.

Nestled in Jenapur Tahasil of Dharmasala block in Jajpur district, Gadamadhpur stands as a testament to royal grandeur and spiritual significance. The magnificent Gadamadhpur Fort, founded in 1847 by



Raja Sudarshan Dhir Narendra, once epitomised power and cultural brilliance.

Built in three phases during the colonial era, the fort remained a royal residence until India's independence. In 1953, it was transferred to the Government of India, marking the end of its regal administration.

Since 2007, the fort has been under the dedicated care of

Aparna Dhir Singh Bhardwaj, daughter of the late King Krishna Prasad Dhir. Despite numerous challenges, she has tirelessly worked to preserve its legacy.

During the walk, participants explored the majestic Lion Gate, admired the exquisite 19th-century architecture, and delved into the fort's storied past. The journey also took

them to the Jagannath Temple of Gadamadhpur, a site of immense spiritual significance now facing neglect due to a lack of funding.

A poignant moment of the event was the recollection of Queen Aparna Singh's historic role in Odisha's Rath Yatra tradition. Following her father's passing, she became the first queen in Odisha to perform the 'Chhera Pahanra'—the ceremonial sweeping of the chariot, a ritual traditionally reserved for kings. Her act symbolised deep reverence for tradition and underscored the evolving role of women in preserving sacred customs.

Despite Gadamadhpur's scenic charm and past recognition by the Odia film industry, its heritage faces the threat of decay. The fort and temple, once vibrant, now stand in desper-

ate need of conservation. While Queen Aparna Singh continues her efforts to safeguard this architectural marvel, substantial funding is required for full restoration.

"This walk is an effort to reconnect with our roots and bring attention to the deteriorating yet magnificent heritage structures of Gadamadhpur," said Suresh Prasad Mishra, Convener of Dhenkanal Heritage Walks.

The walk also saw participation from prominent members of the heritage walk fraternity from Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, and Puri, including Dipak Samantari, Srikanta Singh, and Biswaranjan Dehury. Capturing the essence of the walk were three ace photographers—Kishor Bit (Cuttack), Hrudananda (Bhubaneswar), and Subrata Bal (Rourkela).

WEATHER table with columns BBSR, CTC, Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, FORECAST

MARKET WATCH table with columns INDEX, VARIATION, SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, SILVER

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Healthcare crisis at Bargarh DHH Another drainage pipe falls from Joda flyover

A 50-bed critical care centre inaugurated virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last October remains non-functional, triggering public dissatisfaction



Bargarh, March 17: Healthcare services at the newly constructed Bargarh District Headquarters Hospital (DHH), relocated to Khedapali (Tukurla), about 4 kilometre away from the town, has been severely hit on account of acute shortage of doctors and lack of essential chemicals for various pathological tests.

ultrasound, dialysis, and X-rays are either unavailable or inconsistent, leaving patients in distress, reports added. Additionally, sources said, a 50-bed critical care centre inaugurated virtually by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last October remains non-functional, triggering public dissatisfaction.

complaints of foul odour. The ultrasound department has a single technician, and when he takes leave, services come to a halt. Recently, a pregnant woman brought in by the Padampur police for an ultrasound examination had to be turned away as the facility was closed, sources said. Power supply issues further complicate hospital operations. Frequent electricity outages and a non-functional generator have forced doctors to conduct treatments using torchlights. Diagnostic procedures such as ultrasound and X-rays come to a standstill during prolonged power cuts.

Another drainage pipe falls from Joda flyover

POST NEWS NETWORK

Joda, March 17: Yet another large drainage pipe fell from Odisha's longest flyover in Joda town of Keonjhar district Saturday afternoon. Fortunately, owing to reduced traffic during the Holi holiday, no one was injured and a major accident was averted.



This is not the first time that such an incident has occurred. Previously, a pipe had fallen from the flyover injuring a passer-by. The repeated structural failures arising from the substandard construction of the flyover have sparked growing dissatisfaction among the local residents.

long-term stability. Local BJP leader Ranjit Mahakur has demanded an investigation into the alleged construction flaws and irregularities. Youth activists Jagannath Panigrahi, Sameer Das, Ramesh Chandra Mohapatra, and Kamakshya Patra also voiced concerns, attributing the failures to low-quality pipes and faulty clamps that cannot withstand vibrations.

nymity, claimed that high-quality materials were initially approved by OBCC. However, after approval, an official of the agency had allegedly replaced them with substandard materials without further inspection, leading to repeated failures.

West Bengal Police nabs Kandhamal man in cyber fraud case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Phulbani, March 17: A team of the West Bengal Police, with the help of its Odisha counterparts, Monday arrested a man from Kandhamal district for his alleged involvement in a cyber fraud case, officials said. The cyber branch of Chandannagar police station in Bengal's Hooghly district arrested the accused, hailing from Daringbadi area in Kandhamal district, said Kanak Kumar Majhi, the Inspector-in-Charge, of Daringbadi police station.



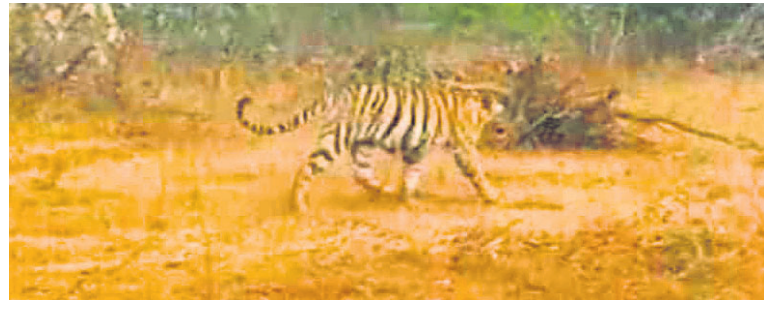
TURNING POINT: A spectacular scene from a match between Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) and Alloy Steels Plant (ASP), Burnpur during the Steel Plant Sports Board Inter-Steel Kabaddi Championship organised by the sports department of RSP at Ispat Basketball Complex in Sector-6 of Rourkela, Monday. RSP trounced ASP by 50/33 points

Kabisuryanagar NAC chairperson loses no-confidence vote

POST NEWS NETWORK

Kabisuryanagar, March 17: S Lakshmi Sethi, chairperson of Kabisuryanagar Notified Area Council (NAC) in Ganjam district, lost her position following a no-confidence motion held Monday. Prior to the vote Monday, she submitted her resignation letter to the NAC's executive officer. However, since the resignation had not been officially accepted, the vote proceeded under the directive of the District Collector, with Chhatrapur Sub-Collector Subashis Baral overseeing the process.

Panic as Royal Bengal Tiger spotted in Madhapur forest



Boudh, March 17: A Royal Bengal Tiger has reportedly been roaming in the Madhapur forest range of Harabhanga block in Boudh district since Sunday, sparking fear and panic among local residents. According to reports, an earthmover machine was excavating a pond near Petini Tailla forest close to Baring village Sunday evening, when the tiger was first spotted. The terrified operator of the machine managed to capture a distant photograph of the tiger and shared it on social media. As the image went viral, fear spread among the local community.

the accuracy of the census data provided by the Forest department. Meanwhile, reports suggest that forest fires in different parts of the Madhapur range may be forcing wild animals to stray towards human settlements. Notably, the carcass of a tiger had been found near the Kuchuda-Lengerpaju road in the protected Podhahola forest under the same range September 25, 2024. When questioned about the recent sighting, Madhapur Ranger Ashish Kumar Dugal denied the allegation dismissing the excavator operator's claims. However, with photographic evidence circulating online, his statement contradicts public reports.

କୋଶାଳ ବିଜ୍ଞାପିତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ପରିଷଦ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ, କୋଶାଳ, ପୁରୀ
ନିଲମ୍ବ ଲଗ୍ନାହାର
No.C-1886: ଏହା ଦ୍ଵାରା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଅବଦାନ ବିନାମରେ ବିଆୟାଜିଟି ଶି ବିଷୟରେ ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ର ଅଞ୍ଚଳ କର୍ମ ୨୦୨୪-୨୬ ପାଇଁ ଯୋଜନା କରାଯାଇଛି...

EAST COAST RAILWAY NOTIFICATION FOR APPOINTMENT OF STATION TICKET BOOKING AGENT (STBA)
No. SDPCM/KUR/STBA/Notification/NSG-6/2025/Phase-2, Dt.: 06.03.2025
Applications are invited for selection and appointment of Station Ticket Booking Agent (STBA) for 03 (Three) years on commission basis at 10 (Ten) "NSG-6" category stations over Khurda Road Division of East Coast Railway for issuing of Unreserved Tickets through computerized Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS)...

Vedanta's Project Arogyam drives cancer screening in rural Odisha

POST NEWS NETWORK

Sundargarh, March 17: In collaboration with Chhattisgarh Raipur-based BALCO Medical Centre (BMC), one of India's leading cancer care hospitals, Vedanta Aluminium recently conducted an extensive cancer screening and awareness drive under its healthcare initiative 'Project Arogyam - Cure with Care' at the Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in Belpahar area under Jharsuguda district and Bileimunda under Sundargarh district.



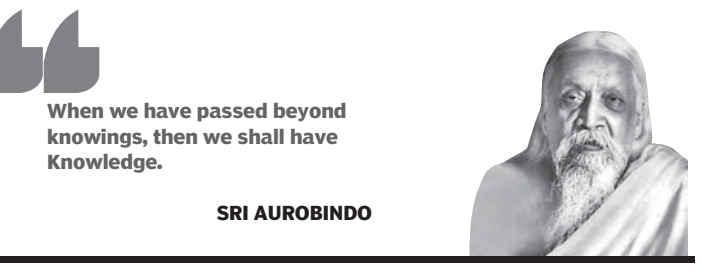
during the treatment period. A total of 182 people from the local community benefited from the healthcare services that were offered during the screening drive. Jitender Munda, Assistant Block Development Officer (ABDO), Hemgr said, "Vedanta's screening and awareness camp is a significant step towards bringing improved health interventions to the region, because early detection and awareness are crucial in the fight against cancer."

MRF LIMITED
Regd. Off: No. 114, Greens Road, Chennai 600 006
Email: mrfshare@mrfmail.com; Tel: 044-28292777; Fax: 91-44-28290562
Notice is hereby given that the following share certificates are reported misplaced or lost or stolen and that the Shareholder/Claimants thereof have appealed to the Company for issue of duplicate share certificates: Share Cert Nos. 15825/26, 53376, 73002, 112662, 154462 for 166 shares bearing distinctive nos. 725021-725080, 1768474-1768503, 1870601-1870609, 2333328-2333355, 1233225-1233247, 2949504-2949524 all-inclusive under Ledger Folio No. R00180 in the name of Sri. Rajendranath Rakshit (Deceased). The claimants Santosh Kumar Rakshit reside at Nuyapara Golebar, Sadar Sambalpur, Odisha 768001 and Rahul Ranjit Kumar Rakshit reside at H no-67, Naya para, Near Santosh mandir lane, Sambalpur, Odisha-768001. The public are hereby warned against purchasing or dealing in any way, with the above share certificates. Any person(s) who has/have any claim in respect of the above share certificates should lodge such claim in writing to the Company at the address mentioned above within 21 days from the date of publication of this notice, after which no claim will be entertained and the Company will proceed with the issue of duplicate share certificate.

EAST COAST RAILWAY E-Tender Notice No.: ST-SBP-TENDER-2025-05, Dated: 10.03.2025
NAME OF THE WORK: IMPROVEMENT OF EARTHING ARRANGEMENT FOR PROTECTION OF SIGNALLING GEARS OVER SANGBALPUR DIVISION.
Tender value: ₹ 88,29,752/-, Bid Security: ₹ 1,76,600/-
Tender Closing Date and Time: At 1100 Hrs. on 02.04.2025.

EAST COAST RAILWAY File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/ E-Tender/117, Dt. 11.03.2025
(1) Tender No. etenderhkur-340-2024, Dt.: 06.03.2025
DESCRIPTION: PROPOSED TEMPORARY SHED AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS WORKS IN CONNECTION WITH CAR FESTIVAL 2025 AT PURI.
Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 365.66 Lakh, EMD: ₹ 3.32,800/-

EAST COAST RAILWAY E-Tender Notice No.: ST-SBP-TENDER-2025-05, Dated: 10.03.2025
NAME OF THE WORK: SUPPLY OF 50,000 CUM. OF HARD STONE MACHINE CRUSHED BALLAST OF 50 MM SIZE AT RAGHUNATHPUR DEPOT & LOADING THE SAME INTO ANY TYPE OF RAILWAY WAGON FOR KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.
Approx. Cost of the Work: ₹ 782.93 Lakh, EMD: ₹ 5,41,500/-



SRI AUROBINDO

Economic Pain

Five years ago, the world economy was hit hard by the CoVID-19 pandemic which brought life in almost all countries to a grinding halt. After reeling under its impact for about two years, most economies recovered to a great extent. However, in case of India, the economic recovery was K-shaped, a situation characterised by stagnant consumer spending for the vast majority and rising wealth for a select few. It is definitely worrying that this pattern of growth has only intensified over the last few quarters.

The middle class, once a formidable force in the Indian economy, has been nearly wiped out by virtue of the double whammy of stagnant wages and spiralling inflation. The declining sales of two-wheelers and entry-level cars underscore the financial struggles faced by millions of families in the country. The household savings rate in India is already at a five-decade low. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in household debt which has grown from 36.6 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) in June 2021 to 41 per cent in March 2024, according to the recent Financial Stability Report (2024) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Not only that, the proportion of loans used for consumption purpose has risen over the years implying that households are primarily borrowing for consumption rather than for acquiring assets like homes or vehicles or for investing in children's education.

Similarly, India has experienced an unprecedented increase in loans secured by gold jewellery, reflecting the financial struggles faced by many households. The combination of slowing economic growth and surging gold prices over the past year has led to a remarkable 68 per cent rise in gold loans during the first nine months of the current fiscal year, compared to just 12.7 per cent in the same period last year, according to data from the RBI. The affinity for gold among Indians is well-known, with a substantial portion of savings typically invested in jewellery. As economic hardships intensified throughout 2024, many families turned to pledging their jewellery to obtain loans. Additionally, what makes gold loans more attractive is their relatively easier processing as compared to other unsecured loans such as personal loans.

Lured by a remarkable surge in the benchmark stock indices, Sensex and Nifty, which more than doubled since the onset of CoVID-19 until the September quarter of last year, nearly 10 crore new investors began trading stocks and derivatives between 2020 and 2024. By end December 2024, the ownership of retail investors, who form the bulk of the small investors, and high-net-worth individuals (HNIs) in all listed companies on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) reached a historic high of 18.2 per cent, exceeding that of foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) for the first time since 2006. Adding to the pain of these crores of investors, India has now been experiencing its longest equity market slump in nearly thirty years, resulting in a loss of a whopping \$1 trillion in market capitalization. This market decline is already impacting consumer spending and also poses a risk of further slowing of the economy which is projected to grow at its slowest pace in four years during the current financial year, primarily due to weak urban consumer demand. Consumer spending, which constitutes half of India's GDP, is already being affected by stagnant income growth and high inflation.

The economic hardships that majority of Indians feel right now needs to be addressed at the earliest. However, prospects for that exercise appear bleak as the government at the Centre has other priorities, while the Opposition parties are busy raking up many trivial issues. This leaves the ordinary citizen to fend for himself.

WISDOM CORNER

I have always believed, and I still believe, that whatever good or bad fortune may come our way we can always give it meaning and transform it into something of value.

HERMANN HESSE

The whole difference between construction and creation is exactly this: that a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed; but a thing created is loved before it exists.

CHARLES DICKENS

The reason a lot of people do not recognize opportunity is because it usually goes around wearing overalls looking like hard work.

THOMAS A. EDISON

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1871:** The Commune of Paris, an insurrection of Parisians against the French government, began, lasting until May 28.
- 1902:** Italian operatic tenor Enrico Caruso, one of the first musicians to document his voice on the gramophone, made his first phonograph recording.
- 1906:** The first monoplane, constructed by the Romanian inventor Trajan Vuia, made a flight of 12 metres (40 feet).
- 1962:** The Évian Accords are signed, ending the Algerian War. Algeria gained its independence from France as a consequence.
- 1965:** Russian cosmonaut Aleksei Leonov becomes the first person to walk in space. During the tethered spacewalk, which lasted 12 minutes, Leonov ventured up to 10 meters from his spacecraft, Voskhod 2.
- 1974:** Seven member countries of OPEC lifted a five-month oil embargo against the United States.
- 1990:** In what was considered the world's biggest art heist, two men pretending to be police officers stole 13 works, including paintings by Rembrandt and Johannes Vermeer, from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston; the stolen art was never recovered.

LOL

A DOG FIGHT

A man walks into a bar one day and asks, "Does anyone here own that Rottweiler outside?" "Yeah, I do!" a biker says, standing up. "What about it?" "Well, I think my Chihuahua just killed him..." "What are you talkin' about?!" the biker says, disbelievngly.



"How could your little runt kill my Rottweiler?" "Well, it seems he got stuck in your dog's throat!"

SUMMER TIME STORIES

FOCUS SOCIETY



We now must depend on fluctuations in weather to help us push the economy, which of course is in part a cause of the fluctuations in the first place!



Sudarshan Iyengar

THE DOOMSDAY PREDICTION BY GANDHIJI MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE COME TRUE BUT ADVERSE CLIMATE CHANGE IS BEING FELT SHARPLY

India is getting hot as the summer season takes hold. But the hot weather, this year arriving earlier and feeling hotter, comes with a chill in the economy. Can an early summer thaw the consumption chill? Will the former salvage the latter? Many economists hold out the hope that FMCG will sell more fizzy sodas and squashes, more cleansing lotions and deodorants. Air-conditioners, coolers and fans will soon be in demand. The consumption story will pick up pace. This is a reasonable expectation from the frame of the modern economy.

But isn't it possible to change the frame? We have just passed the day, 11 March, when in the year 1930, Mahatma Gandhi and his 79 chosen satyagrahis left the Sabarmati Ashram at 6am for the famous Dandi March to break the Salt Law. The description of that historic day, recorded in many documents, did not mention any unusual heat or rise in temperature. Since then, research data show that the annual mean temperature of Gujarat as a whole has increased. The rise in minimum temperature during the winter season was found to be higher than the rise in maximum temperature in the summer season, according to a paper (Ray, Mohanty, and Chincholikar) published in 2009 by the Ahmedabad Meteorological department. Another paper (Dash, Jenamani, Kalsi and Panda) published by Springer recorded evidence of climate change in 20th century India, including an increase in extreme temperature events. Dandi is seeing a high of 35 degrees Celsius this year in March.

Straight to the point of the economy and our consump-

tion story, on 22 December 1916, Gandhiji addressed a gathering of economists in Allahabad. His lecture was titled "Does Economic Progress Clash with Real Progress?" Gandhiji said in the lecture, "Western nations today are groaning under the heel of the monster-God of materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted. They measure their progress in dollars. American wealth has become the standard ... I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods. I venture to suggest that such an attempt if it were made is foredoomed to failure" (Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi Volume 13, pp 310-17).

The doomsday prediction by Gandhiji may or may not have come true but adverse climate change is being felt sharply. One can argue that in the summer months (March-July) there is usually an increase in demand for some consumables such as cold drinks and ice-creams. Since 2016 alone, FMCG revenues have more than tripled. But the feeling of an economy stalled and citizens in distress is distinct. The hope that the higher variation

seen in normal conditions (heat waves or extreme cold), the better for our economy is a position that is materially true in the short haul but also places Gandhi's thoughts in their clear light. We now must depend on fluctuations in weather to help us push the economy, which of course is in part a cause of the fluctuations in the first place!

Are we not trapped in this vicious cycle? All this will of course lead to a steep hike in energy use, most of which is fossil fuel based. Carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions will increase. It will attract more public and private investments in technology and machines to produce low-carbon goods and services. Artificial Intelligence and super automation will tolerate fewer people at work to lower costs and be competitive. People without work will offer great scope to the State to dole out welfare schemes and social security.

The result: more towns and cities will be added to high and dangerously high air pollution levels for which mitigation efforts will further enhance the production of goods and services that will add to the GDP. More prosperity will lead to

the demand for a rise in fossil fuel-driven motorised vehicles on roads. A sedentary life will give rise to lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular and cardio-respiratory problems. More professional gymnasiums and more coaches will arrive on the scene alongside general and super speciality hospitals. More technical and specialised educational courses to deal with these problems will be introduced in universities charging fancy fees. This is "development" and modernity in full drive.

Not surprisingly, Gandhiji called it the "monster-god of materialism." Gandhiji did not give a religious sermon, but he did bring in religiosity by speaking about the moral value of regulating human beings' lifestyles with limited material advancement. The core of the problem lies somewhere else. More than a 100 years ago, Gandhiji was trying to show us that the path is unworkable. He wrote: "In a well-ordered society, the securing of one's livelihood should be and is found to be the easiest thing in the world. Indeed, the test of orderliness in a country is not the number of millionaires it has, but the absence of starvation among its masses."

The threat to us from climate change is real. Human wisdom reflected in the SDGs or similar goals calls for a halt to unbridled consumption and GDP growth. The economists who see great GDP growth potentials in adverse climate conditions have turned into votaries of the monster-god of material progress. Gandhiji reminds us of this simple truth.

The writer is the former Vice Chancellor of Gujarat Vidyapith, the University founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. ©THE BILLION PRESS

SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Future-proofing social protection

Since their inception in late-nineteenth-century Europe, social protection programmes have been financed primarily through payroll contributions by workers and employers. These schemes maintain people's standard of living when old age, illness, child-rearing, or unemployment affect their capacity to earn an income.

The recent confluence of global crises - from the COVID-19 pandemic and the skyrocketing cost of living to the climate emergency and wars in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa - has highlighted the catastrophic risks of inadequate social protection. To address these vulnerabilities and curb rampant inequality, governments must work to bring everyone under the umbrella of comprehensive social protection systems. But just when such systems are needed more than ever, global trends that could erode their very foundation are emerging. The move from productive to financialised capitalism, the rise of digital technologies, automation, and artificial intelligence, together with demographic change, will alter how social protection is funded, who can access it, and under what terms. Ensuring its long-term resilience requires innovative solutions.

Historically, labour was essential for production and the creation of wealth. But today,

the most valuable companies increasingly leverage finance and technology more than human work. At the same time, wages have stagnated and no longer grow in line with productivity. Because social-insurance contributions depend on wages, labour-intensive firms now shoulder a larger financing burden, which lets some of the most profitable companies and those contributing less to employment creation off the hook.

Moreover, demographic shifts such as aging populations and declining birth rates increase the contributions required from workers and their employers, raising affordability constraints for employers seeking to expand their workforce. And with the rise of outsourcing and complex, far-flung value chains, combined with persistently high levels of informal and self-employment, firms benefit from the efforts of workers whom they do not directly employ, and thus contribute less to financing social insurance.

According to international labour standards on social security, workers should not pay more than half of social insurance's total cost, with the remainder borne by employers. As the balance of power and profit shifts away from labour and toward capital, this core principle is under threat.

To address these challenges, countries could raise addi-

tional revenue by increasing taxes on corporate profits. Global efforts to establish a minimum corporate tax and harmonise rates are already underway. But this is unlikely to be sufficient. Social protection programmes compete with government outlays for health care, education, sanitation, and other priorities, and financing them requires long-term planning, which is at odds with short-term political spending cycles.

Moreover, flat-rate, tax-funded benefits alone can hardly curb downward social mobility or prevent the impoverishment of the middle class during crises. Nor are they sufficient to sustain aggregate demand and serve as a macroeconomic stabiliser during economic downturns. Both objectives of social protection are arguably as important as poverty reduction.

In addition to expanding tax financing to ensure a universal minimum of protection, it may be time to rethink the composition and structure of contributions to social insurance systems. Instead of being determined solely by wages (and thus labour stock), employers' contributions to these systems could be determined partly by their capital intensity. This could be calculated as a portion of a firm's profits, sales, or investment in labour-replacing technologies - for example, a levy on robotisation, automation, or artificial intel-

ligence could be earmarked for social insurance.

It would not be the first time that policymakers have devised innovative mechanisms to fund social-insurance programmes through levies on capital. In Portugal, contractors pay social contributions for the self-employed workers whose services they benefit from. Workers in India's and Indonesia's construction sectors, regardless of their contractual status, are insured for workplace-related injury, illness, and death through a charge paid by the main contractor based on the project's total value. Several countries are ensuring social-insurance coverage for platform work through levies on the digital platforms' turnover or digital transactions.

Social protection has long adapted to the changing nature of work and economic activity. Only by adapting can social protection realise its core principles - solidarity, collective financing by capital and labour, redistribution, and risk sharing - for years to come.

Florian Juergens-Grant is Global Social Protection Adviser at Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing. Luca Pellerano is Senior Social Protection Specialist at the International Labour Organization. ©PROJECT SYNDICATE



Florian Juergens-Grant & Luca Pellerano

TODAY, THE MOST VALUABLE COMPANIES INCREASINGLY LEVERAGE FINANCE AND TECHNOLOGY MORE THAN HUMAN WORK

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



Tasting own medicine

Sir, This refers to "Baloch militants attack paramilitary convoy; five killed," OrissaPOST, March 17. Terrorism, nurtured by the Pakistani deep state for decades, is coming back to bite it with devastating effect. The killing of three Frontier Corps personnel on Sunday and recent brazen hijacking of a train in the restive Balochistan province killing 24 passengers are the latest in a series of terror attacks across the country and highlight the growing unrest. The irony is that Pakistan, which used terrorism as an instrument of state policy for decades, is at its receiving end now. Despite being Pakistan's largest province, Balochistan remains its most marginalised and neglected region in the throes of a separatist movement. Home to roughly 15 million people, this arid, resource-rich region has long suffered economic exploitation and state repression. Baloch insurgent groups, particularly the BLA, have waged a decades-long battle for autonomy, accusing Islamabad of plundering the province's vast mineral wealth while leaving its people in abject poverty. The situation has reached a boiling point, with BLA militants targeting security forces, infrastructure and Chinese investments linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. With terror networks expanding and state authority eroding, Pakistan's security challenges are reaching a breaking point.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Road safety

Sir, There were nearly five lakh road accidents causing almost two lakh deaths in 2022. Sadly, 70 per cent of road deaths involve the working age group of 18-45, and the loss of an earning member is a big blow for a family. However, there is no dearth of blame games on the causes of road accidents. But the plain-speaking Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, speaking at a function, while emphasising on newer technologies for road safety, has said that defective road designs and faulty detailed project reports from engineers and consultants were the principal reasons for accidents, and warned that these professionals will be held accountable for faulty road designs. Gadkari went on to point out that even minor things like road signage and markings were badly maintained which speaks volumes about the standard of road maintenance in India.

Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

ASHA workers lay siege to Secretariat



Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers block a road as part of their ongoing protest near the Secretariat demanding an increased honorarium and other benefits, in Thiruvananthapuram

ASHA workers have been protesting here for the last 36 days seeking post-retirement benefits and a hike in their honorarium

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 17: Hundreds of ASHA workers, who have been staging a protest for over a month pressing various demands, Monday intensified their agitation by laying a siege to the state's Secretariat here.

A section of Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers has been protesting here for the last 36 days seeking post-retirement benefits and a hike in their honorarium.

As they are yet to get any assurance from the authorities on their demands, the agitators today laid a siege to the Secretariat by blocking its various gates, in the heart of the city.

After gathering at the protest venue, they moved towards the state's administrative hub, squatted on the road and raised slogans.

Police placed barricades on the premises to block the pro-

testers. Security was intensified in and around the Secretariat and over 800 police personnel were deployed to prevent the protesters from entering Secretariat. Police said the agitation didn't create any hurdle to the normal functioning of the Secretariat.

One of the protesting ASHA workers, who came from neighbouring Kollam district, said they won't end the ongoing agitation until the state government accepts their demands. "How can we take our lives forward with this meagre income. I am a widow and has two children and an elderly mother to look after. I cannot live anymore with this poor honorarium at a time when prices of essential commodities are skyrocketing," she told the media.

Meanwhile, the ruling LDF Monday continued to criticise the ASHA workers over their agitation and said those who are leading the protest have some hidden agenda. "They should have staged a protest against the union gov-

ernment...not against the state government," senior CPI(M) leader and LDF convenor TP Ramakrishnan said here.

He also claimed that the LDF and the CPI(M) have always stood to protect the interests of the ASHA workers and that would continue.

The LDF government has claimed that it has not received any cash grant from the central government under the National Health Mission (NHM) for 2023-24 for payment towards various centre-sponsored schemes, including for ASHA.

The central government has, however, rejected the state's claims and contended that it has given what was due, but the utilisation certificate has not come from Kerala.

It said that once the certificate comes, the requisite amounts would be given to the ASHA workers and the state.

Union Health Minister JP Nadda had also announced in the Parliament that the Mission Steering Group of the NHM has decided to raise the incentives of ASHA workers.

They should have staged a protest against the union government...not against the state government

TP RAMAKRISHNAN | SENIOR CPI(M) LEADER AND LDF CONVENOR

Cheetah Gamini, 4 cubs released into Kuno wild

The release raised the number of cheetahs in the wild to 17, while nine felines are staying in the enclosures

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sheopur, March 17: Cheetah Gamini and her four cubs were released into the wild at Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh Monday, offering tourists a unique opportunity to spot the big cats during safari rides.

The release raised the number of cheetahs in the wild to 17, while nine felines are staying in the enclosures.

Gamini, the South African female cheetah, and her four cubs (two male and two females, aged 12 months) have been successfully released in the Khajuri forest area of the KNP in Sheopur district, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Uttam Kumar Sharma said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav hailed the development as an "important day" in the cheetah project and wildlife conservation.

Yadav said the translocation of cheetahs from South Africa to Madhya Pradesh is an important project not only for India but also for Asia in terms of biodiversity.

The chief minister said the rising population of cheetahs in

TOURISTS' DELIGHT



the KNP region would encourage tourism activities, generate employment, and strengthen the overall economy of the Chambal region.

The selection of Kuno (Sheopur) for this inter-continental project is good fortune for the state, he said in a message to the media.

He hailed the dedication and hard work of the state forest department for the successful implementation of the cheetah

project.

"Gamini and all the four cubs are healthy. This forest area is part of the Ahera tourism zone," Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Uttam Kumar Sharma stated in a release.

As per the forest department's assessment, the presence of cheetahs in the tourism zone will offer tourists an opportunity to spot the felines during safari rides.

"After the release of Gamini

and her four cubs, there are now 17 cheetahs (including 11 cubs born on Indian soil) in the wild in the Kuno National Park. All cheetahs are healthy and doing fine in the wild," the release stated.

According to officials, Gamini gave birth to six cubs in her first litter March 10, 2024. Two of the cubs, however, died in subsequent months.

On February 21 this year, Cheetah Jwala and her four cubs were released into the wild in KNP.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the cheetah translocation project with the historic release of eight cheetahs -- five females and three males -- brought from Namibia to KNP September 17, 2022.

This marked the first-ever intercontinental translocation of big cats.

In February 2023, 12 additional cheetahs were translocated from South Africa to the KNP.

The total number of cheetahs in the KNP now stands at 26, including 14 cubs born on Indian soil. The ambitious project is part of India's efforts to restore the cheetah population and enhance wildlife conservation and tourism in the region.

MP university to use 'Bharat' instead of 'India'

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhopal, March 17: Ujjain-based Maharshi Panini Sanskrit and Vedic University (Formerly Maharshi Panini Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya) in Madhya Pradesh has decided to replace the word 'India' with 'Bharat' on all official documents of the university.

The resolution, passed in its recently concluded executive council meeting, aimed at embracing a term that reflects the nation's rich heritage. The decision was unanimously approved by all members of the council, Prof Vijayakumar CG, vice chancellor of the university told IANS over the phone.

He had chaired the meeting. From now onwards, 'Bharat' will be prominently used across various platforms, including the university's website, student materials, and even the official calendar. The university will use the 'Bharat' word as much as possible in its official documents.

With this decision, the university has become a pioneer in the state, to adopt 'Bharat' in official documentation. During the discussions, Executive Council member Gaurav Dhakad proposed prioritising the word 'Bharat'.

The executive council, a source said, supported that all university-related materials, including administrative documents and resources for students, should carry the name 'Bharat.' This move, the source said, is a tribute to the country's identity and an effort to inspire greater cultural pride, the council observed.

In another decision, the university will make efforts to connect people with the Sanskrit language starting from its base -- the temple town of Ujjain.

Lithuanian held for ₹8L-cr crypto fraud lived miserly life in Kerala

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Thiruvananthapuram, March 17: A Lithuanian man, wanted in the US for cryptocurrency fraud and arrested in Kerala early this week, had been living at the picturesque tourist destination in Varkala, a very miserly life.

46-year-old Aleksej Bescio-kov was arrested Tuesday from Varkala by the Kerala Police, hours before he was getting ready to fly out of the country.

According to his landlord, Aleksej had been living in his house at Varkala for the past eight years and keeps coming and going.

He, according to the landlord, was a miser and it was

after several years he agreed to increase the annual rent and he was driving an old two-wheeler costing ₹12,000.

Aleksej in order to save money from the local workshop mechanics used to repair his two-wheeler by himself.

On Monday, a day before he was arrested, his family returned to their home country.

The locals also are amazed that they are yet to come to terms that Aleksej was someone dealing in crores and they recall him being a quiet personality.

While Varkala is home to numerous foreign tourists and most of them are boisterous while celebrating on the beach, Aleksej and those who occasionally used to visit him were quiet.

Kerala introduces robotic surgery for cancer treatment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 17: Kerala Health Minister Veena George announced Monday that the Regional Cancer Centre (RCC) Thiruvananthapuram and the Malabar Cancer Centre (MCC), Thalassery, have introduced state-of-the-art cancer treatment facilities, including a robotic surgery unit, marking a first in the government sector.

Responding to a query from CPI(M) MLA V Joy regarding the Cancer Grid system in the Assembly, George stated that as part of the Nava Kerala Action Plan-2 Aardram Mission, activities are being carried out in the state with 10 main objectives in mind. One of them is cancer con-



trol and prevention. The Cancer Grid is a network prepared by the Health Department in all districts to coordinate cancer patients, disease treatment systems, diagnostic labs and cancer treatment centres, George added.

The Cancer Grid system

works by connecting the three cancer centres in the state, cancer treatment units in medical colleges, and cancer care units in the Health Department with health institutions ranging from family health centres to district hospitals.

On February 4, 2025, the chief minister inaugurated the popular cancer prevention campaign 'Arogyam Anandam- Akattam Arbudham', and launched the Cancer Grid, she stated.

George further said the 'Karunya Sparsham - Zero Profit Anti-Cancer Drugs' scheme, which provides costly cancer medicines at company prices through select Karunya pharmacies across the state, is progressing successfully.

Under this initiative, med-

icines worth ₹2.5 crore were distributed in just five months, with cancer drugs made available at discounts of up to 88 per cent compared to market rates, ensuring zero profit, she added.

In the first phase, dedicated counters were set up in all 14 districts, and steps are being taken to expand the service further, George said.

The allocation for cancer drugs supplied through government hospitals has doubled in recent years. In 2024-25 alone, ₹27.43 crore worth of cancer drugs were distributed through Kerala Medical Services Corporation Ltd (KMS-CL) to medical colleges, district general hospitals, and other cancer treatment centres, she claimed.

PM's praise brings joy to MP village known as 'Mini Brazil'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shahdol, March 17: A village in Madhya Pradesh renowned as 'Mini Brazil' due to its residents' love for football once again hogged the limelight after Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned it in his conversation with American podcaster Lex Fridman, which was aired Sunday.

Modi had met some players from this village, Vicharpur in Shahdol district, during a visit to MP in early 2023 and had also spoken about it in his radio programme 'Mann Ki Baat' in July that year. The PM had spoken about coach and national level player Raees Ahmed, whose training has seen the love for the game getting complemented by technique.

The PM had also spoken about how Ahmed's dedicated coaching was producing top flight football-

LOVE FOR FOOTBALL



lers from a village once infamous for drugs and alcohol.

Beaming over the PM mentioning Vicharpur in his podcast a day earlier, Ahmed said the village always had passion for the game but not the resources earlier.

"I started football coaching in Vicharpur village in 2002. I

formed a boys team first and then a girls team. After a few years, the situation was such that a child from every house was playing football. As girls too began taking part in school and national level tournaments, the village started getting called Mini Brazil," Ahmed told PTI.

Citing an example, he said res-

ident Lakshmi Sahis has participated in nine national competitions, while her brother Sitaram Sahis and sister Dhanvantari Sahis have taken part in national level competitions.

Others who have demonstrated their skills at national tournaments include Anil Singh Gaur, Om Prakash Kol, Rakesh Kol, Naresh Kunde, Shailendra Kunde, Indrajit, Kewat Satyam Kunde, Hanuman Singh, Mukesh Kol, Bhim Singh, Shankar Dahiya, Rajni Singh, Yashoda Singh, Lakshmi, Yagwati Singh and Renu Singh, the coach said proudly.

During this time, some 1000 football clubs were formed in Shahdol division, resulting in 24 national level players becoming coaches after completing e-licence courses, he said, adding many have got jobs in the railways, police and military.

OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, NAKTIDEUL, DIST. - SAMBALPUR
ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମିତି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟ, ନାକଟିଦେଉଳ, ଜିଲ୍ଲା - ସମ୍ବଲପୁର
Email : ori-naktideul@nic.in
Letter No. 1061/Dtd. 12.03.2025
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

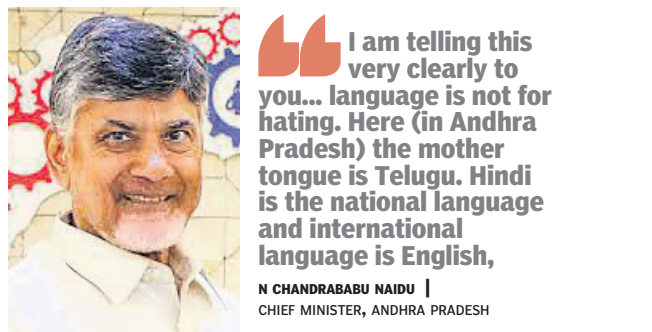
No.i-553 : Sealed tenders are invited for the following projects from registered contractor with valid Class "B" & Class "C" License for carrying out the work.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work	Approximate Value of Work	Period of Completion	Class of Contractor	Bid Security @ 1%	Cost of Bid Document
1	Const. of 50 MT Godown & Office Building at Daincha PACS, Daincha	₹ 24,22,595/-	6 (Six) Calendar Months	"B" & "C"	₹ 24,300/-	₹ 6,000/-
2	Const. of 50 MT Godown & Office Building at Kisinda PACS, Kisinda	₹ 24,22,595/-	6 (Six) Calendar Months	"B" & "C"	₹ 24,300/-	₹ 6,000/-
3	Const. of 50 MT Godown & Office Building at Batagaon PACS, Batagaon	₹ 24,22,595/-	6 (Six) Calendar Months	"B" & "C"	₹ 24,300/-	₹ 6,000/-
4	Const. of 50 MT Godown & Office Building at Naktideul PACS, Naktideul	₹ 24,05,741/-	6 (Six) Calendar Months	"B" & "C"	₹ 24,100/-	₹ 6,000/-
5	Const. of Community Center at Kunjamura Siva Mandir, Batagaon	₹ 15,98,621/-	6 (Six) Calendar Months	"C" & "D"	₹ 16,000/-	₹ 6,000/-

The details of BID Documents consisting of Plans, Specification, the schedule of quantities and the set of terms & conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be obtained from Panchayat Samiti, Naktideul during office hours from 13.03.2025 to 25.03.2025 during 11.00 A.M. to 4.00 P.M. except Govt. Holidays and can be downloaded from the website <http://sambalpur.odisha.gov.in>. Bid shall be received by this Agency upto 4.00 P.M. on dtd.29.03.2025 through Registered Post / Speed Post only and the Bid will be opened on Dtd. 04.04.2025 at 11.00 A.M.

Sd./- Block Development Officer Naktideul

OIPR-19159/11/0001/2425



I am telling this very clearly to you... language is not for hating. Here (in Andhra Pradesh) the mother tongue is Telugu. Hindi is the national language and international language is English, N CHANDRABABU NAIDU | CHIEF MINISTER, ANDHRA PRADESH

19 NAXALITES SURRENDER

At least 19 Naxalites, nine of them carrying a cumulative bounty of ₹28 lakh, surrendered before security forces in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district Monday, a senior police official said. Of the surrendered cadres, Deva Padam (30) and his wife Dule Kalmu (28) were active as senior members in Battalion no. 1 of Maoists and carried a reward of ₹8 lakh each



of the day note

After the Garden Reach illegal building collapse, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) has taken several steps... We have demolished 500 illegal buildings and sent notices to 1,000 other unauthorised constructions. We can say illegal constructions in Kolkata have been stopped 100 per cent FIRHAD HAKIM | URBAN DEVELOPMENT MINISTER, WEST BENGAL

The use of foreign funding in conversion cannot be denied. Though the government claims to have banned such funds, the institutions find their way by not providing audit reports VIJAY SHARMA | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, CHHATTISGARH

In this direction, my proposal is to establish Haryana AI (Artificial Intelligence) Mission, in which the World Bank has assured to provide assistance of Rs 474 crore NAYAB SINGH SAINI | CHIEF MINISTER, HARYANA

DELIMITATION EXERCISE IN NORTHEAST

SC gives 3 months to Centre

The Centre said while consultations were underway for Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, the ongoing violence in Manipur made the situation uncondusive



New Delhi, March 17: The Supreme Court Monday granted three months to the Centre for carrying out the delimitation exercise in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Assam.

scinding the deferment of the process. "Once the president rescinds the notification, that is enough to proceed with the delimitation exercise. Where does the government come in?" the bench asked as it told the Centre's counsel to seek instructions. The Centre said while consultations were underway for Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, the ongoing violence in Manipur made the situation uncondusive.

The bench then deferred the hearing to July 21 and asked the Centre to do the needful within three months

and Manipur. Assam alone saw progress, with delimitation completed in August 2023 following an order from the Ministry of Law and Justice, Gangmei added.

The Election Commission of India maintained that specific directions from the Central government were required to begin delimitation under Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.

The petition cited the presidential order of February 28, 2020, which allowed delimitation in the four northeastern states, along with the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

It alleged selective denial of delimitation in these states, claiming a violation of the fundamental right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

The plea highlighted that despite decades of elections being conducted peacefully in these states, no delimitation took place since the amendment of the Delimitation Act in 2002.

The lack of action left the northeastern states at a disadvantage compared to the rest of the country, it added.

4% QUOTA FOR MUSLIM CONTRACTORS

BJP to challenge K'taka's 'unconstitutional move'

New Delhi, March 17: The BJP Monday termed as "unconstitutional misadventure" the Karnataka government's proposal to provide 4 per cent reservation to the Muslims in government contracts and said it will fight against the move across all levels and even challenge it in the court until it is rolled back.



also aimed at giving "financial strength" to the "ecosystem and unemployed workers" of the banned PFI. "Perhaps for the first time in the country, a government which claims to be secular in nature is incentivising religious conversion in the state," Surya said.

Earlier Friday, the Cabinet approved an amendment to the Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (KTPP) Act, reserving 4 per cent of contracts in (civil) works valued up to Rs 2 crore and goods/services contracts up to Rs 1 crore for the Muslims.

"The BJP firmly opposes the proposed unconstitutional move and demands that Siddaramaiah government immediately roll back the proposed unconstitutional misadventure," BJP MP Tajasvi Surya, who represents Bangalore South Lok Sabha seat, told a press conference at the party headquarters here.

BJP MPs from Karnataka, PC Mohan, Brijesh Chowta and CN Manjunath, were present on the dais with Surya at the press conference. He alleged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah-led government's decision was a "calculated move" to appease the Muslims "at the direction and patronage of the Congress top most leadership, most particularly Rahul Gandhi".

"This patently unconstitutional prima facie illegal act will be challenged in the court. The BJP will fight against the move inside the assembly and outside on the streets. We will raise the issue in Parliament also and protest against this outside Parliament," he added.

The BJP MP said the Karnataka government's move is a threat to national integrity, unity and sovereignty.

"We will fight and oppose this inside the courtroom. We will take the fight to people in Karnataka. Until and unless, the unconstitutional move is rolled back, the BJP's fight will continue," he said. Surya said while various courts, including the Supreme Court, have time and again said that reservation on the basis of religion is "unconstitutional and not permitted", Bhim Rao Ambedkar had also vehemently opposed the idea of granting reservations to minorities based on religion.

GMR Airports sues govt over flights from defence airbase

New Delhi, March 17: The operator of the Indian capital's international airport, majority owned by GMR Airports, is suing the government for allowing commercial flights from a nearby defence aerodrome, flagging financial risks, legal papers showed.

The airport in Delhi is one of India's busiest, with about 73.6 million passengers last year, although it made a loss of \$21 million because of higher government fees. As more and more Indians fly, airports are a lucrative business for the likes of GMR and billionaire Gautam Adani who also operates in the sector.

The Delhi airport will become "economically and financially unviable", after the government permitted commercial flights from the airbase, DIAL said in the March 10 lawsuit.

In the lawsuit, which Reuters was the first to report, DIAL told the Delhi High Court that the government had breached aviation rules barring a new airport within an aerial distance of 150 km (90 miles) of an existing one, unless there was passenger demand.

The Hindon Airport operates over 120 flights weekly, India's Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the court Monday as the judge asked the government to file written responses to DIAL's plea. India's civil aviation ministry did not respond to e-mails seeking comment. Shares of GMR Airports fell as much as 0.7% after the case was reported.

SECURITY TIGHTENED AT AURANGZEB TOMB

Fadnavis assures protection, minister recalls Babri demolition

Mumbai, March 17: The security was beefed up around the tomb of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district of Maharashtra amid threat by right-wing groups for its removal, with police mandating the visitor registration and asking tourists to provide identity documents.



Police have set up multiple security posts along the route from the entrance of Khulatabad town to the site of the tomb, following the submission of a memorandum by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis asking for the removal of the grave.

The memorandum highlighted Aurangzeb's controversial history, particularly his conflicts with the Marathas, and termed his tomb as the symbol of "pain and slavery" to justify its removal.

The VHP cited Aurangzeb's role in the execution of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the son of Maratha warrior king Shivaji Maharaj, as well as his alleged destruction of temples in Kashi, Mathura, and Somnath.

The VHP held similar protests in Nagpur and suburban areas of Mumbai.

In response to these threats, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar police increased security presence, mandated visitor registration, requiring tourists to

provide identity documents, and sign a visitors' register.

An official said a State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) company of 50 policemen, 30 personnel from local police, and 20 Home Guard jawans, have been deployed at various points and the grave site.

Tourists visiting the tomb will have to write their names in a visitors register kept with a team of Home Guards and have to furnish identity documents, he said.

A State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) company, along with local police and Home Guards, are stationed at various points around the tomb.

Fadnavis, while speaking about the controversy, said that while the government is

obligated to protect the tomb as a protected historical site, it will not tolerate any attempts to glorify Aurangzeb's legacy.

"However, I assure you, if any attempt is made to glorify his legacy through 'mahima mandan' (glorification), it will not succeed," Fadnavis said during a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj birth anniversary event.

He said that only Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's legacy deserves glorification.

His statement followed controversial remarks by state Cabinet minister Nitesh Rane, who suggested a "Babri Masjid-type" action, calling on Hindutva outfits to do their duty while the government fulfils its responsibilities.

ISRO Kulasekarapattinam spaceport to see first SSLV launch in 2027

During this year, ISRO has planned a series of launches including GSLV, a commercial satellite from the USA, and unmanned test mission with humanoid as part of the Gaganyaan mission

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) SSLV will primarily support polar launches of upto 500 kg, with Indian industry involved in its production.



"All facilities will be commissioned for launch in 24 months. The first launch will take place in two years. Don't think it will be literally small in size. It will be a 500 kg satellite," Narayanan told reporters after inaugurating a new research centre at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras - 'S Ramakrishnan Centre of Excellence for Research in Fluid and Thermal Science (ISRO-IITM)'. Named after the former director of ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre and a distinguished alumnus of IIT Madras, the Centre inaugurat-

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) SSLV will primarily support polar launches of upto 500 kg, with Indian industry involved in its production

unmanned test mission with humanoid as part of the Gaganyaan mission, Narayanan told reporters.

The state-of-the-art research Centre, housed in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, will focus on critical advancements in spacecraft and launch vehicle thermal management — a key area for India's expanding space ambitions.

The centre will serve as a nodal centre for research in heat transfer, cooling systems and fluid dynamics. These are essential for the next generation of spacecraft and satellite technologies. Scientists and engineers from ISRO will work alongside faculty and researchers from IIT Madras to address complex thermal challenges in space applications.

Chennai, March 17: The Kulasekarapattinam spaceport in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, the second launch complex for ISRO outside Andhra Pradesh, will see the maiden launch with the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in 24 months, chairman of the space agency V Narayanan said Monday.

Security forces defuse IED in J&K

Srinagar: Security forces Monday averted a tragedy with the timely detection of an improvised explosive device (IED) in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district, officials said. A patrol party noticed a suspicious object on the Shopian-Anantnag road at Qaimoh in Kulgam district which turned out to be an IED, they said.



What has the state government done based on facts, figures and reality? Giving vague speeches, and commenting is a different matter but the government is not able to fulfil its accountability responsibly
SACHIN PILOT | CONGRESS LEADER

EAM MEETS HIS COUNTERPARTS FROM SWEDEN, IRELAND

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar Monday met here his counterparts from various countries including Sweden, Ireland and Ghana and discussed ways to strengthen ties. The interactions took place on a day when the three-day Raisina Dialogue – India's premier conference on geopolitics and geo-economics -- began in the national capital



of the day quote

Every district had a mafia under the previous government. We replaced that with One District, One Product so that artisans and local products get global recognition and create jobs
YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH



The department is committed to providing 24/7 reliable, affordable, and high-quality power supply to every household. A well-coordinated plan, taking a holistic view of all key elements of the power supply chain, is under implementation
OMAR ABDULLAH | CHIEF MINISTER, JAMMU AND KASHMIR



Sometimes, (we have to take a) hand loan from Reserve Bank... I paid salaries on the first by taking a hand loan of ₹4,000 crore
A REVANATH REDDY | CHIEF MINISTER, TELANGANA



POST OF THE DAY

Grok is doing what the Indian media was supposed to do – telling the truth instead of dancing to the tunes of the govt & billionaires. But let's not forget, an AI controlled by Elon Musk can just as easily change its stance if Musk's business interests align with those in power.
@Advaidism

SHORT TAKES

Mob attacks 4 foreign students; 5 arrested

Vadodara: Four international students of a private university in Gujarat's Vadodara were attacked by a mob for walking at a dargah wearing footwear, the incident a result of the victims not understanding Gujarati, police said Monday. One of the students received serious head injuries as well as wounds in the hands and leg in the attack, for which five persons have been arrested and two minors detained, an official said. As per the FIR registered at Waghodia police station Sunday night, four Parul University students hailing from Thailand, Sudan, Mozambique and United Kingdom were chased and attacked by around 10 persons at Limda village near their hostel building on the evening of March 14.

12 cops suspended for beating army officer, son

Patiala: The Punjab Police Monday suspended 12 police officials here and also initiated departmental inquiries against them after they allegedly thrashed an Army Colonel and his son here over a car parking issue. The suspended police officials are in the rank of inspectors, assistant sub-inspectors, head constables and constables. A departmental inquiry has also been initiated and will be completed within 45 days.

2 history sheeters hacked to death

Chennai: Two men with long criminal records were hacked to death at Kotturpuram here reportedly due to gang rivalry, police said Monday. The victims, identified as Arunkumar and Suresh, both aged about 25 years, were attacked by an armed gang when the duo were sleeping near a temple in Kotturpuram Sunday night. While Arunkumar was declared brought dead at the Government Royapettah Hospital.

Orry, 7 others booked for drinking at Vaishno Devi base camp

Their action evoked strong resentment among the people, with BJP and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) legislators demanding stern action against the accused



Jammu, March 17: Social media influencer Orry and seven others were booked for allegedly consuming alcohol at a hotel in Katra, the base camp for the pilgrimage to Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, police said Monday.

Their action evoked strong resentment among the people, with BJP and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) legislators demanding stern action against the accused.

The Jammu and Kashmir Police said in a statement that the eight accused were booked for "violating the law of the land" and added a team was set up to nab them for "hurting the sentiments of people".

A complaint was received at Katra police station March 15 that some guests staying at a hotel were found consuming alcohol on the premises, in violation of rules. An FIR was later registered against the eight accused. "Orhan Awatramani, Darshan Singh, Parth Raina, Ritick Singh, Rashi Dutta, Rakshita Bhogal, Shagun Kohli and Anastasiya Arzamaskina consumed liquor on the hotel premises despite being told that alcohol and non-vegetarian food were not allowed inside the property due to its proximity to the Mata Vaishno Devi shrine," a police officer said, citing the complaint.

"Sensing the gravity of the matter, instructions were issued by Senior Superintendent of Police, Reasi, Paramvir Singh to nab the miscreants and set an example of zero

tolerance of any such act at a religious place which can hurt the sentiments of people," the officer said.

Orhan Awatramani, popularly known as Orry, is a socialite and social media influencer best known for his friendship with several Bollywood stars.

Talking to reporters outside the Assembly, Leader of Opposition Sunil Sharma condemned the action of Orry and his friends and expressed confidence that the police would act appropriately against them.

BJP MLAs Baldev Sharma, Balwant Singh Mankotia, Vikram Randhawa and Devinder Kumar Manyal demanded stern action against the accused, saying meat and alcohol consumption was prohibited in the holy town.

"This is a condemnable act and will not be tolerated... The police should strengthen security and ensure that no one is able to carry wine bottles inside the holy town," Shri Maishes said. PDP legislator Waheed Ur Rehman Para said Vaishno Devi was not a tourist place and those visiting the shrine should keep in mind that their actions should not hurt the people's religious sentiments. PDP spokesperson Mohit Bhan also expressed his anger and called for action against the accused.

Rajnath flags concerns over SFJ's activities in US

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 17: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Monday conveyed to US Director of National Intelligence Tuli Gabbard India's concerns over activities of Khalistani separatist group Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) on American soil and urged her to declare it as a designated terrorist entity, sources said.

In an over 30-minute meeting at his office in the Raisina Hills, Singh also apprised Gabbard about SFJ's alleged links with Pakistani spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) as well as its "collaboration" with Babbar Khalsa militant group, and pressed for action against it, they said.

Singh flagged concerns over the SFJ, headed by Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, targeting various Hindu religious structures in the US and said such activities must be stopped, the sources said.

The SFJ is a banned organisation in India. Pannun is want-



ed by Indian probe agencies on various terror charges. Separately, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also met Gabbard.

In their talks, Singh and Gabbard explored ways to boost India-US collaboration in niche defence technologies, information sharing and integration of defence industrial supply chains.

The two leaders also reviewed bilateral strategic cooperation in the maritime domain, according to an official

readout.

The US director of national intelligence arrived in the national capital early Sunday on a two-and-a-half-day trip in the first high-level visit to India by a top official of the Donald Trump administration.

In a social media post, Singh said he was "happy" to meet the US national intelligence chief and discussed ways to further deepen the India-US partnership.

"We discussed a wide range of issues which include defence and information sharing, aiming to further deepen the India-US partnership," he said.

It is understood that the two sides also deliberated on the evolving security situation in the Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.

The defence ministry said Gabbard and Singh emphasised that "strategic security" remains a vital pillar of the India-US comprehensive global strategic cooperation.

Curfew imposed in Manipur day after tribal leader assaulted

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal/Churachandpur, March 17: Curfew was imposed in Manipur's Churachandpur Monday as a precautionary measure following clashes between Hmar and Zomi communities, a top official said.

This comes a day after a Hmar tribal leader was assaulted amidst demands from the community to identify the perpetrators.

"Curfew was imposed in Churachandpur as a precautionary measure following the clashes," the official said. "We have imposed curfew after receiving a report from Churachandpur SP indicating serious apprehension of a breach of law and order," another officer added.

"Whereas reports have been received from the Superintendent of Police, Churachandpur, indicating a serious apprehension of a breach of law and order in the district, which is likely to disturb peace and tranquillity among different communities and may lead to damage to life and public property," an order by the additional district magistrate stated.

Amritsar temple blast suspect killed in police encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 17: A suspect in the blast incident outside a temple in Amritsar was killed in an exchange of fire with police, a top officer said Monday.

Another suspect managed to flee, he said, adding that efforts were on to nab him.

A blast had occurred outside the Thakur Dwara Temple March 15 when a person hurled an explosive device towards it, damaging a portion of its wall and shattering window panes.

Police said the suspect, who was killed in the incident, was identified as Gursidak Singh, a resident of Bal village, while the other one was Vishal, a resident of Rajasansi.

Sharing details, Amritsar Police Commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar said the suspects, who were on a motorcycle, were asked to stop by a police team but they opened fire at the personnel.

Head constable Gurpreet Singh suffered a bullet injury in his left arm while one bullet hit the turban of Inspector Amolak Singh, said Bhullar. He said the accused fired five rounds at the police team which retaliated in self-defence.



Flames rise after a massive fire broke out in a warehouse and a truck located in Mohan Sarai Bairwan village, in Varanasi

2-day farmer training at Patanjali Research

AGENCIES

Haridwar, March 17: A two-day event on the topic "Regional Training for Development of Agricultural Entrepreneurship in Cultivation of Medicinal Plants" sponsored by the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) Scheme under the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India was organized in the auditorium of Patanjali Research Foundation in collaboration with Patanjali Research Foundation



and Patanjali University. In this program, emphasis was laid on conservation of medicinal plants, plantation and conservation of their natural species, as well as promotion of conservation through development of

herbal gardens.

The program started with lighting of lamps. Swami Ramdev Ji and Pujya Bal Krishna Ji welcomed the guests by presenting shawls and garlands. Divided into four sessions, this conference was attended by farmers and agricultural experts of national and regional level, who succeeded in presenting the ancient Sanjeevani of Uttarakhand on the global stage. The farmers present were guided on agriculture related topics.

3 regions, 3 development strategies

Past pulverizes but the future fascinates. If one harks back to by-gones, the other is a harbinger of hope. No wonder predictors remain in high demand, from the commoner to the cash rich and street side palmists to gold gilded astrologers, even face and forehead readers. Knowledge soaked academics and cost conscious corporates are not left behind either. They too fall back on their 'neural networks' and 'decision trees' for studiously predictive models.

One such study undertaken by a threesome of impeccable academic credentials sizes up three Indian states-Gujarat, Bihar and Tamil Nadu- and predicts their growth trajectory over the next 25 years.

The study released in February 2025 and titled "The Challenge of contrasted regional dynamics" focusses on India and has been carried out by Dr Christophe Jaffrelot, a senior fellow on India at Institut Montaigne, an independent think tank based in Paris. He is also a Senior research Fellow at CRI(Centre de Recherches Internationales) a Sciences Po Paris, Research Director at the CNRS(Centre nationale de la recherche scientifique) and professor of Indian Politics and Sociology at the Kings India Institute(London). He has been Global Scholar at Princeton University, and visiting professor at Columbia University, Yale and SAIS(John Hopkins). One needs to call a halt, lest

one exhaust the word limit of this column on introducing the distinguished author. Teaming up with him on this study is Vignesh Rajamani, a post-doctoral research fellow of Indian and Indonesian Politics at the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies, Leiden and Neil Bharadwaj who studies at Delhi University. This study has been initiated by the Institut Montaigne.

The Institut forseees the possibility of India appearing as an ideal partner in countering the emergence of a US-China duopoly and has thus chosen to explore whether it is a mere illusion or a credible prospect. Following the same methodology that it initiated to study Russian and China in 2024, it has selected four themes that captures the main challenges India must address; food security, environmental sustainability, industrial development and regionalism.

The analysis of food insecurity underscores the urgency of diversifying India's agricultural production and modernizing its value chain to combat malnutrition towards truly sustainable development. The examination of environmental transition identifies a set of priority actions to address India's triple crisis of water, air and forest degradation.

According to Marie-Pierre de Bailliencourt, managing director of the Institut, in early 2025 the analysis



has been extended to two additional challenges that will shape India's trajectory. The first examines the ambitions of the "Make in India" initiative in the light of the persistent weaknesses in the country's manufacturing sector. The second examines economic policy disparities among Indian states and their implications.

It is pertinent to note that India is as large as the European Union (EU) and, with its federal structure, has as many states as EU has Member States. Each state of the Indian Union has its own language and the Hindi belt states are the only part of the country to share a common idiom.

The report also notes the sharp contrast between the Hindi speaking North and the South. This division also lingers in a sharp political divide: while the ruling party governs many states in the north, it holds no power in the South. Going beyond the North-South dichotomy, the west also figures, in view of the key role of two of its states, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Thus it is that the study attempts

to show how three states from three different regions illustrate three development strategies-with clear implications for potential foreign partners.

The study notes that even if the Narendra Modi government has promoted centralization since it came to power in 2014, the states still have considerable margin to implement their own policies in infrastructure (roads, ports etc), education (at primary and secondary level at least), health and all sectors of the economy including agriculture and industry. Among the Hindi belt states, Bihar is known as the poorest although its situation is not terribly different from other north Indian states including Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh which with 250 million inhabitants is the largest state in India with Bihar coming next with 130 million. Bihar's development is hindered by a very rigid caste system, a low rate of literacy and lack of infrastructure. As a result the state cannot create enough jobs for its population and so Biharis tend to migrate more than Indians from any other state. "Bihar represents a case of persistent underdevelopment", the study notes.

In contrast, Gujarat, in the west, is the richest case in the country in terms of per capita wealth. Like its neighbor Maharashtra, this prosperity is largely due to its achievement in the field of industry. However this

success has tended to find expression in the development of infrastructure (roads, ports and energy-all of which are highly capital intensive domains) rather than investments in human resources, as is evident from the rather low level of education) As a result, inequalities in the state are not decreasing and Gujarat has not been in a position to promote the IT sector for which India is still known as a model abroad." The trajectory of Gujarat-which Narendra Modi presented as a "model" when he helmed the state between 2001 and 2014-represents a case of highly capital-intensive infrastructure-based industrialization", the study observes.

Tamil Nadu has also developed a very robust industrial sector, but it has relied more on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and has invested heavily in human resources. "Not only are the inequalities limited but the level of education is also well above average. This success is also seen as a model and its societal dimension is also emphasized. The state has capitalized on the egalitarian ethos of the Dravidians, the low caste locals who emancipated themselves from the Brahminical elite in the 20th century, arguing that they were the sons of the soil whereas the upper caste were Aryan invaders. Tamil Nadu is a case of human resources-based development, combining industrialization and service economy.



We're not going to have these people (Houthis) controlling which ships can go through and which ones cannot. And so your question is, how long will this go on? It will go on until they no longer have the capability to do that
MARCO RUBIO | US SECRETARY OF STATE

PERUVIAN FARMER SUES GERMAN ENERGY GIANT

A German court Monday started hearing a Peruvian farmer's case against major energy company RWE, a lawsuit arguing that global warming fuelled by the firm's historical greenhouse gas emissions ultimately poses a risk to his home.



of the day quote

Those conditions that they (Russia) have presented, it shows that they don't really want peace actually
KAJA KALLAS | EUROPEAN UNION'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHIEF

This is the strategic moment for Europe, decisions of today will shape the security of tomorrow
KESTUTIS BUDRYS | LITHUANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

It is wrong to harass those who are raising awareness against rape and oppression instead of supporting their efforts
MIRZA FAKHRI ALAMGIR | BNP SECRETARY GENERAL

SHORT TAKES

Balochistan: 5 hurt in grenade attack

Karachi: Five people including four children were injured Monday in a grenade attack on the residence of a Station House Officer (SHO) in Pakistan's Balochistan, as insurgents continued terror attacks in the restive province. The attack took place at the house of SHO Qadir Sheikh in Khuzdar, according to authorities. Khuzdar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Javed Zehri told the media that unknown assailants threw a hand grenade at the residence of the Hub City SHO, injuring his father as well as his brother's four children. "The father has been moved to Karachi for treatment while the children have been given treatment," he said, adding that the incident was being investigated. There have been a series of terror attacks in different parts of the province since militants from the banned separatist outfit Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) ambushed Jaffar Express carrying 440 passengers last week.

Ukraine's new chief of general staff

Kyiv: Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appointed Andrii Hnatov as the new chief of the general staff of Ukraine's armed forces, as the country looks to restructure and strengthen its military while its engaged in combat in Russia's Kursk region and facing increasing pressure in Donetsk. Hnatov replaced Anatolii Barhylevych, who held the position since February 2024. The appointment was announced by the general staff via its Telegram channel Sunday. "We are systematically transforming the Armed Forces of Ukraine to enhance their combat effectiveness," Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said. Barhylevych will now serve as the general inspector of Ukraine's Defense Ministry. Umerov emphasized that Barhylevych would "remain part of the team," overseeing military standards and strengthening discipline in the army.

Migrant shipwreck leaves seven dead

Nicosia: State-run television in Cyprus reported Monday that seven bodies have been recovered and two people had been rescued after a boat carrying migrants sank off the south coast of the island. Officials from the Joint Rescue Coordination Center confirmed that a rescue effort was ongoing, involving a military helicopter and rescue vessels and a drone, but could not officially comment on casualties, citing the early stage of the operation. The agency confirmed that it was still searching for people believed to be missing.

Trump, Putin talks today

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 17: US President Donald Trump will speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin Tuesday as efforts continue to end the war in Ukraine, a move that could represent a possible pivot point in the conflict and an opportunity for Trump to continue reorienting American foreign policy.

Trump disclosed the upcoming conversation to reporters while flying from Florida to Washington on Air Force One Sunday evening, while the Kremlin confirmed Putin's participation Monday morning.

"We will see if we have something to announce maybe by Tuesday. I will be speaking to President Putin Tuesday," Trump said. "A lot of work's been done over the weekend. We want to see if we can bring that war to an end."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov Monday morning confirmed the plans for the two leaders to speak Tuesday, but refused to give details, saying that "we never get ahead of events" and "the contents of conversations between two presidents are not subject to any prior discussion."

European allies are wary of Trump's affinity for Putin and his hardline stance toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who faced sharp criticism when he visited the Oval Office a little more than two weeks ago.

Although Russia failed in its initial goal to topple Ukraine with its invasion three years



ago, it still controls large swaths of the country.

Trump said land and power plants are part of the conversation around bringing the war to a close.

"We will be talking about land. We will be talking about power plants," he said, a process he described as "dividing up certain assets."

Trump special envoy Steve Witkoff recently visited Moscow last week to advance negotiations.

Russia illegally annexed four Ukrainian regions after launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 — the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east and the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the southeast of the country — but doesn't fully control any of the four.

Last year, Putin listed Kyiv's withdrawal of troops from all four regions as one of the de-

European allies are wary of Trump's affinity for Putin and his hardline stance toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who faced sharp criticism when he visited the US

mands for peace. In 2014, the Kremlin also annexed Crimea from Ukraine. In the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region, Moscow controls the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant — the largest in Europe. The plant has repeatedly been caught in the crossfire since the invasion. The International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN body, has frequently expressed alarm about the plant amid fears of a

potential nuclear catastrophe.

During his conversation with reporters on Air Force One, Trump said he was pushing forward with his plans for tariffs April 2 despite recent disruption in the stock market and nervousness about the economic impact.

"April 2 is a liberating day for our country," he said. "We're getting back some of the wealth that very, very foolish presidents gave away because they had no clue what they were doing."

Trump has occasionally changed course on some tariff plans, such as with Mexico, but he said he had no intention of doing so when it comes to reciprocal tariffs.

"They charge us and we charge them," he said. "Then in addition to that, on autos, on steel, on aluminum, we're going to have some additional tariffs."

Carney meets European allies amid Trump tensions

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Paris, March 17: New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney met with French President Emmanuel Macron Monday, seeking support from one of Canada's oldest allies as US President Donald Trump continues to attack Canada's sovereignty and economy.

This is Carney's first official foreign trip since he was sworn in March 14. He will next land in London where he will sit down with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and King Charles III, the head of state in Canada.

Why Paris and London? Carney has deliberately chosen the two European capital cities that shaped Canada's early existence. During his swearing-in ceremony, he noted the country was built on the bedrock of three peoples, French, English and Indigenous, and said Canada is fundamentally different from America and will "never, ever, in any way shape or form, be part of the United States."

"I want to ensure that France, and the whole of Europe, works enthusiastically with Canada, the most European of non-European coun-

tries, and at the same time resolutely North American, determined, like you, to maintain the most positive relations possible with the United States," Carney said Monday, standing next to Macron.

Macron and Carney appeared in front of reporters before the talks but did not take questions, a sign the French president might not want to upset Trump by siding with Canada.

Macron said tariffs only bring inflation but did not address Trump's attacks on Canada.

"We both believe that fair trade which respects international rules is a good thing for the prosperity of everyone and is certainly more effective than tariffs, which create inflation and damage supply chains and our economic integration," Macron said.

Since Trump came to office, he has imposed whopping tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum and repeatedly commented on turning Canada into the 51st state, infuriating Canadians and sparking a call to boycott US products across the country. He is threatening to impose tariffs on all Canadian products on April 2.



GET WELL SOON: Daian Gusher, right, of Argentina, and Massimiliano Varrese, of Italy, dance Tango for Pope Francis outside the Agostino Gemelli polyclinic in Rome
Pic: AP/PTI

Rights groups seek answers on deportation despite court order

REUTERS

Washington, March 17: Civil rights groups Monday sought 'immediate clarification' from the Trump administration about weekend flights deporting alleged Venezuelan gang members from the US despite a judge's order, saying the US government may have violated the court.

In a filing overnight, the American Civil Liberties Union and others called on the US District Court in Washington to compel President Donald Trump's administration to provide information on whether any flight took off after the judge's written or oral orders were issued as well as other details about the flight's timing.

"Whether or not the planes had cleared US territory, the US retained custody at least until the planes landed and the individuals were turned over to foreign governments," the ACLU and Democracy Forward Foundation wrote.

Over the weekend, the Trump administration said it had deported more than 200 Venezuelans, saying in an extraordinary statement that a judge did not have the authority to block its actions.

As Tesla tanks, Musk's hand-picked board chair is doing just fine

REUTERS

Sydney, March 17: Billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk is drawing political flak as he champions right-wing causes in Europe and leads President Donald Trump's slashing of the US federal workforce. The controversy is pummeling sales at Tesla, the electric-vehicle giant Musk runs. Its stock has plunged — down 15% on March 10 alone — and investors are yelping in pain.

Sixteen time zones away, the woman who ostensibly supervises CEO Musk is faring well: Robyn Denholm, hand-picked by Musk to run Tesla's board, is the best-paid chair at any public company in the US.

The Australian businesswoman has been so richly compensated as Tesla chair that a shareholder lawsuit recently forced her to return part of her



fortune. In a separate and ongoing case, a Delaware judge criticized Denholm for okaying a payout for Musk that, if approved by a higher court, would set a record for CEO compensation: \$56 billion.

Relatively unknown when she assumed the chair in 2018, the 61-year-old former accountant has since become recognized as the chief defender of the hotly contested pay package. Denholm's effort to ensure the payout included a court appearance in which she

described her own pay from Tesla as "life changing."

Her Tesla compensation since she first joined the board in 2014 has totaled about \$682 million in cash and stock, based on recent market prices, according to a Reuters analysis of regulatory filings and research done at the request of the news organization by Equilar, a California-based compensation and governance specialist.

The figure, which varies with market fluctuations, has grown rapidly because of the surge in the value of Tesla stock during her time as chair. It is the highest compensation for any director at the biggest public U.S. companies, the analysis shows, and is exponentially more than the \$3 million a year Denholm has said she previously earned as a telecoms executive.

Despite the recent fall in Tesla's shares, Denholm already has banked a fortune: To date, she has cashed in about \$532 million worth of Tesla shares, according to Equilar, which analyzed dozens of regulatory filings regarding her compensation and stock sales over her time on the board. Some of those sales came as recently as early March, before the stock's decline accelerated last week.

With her wealth has come criticism of her compensation — and pointed questions about whether the oversight is compromising her oversight of Tesla and the billionaire who enriched her.

In a ruling last year, the Delaware judge who rejected Musk's compensation package suggested that Denholm's lucrative board pay has hindered her ability to perform her duties. "Ordinary, market-rate compensation

does not compromise a director's independence," wrote the judge, Chancellor Kathaleen McCormick of the Delaware Court of Chancery. "Outsized director compensation can."

Denholm declined to be interviewed for this story. In a statement, a spokesperson for Denholm said her pay is fair and in line with the gains other Tesla shareholders have reaped because of the stock's growth over the years.

"Tesla's Director Compensation program is 100% aligned with shareholder interests," the statement read. "She only gets paid if the shareholders get paid." Tesla and Musk didn't respond to requests for comment for this report. The billionaire CEO and the Tesla board have argued their high compensation is fair because the company's stock has outperformed corporate America.



Credit spreads may face pressure as institutional investors push back on pricing, demanding a higher premium to compensate for the liquidity crunch and supply glut
VENKATKRISHNAN SRINIVASAN |
FOUNDER AND MANAGING PARTNER,
ROCKFORT FINCAP

AIRTEL PAYMENTS SEE TRANSACTION FEAT

Airtel Payments Bank has surpassed one billion transactions on its platform in January 2025, reflecting a 47 per cent year-on-year growth in transaction volume across businesses, according to a top official. Anubrata Biswas, MD and CEO at Airtel Payments Bank told PTI that the "milestone" underscores increasing adoption of digital banking and payment solutions



of the day **Quote**

Railways is fulfilling its expenses from its own income because of good performance. Overall, the financial condition is good and we are trying to improve it on constant basis
ASHWINI VAISHNAW | RAILWAYS MINISTER



By entering new markets, including Faridabad, Bhubaneswar, Assam and Manipur, we aim to bring Kisna's exquisite craftsmanship to a wider audience, making high-quality jewellery more accessible than ever
PARAG SHAH | CEO, KISNA DIAMOND & GOLD JEWELLERY



Our expansion to 100 cities strengthens our reach and allows us to better serve growing consumer needs in underserved geographies
AMITESH JHA | CEO, SWIGGY INSTAMART



Exports shrink; trade deficit narrows sharply

The change in trade trend was due to volatility in petroleum prices and global uncertainties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 17: India's exports declined for the fourth month in a row in February to \$36.91 billion due to volatility in petroleum prices and global uncertainties, even as the country's trade deficit narrowed sharply.

The country's exports stood at \$41.41 billion in the same month a year ago.

The trade deficit in February narrowed to \$14.05 billion as the country's imports reduced to \$50.96 billion in February, as against \$60.92 billion a year ago, data released by the commerce ministry showed.

Asked about the trade deficit, estimated at its lowest level since August 2021, an official said, "These are quick estimates. We are looking into the details of (the) fall in imports."

Factors, including the high-base effect in February 2024 and change in petroleum prices and precious metals, may be behind the \$10-billion fall in imports from February 2024 to February 2025, the official said.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist and Head - Research & Outreach, ICRA Ltd, said, "India's merchandise trade deficit compressed to a 42-month low \$14.1 billion in February 2025 from \$19.5 billion in February 2024, largely explained by a compression in imports of



India's merchandise trade deficit compressed to a 42-month low \$14.1 billion in February 2025 from \$19.5 billion in February 2024, largely explained by a compression in imports of crude oil, gold and silver
ADITI NAYAR | CHIEF ECONOMIST AND HEAD (RESEARCH & OUTREACH), ICRA

- Exports dip for fourth straight month in Feb to \$36.91bn
- Imports slide to \$50.96bn
- Trade deficit at its lowest level since August 2021 at \$14.05bn

crude oil, gold and silver. A portion of the YoY decline in merchandise exports can be attributed to the base year effect related to the leap month".

She said the trade deficit was also significantly lower than the average of over \$23 billion during the first 10 months of FY25. Cumulatively, during April-February this fiscal year, the merchandise and services exports rose 6.24 per cent to \$750.53 billion as against \$706.43 billion for the same period last fiscal year.

Non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports in February 2025 were \$28.57 billion compared to \$29.99 billion in February 2024.

Non-petroleum, non-gems &

jewellery (gold, silver & precious metals) imports in February 2025 were \$35.02 billion compared to \$33.96 billion in February 2024.

Top-five export destinations, in terms of change in value, exhibiting positive growth in April-February 2024-25 are the US (9.1 per cent), the UAE (5.19 per cent), the UK (12.47 per cent), Japan (21.67 per cent), and the Netherlands (3.68 per cent).

India's merchandise shipments witnessed a decline in value terms between November and February. Merchandise exports were \$36.43 billion in January compared to \$37.32 billion a year ago. In December, it stood at \$38.01 billion against \$38.39 billion in December 2023, while its outward shipments declined to \$32.11 billion in November 2024 from \$33.75 billion in the year-ago month.

Integrate eco-friendly, socially responsible practices: Kar

Desia Social Resorts is a community oriented ecotourism initiative which aims to bring maximum benefit of tourism to the local communities at the grassroots level and minimum negative impact of tourism for environment and local culture. The affordable stays, quality service and serene destinations have made the resorts a preferable place for travel lovers. The man behind this successful venture is Yugabrat Kar, managing director, an adventurer himself who brought tribal culture and traditional hospitality under one roof over the past two decades. In an interaction with Orissa POST, Kar talks about his experience in the industry. Excerpts...



■ Can you brief us about your early life and what made you enter the ecotourism industry?

■ Growing up in Puri, I was always fascinated by the stories of travellers and wanted to be like them. Like many middle-class families, my parents encouraged me to pursue a stable career. I studied mechanical engineering and worked as an engineer in a multinational company, travelling across rural Odisha to sell agricultural pumps. However, my passion for travelling and exploring new cultures led me to leave the job and pursue entrepreneurship in tourism. The experience I gained working in rural Odisha has become the core of my business today. For over 30 years, I have been committed to responsible tourism, empowering local communities and promoting cultural heritage. I believe tourism can be a powerful tool for positive change, and I'm dedicated to making a difference in my community. So, I must say that it is destiny that brings me here.

■ Travelling trend on social media has been a major driver behind ecotourism growth; do you also witness this craze in Odisha?
■ Absolutely! Social media

has played a significant role in promoting ecotourism in Odisha. The state's pristine beaches, lush forests, and diverse wildlife have become increasingly popular among travellers, especially younger generations. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube have created a buzz around Odisha's off-the-beaten-path destinations, such as the Bhitarkanika National Park, Simlipal National Park, and the Koraput valley. As a result, we've seen a significant surge in eco-tourism activities, such as bird watching, trekking, and village tours. This trend has also encouraged local communities to develop sustainable tourism initiatives, creating new economic opportunities and promoting conservation efforts. Also, there is a lot of greenwashing in the name of eco, sustainable or responsible tourism as it has been a marketing tool. Hence travellers should do proper research before believing social media posts.

showcasing Odisha's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty to travellers from around the world. The journey has not been without its challenges, but the support of my team, partners, and the local community has been instrumental in our success. We've received numerous accolades and recognition for our commitment to responsible tourism. As for expansion plans, we are developing new eco-lodges in unexplored regions of the state, offering unique experiences and promoting community-based tourism. After Desia Duduma and Desia Deomali now we have just started a small home stay Desia Chilika nest near Satapada. Also we like to expand the work of our Odisha Ecotourism Foundation to other destinations for making plastic free destinations like we are doing it now at Neeladri beach and Satapada tourist jetties.

■ As an entrepreneur, what advice do you have for newcomers in this business?

■ As an entrepreneur, I do have some advice for newcomers. Firstly, ensure that your passion for tourism is aligned with a clear purpose. For me, it's about promoting responsible tourism and supporting local communities. Secondly, differentiate your offerings by showcasing authentic, local experiences that reflect the character of your destination. Last but not the least, integrate eco-friendly and socially responsible practices into your business model to ensure long-term viability. By embracing these principles, newcomers can build a successful and responsible tourism business that benefits both people and the planet.

■ There must be varying expectations of customers from your establishment. How do you tackle their demands and complaints?

■ Guests who travel with us are mostly aware of our products and the services we offer. Once the communication is clear before the tour starts, the guests know what to expect. Hence we always ensure that we deliver the things which we have promised and there is no such misunderstanding about expectations.

■ How has your journey been so far? Do you have any expansion plans in pipeline?

■ My journey in the industry has been incredibly rewarding. Over the past 27 years, I've had the privilege of

Banks write off NPAs worth ₹16.35L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 17: Banks have written off non-performing assets (NPAs) or bad loans worth about ₹16.35 lakh crore in last 10 financial years, Parliament was informed Monday.

Highest amount of ₹2,36,265 crore was written off during financial year 2018-19 while NPAs worth ₹58,786 crore were written off in 2014-15, the lowest in the last 10 years.

During 2023-24, banks wrote off bad loans of ₹1,70,270 crore, lower than ₹2,16,324 crore done in the previous financial year.

Banks write off non-performing assets (NPAs), including those in respect of which full provisioning has been made on completion of four years, as per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines and policy approved by banks' boards, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a reply in the Lok Sabha. Such write-offs do not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers and therefore, it does not benefit the borrower, she said.

Banks continue pursuing their recovery actions initiated against borrowers under the various recovery mechanism available to them, such as filing of a suit in civil courts or

in Debts Recovery Tribunals, action under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, filing of cases in the National Company Law Tribunal under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, etc, she said.

As per RBI data, as December 31, 2024, scheduled commercial banks had 29 unique borrower companies, which have been classified as NPAs and each of them have outstanding of ₹1,000 crore and above, she said, adding aggregate outstanding in these accounts were ₹61,027 crore.

Wholesale price inflation inches up to 2.38%

The marginal increase in WPI was witnessed after three consecutive months of decline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 17: Wholesale price inflation marginally rose to 2.38 per cent in February due to expensive manufactured food items like vegetables oil and beverages, government data released Monday showed.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based inflation was 2.31 per cent in January. It was 0.2 per cent in February 2024.

The marginal increase in WPI was witnessed after three consecutive months of decline. The month-over-month change in WPI for the month of February stood at 0.06 per cent as compared to January.

Positive rate of inflation in February, 2025 is primarily due to the increase in prices of manufacture of food products, food articles, other manufacturing, non-food articles and manufacturing of textiles, etc, according to the statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

As per the data, inflation in manufactured food products



■ While healthy crop output and an elevated base is expected to lead to further cooling in the WPI-food inflation in the near term, higher-than-normal temperatures pose an upside risk to the food inflation trajectory
RAHUL AGRAWAL | SENIOR ECONOMIST, ICRA

rose to 11.06 per cent, vegetable oil rose by 33.59 per cent, while beverages increased marginally to 1.66 per cent during the month.

Overall, the manufactured products index increased by

0.42 per cent in February. However, prices of vegetables cooled with potato prices dropping to 27.54 per cent from 74.28 per cent during the month. Besides, prices of milk moderated at 1.58 per cent from 5.40 per cent in the previous month.

Fruits and onion prices were still ruling high with 20 per cent and 48.05 per cent inflation respectively.

The fuel and power category witnessed a deflation of 0.71 per cent in February, against a deflation of 2.78 per cent in the previous month.

Retail inflation data released Wednesday showed that Con-

Indices snap losing run

Sensex bounces back 341 pts on gains in banking shares, global rally

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 17: Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by 341 points Monday, snapping its five-day losing streak following buying in banking stocks and a sharp rally in global shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 341.04 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 74,169.95 as 19 of its constituents ended in the green and 11 in the red. In intra-day trade, the benchmark jumped 547.44 points or 0.74 per cent to 74,376.35.

The NSE Nifty rose by 111.55 points or 0.50 per cent to 22,508.75.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports, ICICI Bank, Zomato and UltraTech Cement were among the biggest gainers. However, ITC, Nestle, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards.

Shares of IndusInd Bank jumped 5.30 per cent in intra-day trade after the Reserve Bank Saturday assured customers that the firm remains



'well-capitalised', even as it directed the bank's board to complete remedial action relating to an estimated ₹2,100 crore accounting discrepancy within this month. The stock finally ended at ₹676.95, up 0.72 per cent.

On Thursday, the Sensex declined by 200.85 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 73,828.91. The Nifty fell 73.30 points or 0.33 per cent to settle at 22,397.20.

