



## Tamannaah's take

Actor Tamannaah Bhatia addresses the ongoing nepotism debate, offering a candid perspective on the issue

LEISURE | P2



## Pentagon meeting

Elon Musk holds a meeting at Pentagon as Trump calls for prosecutions of officials leaking false information about his visit

INTERNATIONAL | P10



## Coal milestone

India crosses a record milestone of 1bn tonnes of coal production in current fiscal, showing its commitment to energy security

BUSINESS | P11



## Conor for presidency

UFC fighter Conor McGregor registers for Ireland Presidential polls, promises his country would protect citizens from migration

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## Justice Tandon appointed Chief Justice of Orissa HC

**NEW DELHI:** Justice Harish Tandon was Friday appointed as the next Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court, the Law Ministry said. He is at present a judge of the Calcutta High Court. The Supreme Court collegium had earlier this month recommended the elevation of Justice Tandon as the Chief Justice of the Orissa High Court. The office of the Orissa HC Chief Justice fell vacant in January following the retirement of Justice Chakradhari Sharan Singh. Justice Tandon was appointed as a judge of the Calcutta High Court in April 2010 and has been functioning there since then.

## Thunderstorms likely in 12 dists

**BHUBANESWAR:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said thunderstorms with lightning, hail and gusty winds would lash several parts of Odisha Saturday. In a bulletin Friday evening, the weather office said thunderstorms with wind speeds reaching 50-60 kmph would occur in some places of Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Bhadrak, Balasore, Sundargarh, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul and Deogarh districts March 22. Heavy rainfall and thunderstorms with lightning would occur in Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Balasore and Bhadrak districts, it said. The IMD has issued an 'orange warning' (be prepared) for these districts. Similarly, thunderstorms with wind speeds reaching 40-50 kmph is expected in Nuapada, Bolangir, Bargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Boudh, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Khurda, Puri, Ganjam, Malkangiri, Koraput, Rayagada, Gajapati, Kalahandi and Nabarangpur during Saturday afternoon or evening, the IMD said.



**GLOBAL FLIGHT TURMOIL:** London's Heathrow Airport was shut Friday after a huge fire at a nearby substation knocked out its power, stranding passengers around the world and angering airlines who questioned how such crucial infrastructure could fail (Report on P10)

## Union minister seeks SC action on HC ruling in sexual assault case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 21:** Union minister Annapurna Devi Friday said she 'completely disagreed' with Allahabad High Court's ruling on what constituted rape or attempt to rape and urged the Supreme Court to intervene in the matter.

The high court, in an order earlier this week, ruled that mere grabbing of breasts and snapping pyjama strings did not amount to rape or attempt to rape but fell under the ambit of assault or use of criminal force against any woman with the intent to disrobe or compel her to be naked.

"I am completely against this decision and the Supreme Court should take serious note of it. Such a ruling has no place in a civilised society," Devi, the Union women and child development minister, told PTI Videos outside Parliament.

She also expressed concern over the broader implications of the judgment, warning that it could send the wrong message to society.

"Somewhere, this will have a negative impact on society and we will discuss this matter further," she added. The case involved an 11-year-old girl in Uttar Pradesh's Kasganj, who was assaulted by two accused, identified as Pawan and Akash, in 2021.

# Cabinet nod for Odisha State Highways Authority

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** The state Cabinet led by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has approved the proposal for Odisha State Road Policy, 2025 designed for effective implementation and monitoring of the road network across the state.

The Chief Minister said the policy will provide a framework for a quality road network, which will ensure a well-organised system for proper development of roads.

The Cabinet also approved the Odisha State Highways Authority Bill, 2025 to meet the increasing need for efficient and safe road infrastructure in the state.

It provides for the formation of Odisha State Highways Au-

thority, an autonomous body to ensure the overall development of major road projects.

Although the Cabinet approved these new policies Thursday, the Chief Minister tabled the Cabinet decision in the Assembly Friday.

The Odisha State Road Policy also focuses on bridge development in the state. In this policy, a 'Comprehensive Online Bridge Information System-BIS' will be developed to collect detailed information of all the bridges in the state on an online platform.

Annual assessment of the bridges will be done through modern processes. The assessment report of the condition of the bridges will be updated regularly in the online Bridge Information System and Odisha

Road Asset Management System. Majhi said road construction and maintenance are very important to promote the economic development of the state.

The state government, he said, is planning to implement various high-value projects in a smooth and comprehensive manner with a target of developing 75,000 km of roads across the state into a world-class road network.

The Cabinet also approved an outlay of ₹27,019.25 crore for the implementation of the Centre's Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and the state-sponsored Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) for a period of five years - 2025-26 to 2029-30.

The state government, in January, had signed an MoU

with the National Health Authority to implement the AB-PMJAY in convergence with the state's GJAY.

Under the new integrated scheme, 3.46 crore people of about 1.03 crore families will get ₹5 lakh per family per year, and female members will get an additional cashless treatment benefit of ₹5 lakh, the Chief Minister said.

In addition, the Centre's Ayushman Vay-Vandana Yojana will also be implemented in Odisha for all persons aged 70 years and above, irrespective of their economic status. This will enable them to get free treatment worth ₹5 lakh per family per year, he said.

The Cabinet has approved a total of 10 proposals from seven departments.

## Row over cash at judge's residence

*The alleged discovery of a huge amount of cash from the official residence of Delhi High Court's Justice Yashwant Varma has raised important questions on the issue of corruption in the judiciary, considered the third pillar of democracy. While the ruling BJP reacted cautiously to the development, saying the party should not comment on the affairs of courts, the Opposition Congress said the issue cannot be hushed up by a mere transfer and asserted that it is important to find out whose money it is to maintain the country's faith in the judiciary*

PNN & PTI

**New Delhi, March 21:** Following reports of alleged cash discovery from sitting Delhi HC judge Yashwant Varma's official home, the Supreme Court Friday said the Delhi HC Chief Justice had initiated an in-house inquiry against him and

the proposal to transfer him to the Allahabad High Court was separate.

The purported discovery of a huge stash of cash happened following a fire at Varma's Lutyens Delhi residence March 14, prompting the Delhi fire department personnel to rush to the spot and douse it.

Delhi Fire Services Chief Atul Garg, however, Friday denied claims of the cash discovery by the fire fighters.

The incident created ripples in the legal circuit, with many voices calling for the judge's resignation while criticising the Supreme Court collegium decision to transfer him.

To put to rest the supposed conjectures, the top court issued a statement which read, "There is misinformation and rumours being spread with regard to the incident at the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma."

MORE P9

## Teams eye 300-mark as new IPL season gets under way

REUTERS

**New Delhi, March 21:** Bowlers have been allowed to use saliva to shine the ball in the Indian Premier League but it is the batters who will be salivating at the prospect of breaching the 300-mark when the world's richest Twenty20 league gets under way Saturday.

Lifting the saliva ban, a COVID-19 legacy, will allow the fast bowlers to try and generate some reverse swing in a format which treats them as cannon fodder.

But the continuation of the Impact Player rule, which allows teams to play an extra batter substituting a bowler in a match, will ensure it will rain fours and sixes across 13 venues over the next two months.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's 263-5 against Pune Warriors stood as the league's high-



est total for a decade but that 2013 mark was bettered four times in last year's IPL - three times by Sunrisers Hyderabad alone.

Hyderabad's 287-3 against Bengaluru is the new benchmark but Nathan Leamon, a strategy consultant with a fencing champions Kolkata Knight Riders, is among those who believe 300 is achievable.

"We have already seen a huge escalation in scores over the last two years," the former England lead analyst told ESPNcricinfo.

## Apples find new home in desert state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 21:** Traditionally associated with cool climates like in the Himalayan states of Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh, apples are now also flourishing in the most unlikely place one could imagine - Rajasthan.

The northwestern state, known for its scorching summers and dry, sandy terrain, is now home to the delicious fruit, thanks to the districts of Sikar and Jhunjhunu, where they are blooming. Santosh Khedar, a farmer from Beri village in Sikar, never imagined that a single apple sapling she received in 2015 from the National Innovation Foundation in Gujarat would transform her farm.

Today, her orchard produces over 6,000 kg of apples each season, challenging long-held beliefs about their growing

conditions. The family, which had traditionally grown lemons, guavas, and sweet limes on their 1.25-acre land, was initially doubtful about growing apples in the desert heat.

"Neighbours dismissed our idea, thinking apples couldn't possibly grow in such extreme conditions," recalls Santosh.

Like the rest of the state, the two districts experience scorching summers with temperatures soaring above 40 degrees Celsius. But Santosh was determined to take the risk and proceeded with her plan. "We watered the plant and used organic fertilisers as needed," recalls Santosh. And, a year later, the risk paid off.

"We were surprised to see apples growing. By the second year, it yielded nearly 40 kg of fruit," says Santosh with a confident grin. Encouraged by the results, the family expanded their orchard to 100 trees using



grafting techniques. "Since we have an organic farming certificate from the Rajasthan Organic Certification Agency, we (now) sell our apples at ₹150 per kg," says Rahul, Santosh's son.

The secret to this success lies in the HRMN-99 apple variety, specially developed to with-

stand high temperatures.

"This variety can survive in regions where summer temperatures exceed 40 °C," says Rahul, who studied agriculture.

Now, the family barely needs extra water to water the tree. Horticulture experts confirm that apple trees require minimal irrigation once they ma-

ture. "By the time a tree is five years old, it only needs watering once every two weeks," explains Madan Lal Jat, deputy director of horticulture.

Flowering starts in February, and the apples are ready for harvest by June. Sceptics who once doubted Santosh's efforts are now eager to follow her example. "Those who laughed at me are now asking for saplings," she says, beaming with pride.

Inspired by her success, a farmer in Katrathal village has also planted 50 apple trees.

Experts believe this is just the beginning of a larger shift.

"A decade ago, farmers in Barmer started growing dates and pomegranates. Now, we even have strawberries growing in Chittorgarh and Bhilwara," Jat notes and adds that apple orchard cultivation can spread to even more regions in the next five years.

# leisure



## TOM CRUISE TO GET BFI FELLOWSHIP

Hollywood star Tom Cruise is set to receive BFI Fellowship, the highest accolade from the British Film Institute. Cruise, known for his work in projects like the *Mission Impossible* franchise will be presented with the accolade May 12 at the BFI Chair's Dinner in London.

## PETE DAVIDSON SPARKS ROMANCE RUMOURS

Pete Davidson is reportedly dating model Elsie Hewitt, as the couple was seen enjoying a romantic vacation in Palm Beach, Florida. Davidson, known for his high-profile relationships, is now connected to Hewitt, a model and social media personality with a notable Instagram following.



## FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
You may be impetuous today, which may lead to unforeseen results. You may be in a hurry and complete work which has been pending for a long time. You will find the time to make long-term plans. Ganesha says you will rectify your past mistakes.

**TAURUS**  
This is, health wise a bad day for you. Ganesha urges you to take special care and not to do anything that invites illness or discomfort. The least you can do is to ensure that you do not over exert or get into situations that generate tension and anxiety. Be careful about the food you eat. Make sure that the water you drink is potable and safe. Do not expose yourself to extreme heat or cold. Act sensibly.

**GEMINI**  
Interactions with member of the opposite sex may yield positive and pleasurable results today. Public servants will get the much-needed encouragement and moral support from bosses and family members. In academics, you will be able to solve whatever problem you set your mind to.

**CANCER**  
Today, you are likely to remain open-minded while dealing with others. However, it doesn't mean that you will always be soft on others. Later in the day, your approach may be different and stubborn. In the evening, you will enjoy the company of family and friends.

**LEO**  
You will be in a very good mood today. You will inspire others to achieve substantial things in life. While you have been looking to take on an extremely challenging project, you have been unable to find the right opening so far. You ought to start such projects today, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
If being humanitarian needed a definite physical form, you are most likely to be nominated. Such is the mix of values and practicality today, says Ganesha. Devise strategies to achieve more productivity. See the bigger picture, says Ganesha. This is not difficult considering you have a broad vision - with or without the glasses.

**LIBRA**  
Wedding bells are ringing, and you are about to get very lucky! Ganesha foresees a plethora of marriage proposals coming your way on this day full of special occasions, as you turn up your charisma and sweep the enthralled opposite sex off their feet with your charm. You may end up spending quite a bit on fun and entertainment, but it's all for a good cause.

**SCORPIO**  
A happening day where a lot may happen today, suggests Ganesha. Grey hairs will teach valuable lessons, so keep your ears open to bosses and elders. Seniors will extend their best possible cooperation to you. Stay clear of courtrooms, warns Ganesha, lest the legalities sink you deep.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
The pressing needs of your loved ones call for extra attention today. You may have a few family friends over for lunch or dinner, and end up chatting a good deal with them. Ganesha says an intimate tête-à-tête with your better half would fare you well.

**CAPRICORN**  
Money will flow in from various quarters today, but it will also find its way out of your pockets. Keep a tab on your income and more on your expenses, says Ganesha. Situation at work may get a little trying, but you will overcome all problems by means of your innate and acquired skills, and past experience.

**AQUARIUS**  
Most of the time it is your way or no other way, especially when you charging towards your goal. Today, you will push your limits to achieve what you have desired. You are talented, hard working, creative, and icing on the cake is your luck which is favouring you big time.

**PISCES**  
For those in the creative, marketing or advertising fields, today will likely bring about an important milestone on their path to progress, says Ganesha. Your creativity and ingenuity will be at their peak. Remembering that confidence is the key to success will keep you from shying away from challenges, which when surmounted will bring you substantial gains.

## Ranbir's 'first wife'

**Mumbai:** Ranbir Kapoor is a devoted husband and a loving father, but did you know Alia Bhatt is not his first wife? Before you get confused, let's clarify—this is a hilarious story from the actor himself!

During a 2022 interview with *Mashable India*, Ranbir recalled one of his craziest fan experiences. He shared that in his early days, a girl took her admiration to an extreme level. "I never met her, but my watchman told me she came with a pandit and married my gate," he laughed.

The actor explained that at the bungalow where he lived with his parents, the girl performed a wedding ritual at the entrance in his absence. "There was tika on the gate and flowers. I was out of town at the time, so that was quite crazy. I haven't met my first wife yet, but I look forward to it someday," he joked.

Ranbir and Alia's love story began on the sets of *Brahmastro: Part One*. They tied the knot in April 2022 and are proud parents to their daughter, Raha, who turned two in November last year. The couple is currently filming *Love and War*, a Sanjay Leela Bhansali period drama, alongside Vicky Kaushal.



AGENCIES



## Kim: Marriage is a concept

**Mumbai:** Actress Kim Sharma recently shared her views on societal expectations surrounding marriage and traditional roles. In a candid conversation, she expressed that adhering to societal

norms, such as sticking to one partner or playing conventional roles in marriage, is unnecessary.

"Marriage is a concept," Kim stated, adding that people should be free to marry as many times as they like. She questioned the traditional expectations placed on women—cooking, managing the household and raising children—suggesting that such roles should be a choice, not a compulsion. "If

you want to do it for a few years, do it. If you want to do it forever, fine. If you don't want to do it at all, that's okay too," she emphasised.

When asked about marriage and motherhood, Kim firmly dismissed the idea, particularly the responsibility-

ity of preparing meals for children. Addressing the fear of loneliness in old age, she argued that children are not a guaranteed source of support. "I want to see how many kids actually take care of their parents. Most are too busy with their own lives," she remarked, highlighting the reality that parental sacrifices often go unreciprocated.

AGENCIES

## Tamannaah on nepotism

**Mumbai:** Actress Tamannaah Bhatia recently addressed the ongoing nepotism debate, offering a candid perspective on the subject.

Reflecting on her journey in the industry, Tamannaah questioned the labels given to individuals based on their backgrounds, stating, "What do they call people like me? Those with a film background are called 'nepo' kids, and those from outside are called 'outsiders.'" So, what do they call people like me? I've figured it out — they call us "fan-made."

Speaking about the *Zee Cine Awards*, the *Baahubali* actress added, "It's only the beginning of the year, but it has already been creatively exciting—balancing different industries, exploring unique roles, and breaking stereotypes. Through it all, the unwavering love from my fans has been my biggest strength. *Zee Cine Awards*, with FANtertainment, truly celebrates this bond between artists and their fans, and I can't wait to be a part of it."

Meanwhile, on the work front, Tamannaah's most recent appearance was in the Netflix movie *Sikandar Ka Mukaddar*, which revolves around a diamond heist and the involvement of three key suspects. Tamannaah played Kamini Singh, alongside Avinash Tiwary and Jimmy Sheirgill. She is next set to appear in the horror thriller *Odela 2*, in which she plays the role of a sadhvi.

IANS



## From box office failure to wealthiest actress

**Mumbai:** Success in Bollywood is unpredictable—some actors rise instantly, while others take time to establish themselves.

But did you know one of Bollywood's biggest superstars began her journey with a box office disaster? Despite an underwhelming debut, she soared to fame with a Salman Khan blockbuster and is now

among the richest actresses in the industry—far wealthier than her husband!

We're talking about Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. With an estimated net worth of 900 crore, she is reportedly four times richer than Abhishek Bachchan, whose net worth is around 280 crore.

Crowned Miss World in 1994, Aishwarya was a household name before stepping into Bollywood. Initially offered *Raja Hindustani* oppo-

site Aamir Khan, she chose to focus on modeling before debuting in *Aur Pyaar Ho Gaya* (1997) with Bobby Deol. The film flopped, but everything changed in 1999 with *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam*, where she starred alongside Salman Khan and Ajay Devgn. The film catapulted her to stardom.

She later dazzled in *Devdas*, *Dhoom 2*, *Guru*, and *Robot*. Recently, she impressed audiences in *Ponniyin Selvan*

I & II. Besides acting, Aishwarya earns 6-7 crore per brand endorsement and has made strategic real estate and startup investments.

Despite the financial gap, Aishwarya and Abhishek, married since 2007, share a strong bond and a daughter, Aaradhya. From a shaky start to reigning Bollywood, Aishwarya's journey remains legendary.

AGENCIES



## PEANUTS



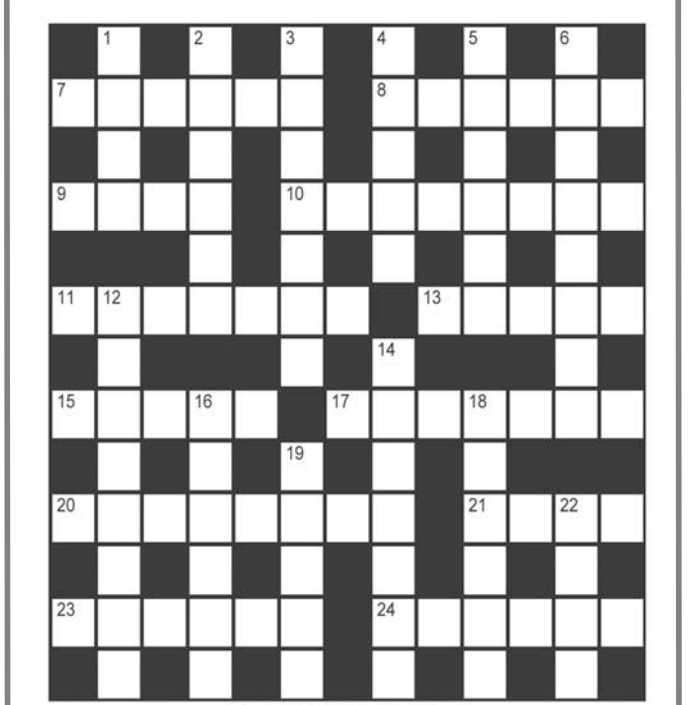
## CALVIN AND HOBBS



## BREVITY



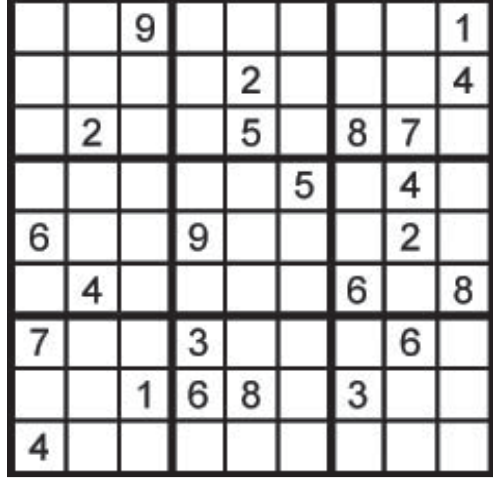
## FUN POST CROSSWORD



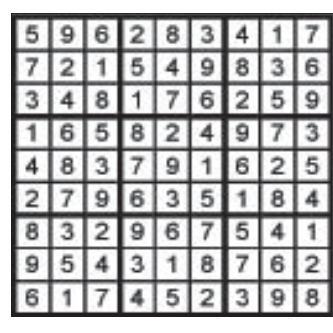
- Across**
- 7 Half of an old comedy duo
  - 8 Kind of apartment
  - 9 Washer cycle
  - 10 Longing
  - 11 Deputise
  - 13 Scent
  - 15 Leftover
  - 17 Camping gear
  - 20 Musical starring Shirley Jones
  - 21 Military organization
  - 23 Oceanic bird
  - 24 Dream up
- Down**
- 1 Incline
  - 2 On the double
  - 3 Cavorting
  - 4 Common
  - 5 Stove part
  - 6 Unsuitable name
  - 12 Budgie
  - 14 Equilibrium
  - 16 Lacking resources
  - 18 Sore
  - 19 High-spirited
  - 22 Ballot

## 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

Students of Laxmisagar Government High School in Bhubaneswar head for home after attending morning classes, which began Friday in view of the summer heat conditions



# downtown

## Ravenshaw, Utkal varsities hit by staff crunch

66% teaching, 72% non-teaching posts vacant in 17 Odisha universities



against 897, while Ravenshaw University has 195 against 212 sanctioned posts.

Overall, the minister said, out of the 2,027 teaching posts in 17 state public universities, 1,353 are presently lying vacant (66.74 per cent). These institutions have been functioning with 674 teachers.

Among the major vacancies in teaching posts in public universities, 109 are unoccupied in Dharanidhar University against 114 sanctioned positions, Rajendra University (106 against 126 total posts), Rama Devi Women's University (78 against 137 posts) and Berhampur University (95 out of 182). Khallikote Unitary University, Vikram Dev University, MS Law University, OSOU

## Min: 2,116 ST/SC atrocity victims got aid since June

The state government has given Rs 20.34 crore in compensation to 2,116 ST/SC atrocity victims since June last year, ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Minister Nityanada Gond told the Assembly Friday.

Responding to a query of Congress MLA Sofia Firdous, Gond said the assistance has been given in accordance with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Rules, 1995.

The minister also mentioned that the 'SAACAR' online portal (Single Window Application Atrocity Compensation Assis-

and Odia University have all teaching posts vacant.

The universities have 2,879 sanctioned non-teaching positions. "Of it, 2,081 (72.28 per cent) are lying unoccupied

tance & Relief) is operational to ensure timely disbursement of aid to victims.

According to the minister, 281 victims from Bolangir district received compensation, followed by 211 from Jajpur district. Other districts with significant numbers include Puri (207), Cuttack (202), Dhenkanal (130), Ganjam (129), and Bargarh (107).

However, no victims from Malkangiri and Nabarangpur districts received assistance.

Launched in October 2020, the SAACAR portal streamlines investigations and ensures compensation is paid to ST/SC atrocity victims within 21 days.

and 798 are filled," the minister said.

Major varsities where non-teaching posts are vacant include Berhampur University (182 vacancies

## CONG PROTEST ROCKS HOUSE

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** Demonstrations by MLAs of the Opposition Congress over crimes against women in the state rocked the Assembly Friday morning, forcing Speaker Surama Padhy to call an all-party meeting after multiple adjournments failed to normalise the situation.

As soon as the House assembled for the Question Hour, the agitating Congress MLAs hit the Well and attempted to climb the Speaker's podium.

Clad in full black dresses, the Congress MLAs members beat gongs and blew flutes to draw the attention of the Speaker, seeking a ruling on the formation of a House Committee to probe into crimes against women in the state.

Unable to run the House, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings for an hour till 11:30am.

After the House reassembled, the protests continued and the

Speaker adjourned the proceedings for another 30 minutes till 12pm.

She also convened an all-party meeting in an attempt to normalise the situation.

The House has been rocked by protests on the issue over the last few days.

Senior Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati, who was suspended for a week during a similar agitation over the issue, returned to the Assembly and led the Opposition demonstration.

"We will continue to protest inside and outside the Assembly over violence against women till a House Committee is formed," Congress Legislature Party leader Rama Chandra Kadam said. Bahinipati alleged that the state government was making all efforts to suppress the voice of the Opposition in the Assembly.

"I was suspended for seven working days for demanding the formation of a House Committee," he said.

## WORLD POETRY DAY & WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY

### Poets, activists team up to celebrate, raise awareness



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** The Ketaki Foundation Trust, in collaboration with Swabhiman, organised a literary homage and social awareness event at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan here on the occasion of World Poetry Day and World Down Syndrome Day, Friday.

This event brought together poets, scholars, and activists to celebrate the power of poetry while raising awareness about the importance of down syndrome advocacy.

In the opening session, Rabindra K Swain highlighted the significance of the dual celebrations. This was followed by a dedicated session on World Poetry Day, exploring the relevance of poetry in today's world. On the occasion, rich tributes were paid to eminent poet Ramakanta Rath, honouring his enduring literary contributions.

Observing the World Down Syndrome Day, Pavitra Mohan Kar led an insightful session emphasising the importance of awareness and inclusivity. His discussion offered perspectives on the challenges

faced by people with down syndrome and the support systems necessary for their wellbeing.

The evening featured poetry recitals by poets such as Ashutosh Parida, Saqti Mohanty, Saroj Bal, Subhasree Subhasmita Mishra, Sangram Jena, Kedar Mishra, Badal Mohanty, Swapna Mishra, Basudev Sunani, Pabitra Mohan Kar, Ramakanta Samantaray, Srisikta Suvadersini Nayak, Manua Das, Bharati Parida, and Manasi Rout who paid homage to Ramakanta Rath through their verses.

The event concluded with the launch of book-Subhadranka Aakhi- by eminent writer, poet, and author Jagannath Prasad Das. Kapilash Bhuyan delivered the closing remarks.

Ketaki Foundation Trust is dedicated to publishing, preserving, and promoting art, culture, and literature of the state. In collaboration with Swabhiman, the trust actively participates in philanthropic activities, including raising awareness, training students with disabilities, offering art therapy for elders, and sponsoring the education of underprivileged tribal students.

## Ex-MLA Devendra Sharma dies at 66



**Bhubaneswar:** Senior Congress leader and former MLA Devendra Sharma died at a private hospital here Friday evening, family sources said.

He was 66. Sharma was suffering from cancer and was undergoing treatment for the last several days, they said. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, state Congress president Bhakta Charan Das and many other political leaders expressed grief over Sharma's demise. Sharma was elected to the Assembly from Aul segment in Kendrapara district in 2014 but was defeated in 2019. He had also served as the president of Kendrapara district Congress committee. "He (Sharma) will always be remembered for his welfare works and service as a public representative. I pray for the eternal peace of his soul and express my deepest condolences to the bereaved family. Om Shanti," Majhi wrote on X.

## Liquor sold in soft drink bottles; shopkeeper held



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** City Excise sleuths seized 60 litres of duplicate liquor from a road-side grocery cum cold drinks shop in Baramunda area Friday.

An Excise official identified the accused as Kartik Chandra Nanda, 34, a resident of Ghatikia.

According to the official from Bhubaneswar Excise Station III, the detection took place during a search operation

launched by two teams, including the Flying Squad, at shops in Baramunda and Ghatikia areas. It was found that the shopkeeper had stored the duplicate alcohol in soft drink bottles, ostensibly for sale, the official added. The accused has been forwarded to court, he added.

### Attention! GST Taxpayers

Whose Aggregate Annual Turnover\* is upto a specified limit\* can opt for GST Composition Scheme for the FY 2025-2026 by 31st March, 2025

Eligible taxpayers who wish to avail the Composition Scheme can follow these steps on the GST portal ([www.gst.gov.in](http://www.gst.gov.in)):

Log in to the Taxpayers' Interface

Go to Services > Registration > Application to Opt for Composition Levy

Fill the FORM GST CMP-02 and submit

Those eligible taxpayers, who are already availing Composition Scheme, need not file FORM CMP-02 if they are eligible.

Easy & Convenient Compliance

Attractive Tax Rates

Minimum Compliance Requirements

Auto Renewal and Easy to Opt-out

Available for supplier of Goods as well as Services

Less Bookkeeping

	* Type of Suppliers	# Aggregate Annual Turnover during FY 2024-25
Supplier of Goods:	Taxpayers registered in 08 Specified States	upto ₹75 Lakh
	Taxpayers registered in other States	upto ₹150 Lakh
Supplier of Services		upto ₹50 Lakh

For more details, please refer to Section 10 of CGST Act, Rule 3-7 of CGST Rules and Notification No. 14/2019-Central Tax dated 07.03.2019

GST Composition Scheme: Big Benefits for Small Taxpayers

SCAN ME!

Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs

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# Min: Plant & nurture at least 5 trees each



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** Forest, Environment and Climate Change Minister Ganesh Ram Singkhuntia Friday called on the citizens to actively participate by planting and nurturing at least five trees each. He said this while addressing a meeting on International Day of Forests held at the Lok Seva Bhavan conference hall here Friday.

Stating that restoring degraded forests requires a united effort, the minister said planting at least five saplings each will enhance environmental stability, improve productivity, and secure a healthier future for all.

He said forests are vital to biodiversity, climate resilience and human well-being, calling for collective action for their

sustainable use and protection. Singkhuntia highlighted the multifaceted contributions of forests, describing them as 'nature's gift' that purify air, absorb carbon dioxide, regulate rainfall, and provide food, medicine, and fuel. "Forests are Earth's lungs and a front-line defense against climate change," he said. "Their preservation is crucial for humanity's future," he said.

Citing the 'State of the Forest Report-2023' by the Forest Survey of India, the minister shared Odisha's impressive progress in forest conservation. The state's forest cover now spans 52,433.56 sq km—33.67% of its geographical area—while an additional 6,163.45 sq km of tree cover brings the total forest and tree coverage to 37.63 per cent. This

## State's forest cover hits 37.63%, with 1.95 crore saplings planted in 2024, says State Forest Survey Report

growth reflects robust efforts in afforestation and sustainable forest management, including the planting of 1.95 crore saplings in 2024 alone and the distribution of 2.33 crore saplings to citizens, institutions, and organizations. Singkhuntia spotlighted key initiatives driving these achievements, such as widespread tree-planting campaigns along hills, roadsides, and urban spaces. In 2024, afforestation was made in 30,719 hectares of land, with 1,583 hectares restored under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The innovative 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' (One Tree for Each Mother) campaign has seen over 5.6 crore saplings planted statewide. Additionally, to mitigate lightning-related risks, 19 lakh palm saplings have been planted along vulnerable forest edges, funded by the Special Relief Fund.

## 2 vessels arrested at Paradip Port

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Cuttack, March 21:** Two tug vessels — Ocean Jade and Ocean Morganite — were placed under arrest at Paradip Port, about 90 km from here Friday, following an order issued by the Orissa High Court in connection with a high-stakes maritime dispute. The arrest was carried out in the presence of local sub-judge Chinmayee Panda. The vessels were detained pursuant to an ongoing admiralty suit filed by Alphard Maritime Limited, a leading maritime logistics and services company, which has claimed outstanding dues amounting to ₹428 crore arising from the sale and purchase of seven tug vessels. The High Court, in its order passed Wednesday, observed that "a prima facie case is made out against the defendants-vessels," and noted that "unless an order of arrest is passed, the relief claimed in the suit would be rendered infructuous."

Consequently, a single-judge bench of Justice Murahari Sri Raman directed that both Ocean Jade, an offshore supply vessel, and Ocean Morganite, an anchor handling tug, be arrested within Indian territorial waters at Paradip Port. The petitioner, Alphard Maritime, was granted liberty to communicate the order — along with a Letter of the Marshall of the Court under the Orissa High Court Admiralty Rules, 2020. In accordance with judicial procedure, "notice in the main case and the interlocutory application is to be issued to the defendants, with the next hearing scheduled for April 30, 2025."

# 'Stop intellectual pollution'



PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Friday called upon writers and individuals associated with literary activities to stop the prevailing "intellectual pollution" that poses a danger to India's rich culture and tradition. Shekhawat made these remarks while addressing 11th Kalinga Literary Festival in the presence of Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, ambassador of Indonesia Ina H Krisnamurthi, Padma Vibhushan Sudarshan Sahoo and Sahitya Akademi secretary K Sreenivasarao.

Addressing the festival as the chief guest, Shekhawat said, "There is a systematic attack on India's culture and tradition. The writers and individuals associated with literary activities have the potential to stop this because they can ignite the people's minds and save the country's rich culture."

Noting that India has been undergoing a transformation since 2024, the Union Minister said, "The people who have the potential to ignite minds and

create consciousness among the masses have a great responsibility in contributing to the transformation of the country. They are certainly writers and literary activists."

He also pointed out that external forces continue to destroy India's centuries-old intellectual properties.

He emphasised, "The present generation has forgotten the sacrifices of our forefathers. Though significant change has occurred during the last 10 years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, there is still a lot to do for saving the country's rich culture and tradition."

The minister also highlighted the contribution of Odisha writers to nation-building, naming some, including Vyasakabi Fakir Mohan Senapati, and current-day writer Pratvira Ray.

Governor Kambhampati said, "Language is not just a tool for communication but a bridge that connects people and carries culture."

He further emphasised that India's linguistic diversity reflects its rich cultural heritage. "Indian civilization has always upheld intellectual freedom and

celebrated cultural pluralism," he added.

He also added, "Literature's role is beyond artistic expression, as it is a force that shapes societies, fosters empathy, and inspires change."

"In an era dominated by technology and artificial intelligence, literary festivals like Kalinga reaffirm the importance of human imagination and the written word. Literature is not just about words on a page but about ideas that transform lives and societies," the Governor said.

Krisnamurthi said, "Indonesia is truly honoured to be the partner of this festival."

She mentioned that her country has a long history of friendship with India.

This year's Kalinga Literary Award was bestowed upon legendary Hindi writer Mamata Kalia, acclaimed translator and academician Jatindra Kumar Nayak, while Kalinga International Literary Award was given to Sanskrit scholar Srinuruddh Dash and Mamata Mishra.

The Kalinga Literary Award (Youth) was given to popular Nepali writer Buddhishagar.

## Khaki-clad man creates high drama on Mahanadi bridge

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Barang, March 21:** In a bizarre incident, a man wearing a police uniform created high drama for at least three hours on the busy Mundali bridge over Mahanadi River. The man was identified as Bikram Tudu of Palasdhangi village in Dhenkanal district.

Reports said around 8am Friday, a few locals spotted Tudu wearing police uniform stuck on the iron gate of the Mahanadi bridge at Mundali, with a motorcycle, bearing registration number OD 06D 4548, parked on the bridge.

Gradually, a crowd began to gather there to witness the freak incident. Many bystanders urged Tudu not to jump into the river and come back instead. However, he ignored their requests. At times Tudu was putting a helmet on his head and lying down, while at other times

dancing, standing, or even exercising. The high drama continued for three hours.

Upon receiving the news, police and Fire Services personnel arrived at the spot and tried to reason with Tudu, but he refused to listen. Eventually, disregarding everyone's pleas, the man jumped into the river. The fire brigade and local fishermen, who were prepared in advance, launched a joint rescue operation and rescued him.

The reason behind the man's suicide attempt yet remains unclear. Tudu reportedly claimed that he had bought the police uniform by himself. The police have taken him into custody for questioning, seized his bike (OD 06D 4548) and the police uniform he was wearing.

The cops are investigating the exact reason behind the drama he staged on the busy bridge and his suicide attempt.



## Utkal VC's thrust on preserving traditional weaving knowledge



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** The Department of Analytical & Applied Economics at Utkal University here hosted a two-day National Conference titled "Intergenerational Transfer of Knowledge and Practices Amongst Handloom Clusters in India" Friday. The event sparked vital discussions on preserving and promoting the traditional weaving knowledge integral to India's cultural and economic fabric.

The conference drew a diverse group of participants, including academic researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders, to explore the socio-economic importance of the handloom sector

and the critical need for passing down weaving expertise across generations. Utkal University Vice-Chancellor Sabita Acharya underscored the necessity of a robust alliance between academia and industry to protect this traditional knowledge. She emphasised that such partnerships could drive entrepreneurship and ensure the survival of these crafts, while also advocating for interdisciplinary research to inform supportive policies.

The event shed light on the handloom industry's deep socio-cultural roots, from its historical role in India's independence struggle to its current significance as a major employer of women. Siba Sankar Mohanty, Head of the Department of An-

alytical & Applied Economics, highlighted the sector's intersection with diverse fields like economics, anthropology, sociology, gender studies, psychology, and visual arts, reflecting its broad relevance.

Arabinda Mishra, Chairman of the Development and Environment Futures Trust (DEFT), set the tone by addressing the pressing need to safeguard indigenous weaving practices amid challenges from globalisation and evolving markets. In her keynote address, Chief Speaker Roop Rashi, Textile Commissioner of India, outlined government efforts, including policy measures and technological innovations, to bolster the handloom industry while promoting sustainability.

Through its sessions and panel discussions, the conference aims to generate meaningful insights into balancing tradition with sustainable development, ensuring the handloom sector thrives for future generations. The outcomes of these deliberations are expected to shape policies and initiatives that support artisans and sustain this timeless craft.

## SSU hosts 3-day vedic conference



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Cuttack, March 21:** With the objective to spread the mantras and learning of four Vedas which has considerable relevance in recent times, a three-day Regional Vedic Conference commenced here at Sri Sri University (SSU) Friday.

The conference has been organised by Ved Vigyan Maha Vidyapith-Sri Sri Gurukul, SSU. Gurukul head and academic director Swami Harihara delivered the welcome address.

At the beginning, a 'Shobhayaatra' from CDA Sector-6 to Sector-9, was attended by more than 200 delegates from Maharishi Sandipani Rashtriya Ved Vidya Sansthan, Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh and various Sanskrit educational institutes.

Representatives from the state, as well as from West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh actively participated in the programme.

Speaking at the meet, Vedologist Gangadhar Panda and Acharya Umakanta Samanta shed light on the teaching of Vedas. Chief guest and president of the university Rajitha Kulkarni said, "Revered Guruji Sri Sri Ravi Shankar has made an unprecedented effort to make ancient Indian knowledge, especially vedic and Sanatan traditions, conducive to modern life." Vedas contain the qualities of the whole world. The art of human life is available in the Vedas. The Vedas mention four ashrams, including brahmacharya. It also talks about the culture, tradition and human religion that can be used for human survival, said the guests at the conference.

The programme was moderated by assistant professor Jhana Rani Tripathy and SSG Principal Rahul Kumar Mishra. Director of Operation at the University Swami Satyachaitanya extended his sincere thanks to all the students, teachers and representatives.

**WEATHER**

BBSR	CTC
Max Temp 34.5°	33.5°
Min Temp 24.2°	23.5°
Humidity 69%	78%
Rainfall Nil	Nil

**FORECAST**  
Partly cloudy sky

**MARKET WATCH**

INDEX	VALUE	CHG
SENSEX	76905.51	▲ 557.45
NIFTY	23350.40	▲ 159.75
DOLLAR	86.01	▼ 0.37
EURO	93.29	▼ 0.38
GOLD	₹87,710	▼ ₹96
SILVER	₹97,827	▼ ₹1,565

## ECoR SETS NEW RECORD

# 250 MT freight loading in 2024-25 surpasses previous numbers

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** The East Coast Railway (ECoR) has once again set a milestone in freight loading, becoming the first railway zone in the country to achieve 250 million tonne (MT) of originating freight in the financial year 2024-25.

The remarkable achievement was accomplished ahead of schedule—by March 21, 2025—11 days before the end of the financial year. ECoR's freight loading record surpasses all previous benchmarks of Indian Railways, reinforcing its status as the highest

freight-loading zone in the country. This is the second consecutive year that ECoR has crossed the 250 MT mark. Notably, ECoR has also achieved the distinction of surpassing 200 MT of freight loading for the sixth consecutive year.

Additionally, ECoR has released and unloaded 228.3 MT of freight under its jurisdiction in the 2024-25 financial year, registering an increase of 2.6 per cent compared to the 2023-24 fiscal. As of March 21 in the 2023-24 fiscal year, ECoR had unloaded 222.4 MT of freight within its jurisdiction.

The three railway divisions



of ECoR played a crucial role in attaining the feat. Major freight contributor includes the coalfields of Mahanadi Coalfields Limited (MCL) at Talcher, five key ports under ECoR's jurisdiction—Paradeep, Dhamara, Visakhapatnam, Gangavaram, and Gopalpur, iron ore mines in Keonjhar and Bailadila (Chhattisgarh) and major steel and aluminium industries.

"Today, ECoR has established itself as the first railway zone to achieve 250 MT of freight loading for two consecutive years. Despite various operational challenges, this record-breaking achievement was made possible through

meticulous planning, seamless coordination with government sectors, industries, and stakeholders, and an unwavering commitment to efficiency," said ECoR general manager Parmeshwar Funkwal.

The dedicated workforce, with its positive attitude and relentless efforts, has played a key role in maintaining this momentum of success, he added.

"This phenomenal performance further cements ECoR's position as a frontrunner in freight transportation, significantly contributing to the nation's economic growth and logistics efficiency, Funkwal said.

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GANDHAMARDAN MINES LOADING SCAM

Chorus grows for detailed probe despite crackdown

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 21: The controversy surrounding the Gandhamardan Loading Agency and Transporting Cooperative Society in Keonjhar district continues despite a recent Crime Branch raid and arrests.



Former MLA Subarna Nayak criticised the lack of action, suggesting that if the audit had been acted upon earlier, the current scale of corruption might have been prevented.

That certain senior employees of the mining company have been collecting a percentage of money per tonnage for ore transportation. Critics argue that a thorough investigation into these individuals' activities could expose illegal transactions worth hundreds of crores.

The cooperative society takes orders from companies purchasing iron ore, with machine-operated loading replacing manual labour. The funds generated from this machine loading are used for development of the mining affected area and its population.

In 2021, a special audit was conducted by the District Registrar of Cooperative Societies (DRCS) following a complaint. While financial irregularities were allegedly found to be multiple times higher, the audit report allegedly downplayed the same due to political and administrative pressure.

The Orissa Mining Corporation (OMC) oversees the mine, raising questions about how such irregularities could occur without the knowledge of its authorities. Nayak emphasised that the Crime Branch inquiry should also include the OMC's involvement in these financial malpractices.

BJD MLA Badri Narayan Patra also voiced support for an investigation, claiming that the district collector and superintendent of police were complicit in protecting Raja Chakra, who was arrested in the recent raid.

Further allegations suggest that the district collector and superintendent of police were complicit in protecting Raja Chakra, who was arrested in the recent raid. Patra noted that despite repeated calls for action and the audit report highlighting fund mismanagement, the administration had failed to take appropriate steps.

9 workers injured in blast at Tata Steel Kalinganagar plant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 21: Nine workers were injured due to a sudden explosion at the steel melting shop of Tata Steel's Kalinganagar plant in Jajpur district Friday, police said.

The incident took place at about 11.30am, they said. The nine injured persons were immediately taken to the hospital and one of them has been discharged after first aid, a company release said.

Stating that the medical team is currently attending to the injured persons and has confirmed that everyone is now out of danger, the private steel major said that it has made arrangements for the best possible care and all necessary efforts are being made to ensure the well-being of the injured workers.

The police and local administration reached the steel plant and launched an inquiry into the incident. The incident site has been barricaded and an internal investigation is underway. "We are taking all necessary steps to address the situation," the Tata Steel Kalinganagar plant said.

Mob attacks police team during ganja seizure op; 26 cops injured

POST NEWS NETWORK

Mohana, March 21: At least 26 police personnel were injured after a mob attacked the team during a ganja seizure operation at Pidiari village under Mohana police limits in Gajapati district late Thursday night.

Acting on intelligence about illegal ganja cultivation in the village, a joint team from R Udayagiri, Mohana, and Adava police stations raided the area late Thursday night and seized a large quantity of ganja.

The raid was part of an intensified crackdown against drug trafficking in the region, which has seen a surge in illegal ganja cultivation in recent years.

However, while returning, the police team was ambushed by enraged villagers who surrounded them and launched a violent attack.



The villagers, armed with sticks and other weapons, began thrashing the police personnel. The officers were caught off guard as the crowd swelled, and in no time, they found themselves being overpowered.

In addition to the physical attack, the mob targeted police vehicles, smashing windshields, breaking doors, and rendering five official vehicles completely unusable. Eyewitness accounts suggest that the attack was premeditated.

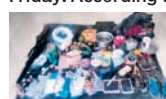
Following hours of negotiations and intervention by local representatives and high-

er authorities, the situation was eventually defused, and the mob eventually released the officers. The 26 injured police personnel, including R Udayagiri SDPO, were rescued and taken to the Chandragiri Community Health Centre for treatment.

The Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP), Gajapati later arrived at the scene and initiated an investigation into the incident. Sources indicate that legal action will be taken against those involved, and additional forces may be deployed in the area to prevent further incidents.

Maoist camp busted in Patadhara forest

Nuapada: A Maoist camp was dismantled in the protected Patadhara forest near Chatapani village under Boden police station limits in Nuapada district Friday. According to sources, Nuapada police received intelligence tip-off that Maoists were camping in the Patadhara forest.



Maoists were stockpiling supplies to set up a camp. However, upon detecting the approaching security forces, they abandoned their equipment and fled the scene. Security personnel later recovered a country-made firearm, a Baofeng walkie-talkie, a charger, a blood pressure monitor, a battery, a solar panel, a pressure cooler, two torchlights, ration supplies, shoes, bags, an electrical extension board, 12 pencil batteries, packets of refined oil, and a medical kit.

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender No. 60-KUR-TRD-OT-2024-25 Name of Work: STRENGTHENING OF OHE STRUCTURES WITH ASSOCIATE EQUIPMENTS IN PLACE OF LEANING OHE STRUCTURES IN NORTH SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD DIVISION.

ପ୍ରଥମ ଶ୍ରୀକାର୍ତ୍ତିକା ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ ଅଶୁଭ ଶ୍ରୀକାର୍ତ୍ତିକା ଶ୍ରୀକାର୍ତ୍ତିକା ପଣ୍ଡା ସମାପନ ଶାସନ, ପିପିକି, ପୁରୀ

PEO siphons off ₹43L for cricket betting, held

Berhampur: A panchayat executive officer (PEO) in Ganjam district was arrested by the Vigilance Friday for allegedly embezzling government funds of over ₹43 lakh for cricket betting and online gaming, an officer said.

The PEO allegedly used the money for betting, the SP said after a preliminary inquiry. The sarpanch claimed money was withdrawn without his knowledge and by forging his signature, Pradhan said.

Bengal crosses border again

Residents protest as road damaged; MLA intervenes

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhograi, March 21: West Bengal has once again encroached upon Odisha's territory. The West Bengal Revenue department damaged a 300-metre concrete road in Shagadasahi, a border village under Kamaradipada police station in Bhograi block of Balasore district, in an attempt to bring it under their control Thursday. This led to a confrontation between the border area residents and West Bengal officials.



villages in Bhograi and Jaleswar blocks of Balasore district have been embroiled in border disputes. Recently, the West Bengal administration attempted to take control of Sahabajpur village, but the strong opposition from local residents forced them to retreat.

Due to the lack of a permanent resolution, the border dispute between Odisha and West Bengal is becoming increasingly complex, similar to the long-standing dispute with Andhra over Kotia. In response to West Bengal's alleged high-handedness, MLA Das has urged border residents to remain vigilant.

POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule 8(1)] WHEREAS the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of Mercedes-Benz Financial Services India Private Limited, having its registered office at: 5th Floor, Plot 8, Baashyam Willow Square 9 & 10, First Street, Thiru Vika Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032 under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notices calling upon the borrowers/guarantors, to repay the outstanding amount with interest thereon within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

Vigilance nabs corrupt OAS officer on the run for 17 yrs

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bolangir, March 21: Vigilance sleuths have arrested an OAS officer who was on the run for last 17 years in connection with a series of corruption cases filed against him.

Binay Kumar Garnaik, the former Special Land Acquisition Officer of the Lower Suktel Irrigation Project in Bolangir, was produced before the Special Vigilance Judge at Bolangir Friday, where his bail plea was rejected, and he was sent to judicial custody.

According to sources, at least 12 cases of government fund misappropriation and other irregularities had been registered against Garnaik and others in 2008. He was also booked for excess payment of land compensation causing loss of government money to the tune of ₹6.23 crore.

In 2013, after failing to appear in court, a non-bailable arrest warrant was issued against him. Since then, he had been evading Vigilance authorities.

During the last 17 years, Garnaik kept changing his locations across the state. After years of searching, Vigilance officials apprehended him from Kankadasa village in the Parjang police station area of Dhenkanal district.

Brown sugar worth ₹26L seized; 1 held

Jaleswar: Police arrested a 28-year-old man from Rajpur village under this block in Balasore district after seizure of 260 gram brown sugar worth approximately ₹26 lakh from his possession during a raid at Agrawala Chowk on NH-60 near the West Bengal-Odisha border. The raid, which was conducted at around 2:30pm Friday, was led by Jaleswar SDPO Dilip Sahu following a tip-off. In addition to the contraband, police seized an unregistered Yamaha motorcycle, a Vivo mobile phone, ₹1,300 in cash, a bank passbook, and five ATM cards. Reports indicate that the suspect's father is also involved in the illegal drug trade and has pending cases against him. At a press conference, Balasore SP Raj Prasad confirmed the arrest.

EAST COAST RAILWAY ADDENDUM to E-AUCTION PROGRAMME FOR MARCH-2025 FOR DEPOT & DIVISIONS ADDITIONAL SCHEDULE OF E-AUCTION

EAST COAST RAILWAY ADDENDUM to Notice No. ECoR/BBS/MD/CH/BBS/Case to Case Consultants Engagement-2025-26/160, Dtd. 04.03.2025 FOR ENGAGEMENT OF MEDICAL CONSULTANT ON CASE TO CASE BASIS AT CENTRAL HOSPITAL/MANCHESWAR/BHUBANESWAR

EAST COAST RAILWAY PUBLIC NOTICE CRS INSPECTION OF PROPOSED NEW BG RAIL LINK BETWEEN BOUDH - CHAMPAPUR - PURUNAKATAK SECTION OF KHURDA ROAD - BOLANGIR NEW B.G. RAIL LINK PROJECT

EAST COAST RAILWAY ADDENDUM to Notice No. ECoR/BBS/MD/CH/BBS/Case to Case Consultants Engagement-2025-26/160, Dtd. 04.03.2025 FOR ENGAGEMENT OF MEDICAL CONSULTANT ON CASE TO CASE BASIS AT CENTRAL HOSPITAL/MANCHESWAR/BHUBANESWAR


EAST COAST RAILWAY ADDENDUM to Notice No. ECoR/BBS/MD/CH/BBS/Case to Case Consultants Engagement-2025-26/160, Dtd. 04.03.2025 FOR ENGAGEMENT OF MEDICAL CONSULTANT ON CASE TO CASE BASIS AT CENTRAL HOSPITAL/MANCHESWAR/BHUBANESWAR

EAST COAST RAILWAY ADDENDUM to Notice No. ECoR/BBS/MD/CH/BBS/Case to Case Consultants Engagement-2025-26/160, Dtd. 04.03.2025 FOR ENGAGEMENT OF MEDICAL CONSULTANT ON CASE TO CASE BASIS AT CENTRAL HOSPITAL/MANCHESWAR/BHUBANESWAR

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to notify the public at large that this lan measuring about 30 decimals or 0.30 Acre comprised in MS Khata No. 126/856 and 126/255 under Plot No. 850/1674 and Plot No. 850/1675 Kissam gharabari of Mouza: Badmal, P.S. No. 35, Tahasil No. 199 district Jharsuguda, Orissa and with the construction of G+4 building together with all structures thereon, is under physical possession of SREI Equipment Finance Limited, under the provisions of SARFAESI Act, 2002 by virtue of the order passed by District Magistrate, Jharsuguda. All trespassers shall be prosecuted.

EAST COAST RAILWAY File No. DRM/Engg/KUR/24-25/E-Tender/118, Dt. 18.03.2025 1. Tender No. e-TenderNorthKUR-344-2024, Date: 12.03.2025 Description: MISCELLANEOUS P.WAY WORK SUCH AS MANUAL DEEP SCREENING, THROUGH PACKING, BALLAST DRESSING, PRE-POST TAMPING WORK, GLUED JOINT RENEWAL, SEJ RENEWAL, AT WELDING, ERC GREASING ETC. UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF SENIOR SECTION ENGINEER/P.WAY/KENDUJHARGARH.

**“Spiritual realisation can be had on by any plane by contact with the Divine (who is everywhere) or by perception by the Self within, which is pure and untouched by the outer movements.”**



**SRI AUROBINDO**

## Governance Playbook

With the BJP leadership not taking any chances regarding governance, the Rekha Gupta-led Delhi government is off to a planned start. Six senior officials are being appointed as advisers, or OSDs, to monitor decision-making and ensure ministers remain on course closely. A senior DANICS officer will also serve as the secretary for each of the six cabinet ministers.

This clearly indicates that this administration takes business seriously. After winning the election, the BJP is committed to fulfilling its promises, which is challenging in a city with a long history of political rivalry. With a secretary and two special secretaries to assist them, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) has an organised team in place to ensure smooth governance.

In contrast, the Kejriwal-led government took a different approach during the previous administration, assigning party functionaries to ministers in various capacities. While political control may have been assured, this often led to an overcrowded secretariat with too many hands in the pot and unclear roles. Reflecting on the Sheila Dikshit era, the contrast is striking. Her governance model collaborated well with the bureaucracy and did not require additional political appointees to oversee operations.

Gupta's new system is evidently an attempt to provide structure and discipline, but it also raises the question of whether this is a necessary administrative step or merely a means to exert greater political control.

### Who's calling the shots in the J&K arms licence scam?

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is chasing down missing paperwork in the protracted arms licence scam involving senior IAS officers in Jammu & Kashmir. In its latest move, the MHA has requested the J&K Chief Secretary to resubmit prosecution proposals against three officers—Yasha Mudgal, Shahid Iqbal Choudhary, and Niraj Kumar—because some documents remain unaccounted for.

This isn't the first reminder. Earlier in February, the MHA also instructed the J&K administration to expedite the CBI's prosecution requests for two more IAS officers—M Raju and Prasanna Ramaswamy G—after obtaining the necessary approval from Ladakh's Lieutenant Governor. The entire process has been dragging on, with files shuffling back and forth, yet no concrete action has been taken.

Let's not forget that the J&K administration had already recommended prosecution sanctions for five officers in December 2024 for allegedly issuing fraudulent gun licences in exchange for financial gains—serious business, if proven true. But despite all this, the MHA is still awaiting a final response from the J&K government.

Meanwhile, the General Administration Department (GAD) in J&K is continuing to gather details on IAS officer P K Pole, while jurisdictional debates persist over Prasanna Ramaswamy G's case, since the alleged violations occurred in Ladakh. Additionally, there's the pending examination of cases against three more officers—Jitendra Kumar Singh, Ramesh Kumar, and, once again, Prasanna Ramaswamy G.

Is this merely another case of bureaucratic lethargy, where the system operates at a glacial pace until the fervour subsides? Or is there an unwillingness to act decisively against senior officers? Whatever the case, this saga is beginning to resemble less an anti-corruption crackdown and more an administrative merry-go-round.

### From FIR to ADG: the curious case of Amit Lodha

Amit Lodha's story is one of the most dramatic in the world of Indian bureaucracy. Lodha, a former police officer who is now a best-selling author, rose to prominence with Bihar Diaries, which was later adapted into Khakee: The Bihar Chapter, a Netflix sensation. However, real-life controversies followed shortly after the arrival of reel-life glory. His career appeared to be in danger due to a formal complaint, accusations of disproportionate assets (DA), and an Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation.

And yet, the Bihar government has now elevated Lodha to the position of Additional Director General (ADG). There are more questions than answers about the move. Was this a tacit admission that the accusations against him were unfounded? Or does it portend a change in the political tide, where his "larger-than-life" persona, which was previously viewed as a liability, is now being welcomed? It had been conjectured that his popularity in films had annoyed Bihar's political establishment, making a comeback improbable. They obviously misread the script.

Naturally, the ED investigation and the vigilance case remain significant. The ED's case is based on the same grounds as the DA case that the state's own vigilance department filed against Lodha in 2022. Shouldn't these charges matter if they are serious in a system that takes pride in its integrity? Or do babus follow their own version of realpolitik, where decisions are made more by internal equations, public opinion, and influence than by following the law?

Lodha's promotion is perhaps just another reminder that, in the end, it's not just about crime and punishment—it's also about timing and political calculus in a world where headlines change more quickly than policies.

*Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect*

## WISDOM CORNER

**“Change has to come. It's not always what you'd like. It's what other people like”**

RUSKIN BOND

**“Life is a gift, and it offers us the privilege, opportunity, and responsibility to give something back by becoming more”**

TONY ROBBINS

**“Love, friendship and respect do not unite people as much as a common hatred for something”**

ANTON CHEKHOV

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1638:** Anne Hutchinson was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony after her liberal religious beliefs ran afoul of officials; she later helped found Rhode Island.

■ **1765:** British Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which placed taxes on various printed papers in the colonies; highly unpopular, the legislation was particularly contentious in America.

■ **1832:** German author and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was considered the greatest German literary figure of the modern era, died in Weimar, Saxe-Weimar.

## FOCUS WORLD WATER DAY

# ELIXIR OF LIFE

Not too long ago, it was blasphemy to compare the price of petrol or milk with that of water because water, so easily available in abundance, was not an issue. The deceptively cozy situation led us to take a cavalier stance toward water, the lifeblood of our planet. As Cynthia Ozick said, “We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude.” This moral breach cannot remain unsettled. The current global water crisis can be seen as a form of divine retribution for our disregard for the “elixir” of life.



**Much of the problem could be mitigated if water-surplus regions understood that monopolizing this natural gift only enhances disparities, which is not in the long-term interest of anyone**



Harish Barthwal

**RIVER WORSHIP WAS A NORM IN INDIAN CULTURE, AND WATER IS STILL DEEMED A CLEANSER THAT RIDES PEOPLE OF ALL FORMS OF IMPURITIES**

Quality water supplies are in a precarious state globally, with drinking water availability being the most severely affected. While there is no overall shortage of water on the planet, the availability of safe and usable water continues to mar prospects in most regions. UNICEF estimates that by 2030, about 700 million people are likely to be displaced due to intense water scarcity. By 2040, around 1 in 4 children worldwide will be living in areas of extremely high water stress, and over two billion people will reside in countries with inadequate water supplies. Millions of people struggle with drinking water scarcity and rising pollution levels. With the recognition that water is a vital input permeating every aspect of our existence—sustaining ecosystems, farming, industries, health, and human survival—efforts are now made at various levels to maintain water sources and ensure their even distribution.

Since 1993, the United Nations has designated March 22 as World Water Day to highlight the significance of freshwater and advocate for sustainable water management. Glaciers are melting faster, the planet is getting subtly hotter, and our frozen world is shrinking, making the water cycle more unpredictable. Ecosystems are on the verge of collapse. For billions of people, changes in melt water flows are causing droughts, floods, landslides, and rising sea levels. Countless communities and ecosystems are at risk of devastation. Emphasizing that glaciers are vital sources of freshwater, the theme for 2025 is “Glacier Preservation.” Individuals, organizations, and governments are encouraged to address global water challenges, including water conservation, sanitation, and ecosystem restoration. Lowering carbon footprints, conserving water, and supporting sustainability efforts can help future

generations. Civilizations and farming grew along riverbanks, and rivers also facilitated the development of waterways for transportation. Ironically, regions and nations with ample water reserves are often unwilling to share their surplus water with those struggling to secure every drop. Much of the problem could be mitigated if water-surplus regions understood that monopolizing this natural gift only enhances disparities, which is not in the long-term interest of anyone. A concrete solution to the perennial water crisis appears to be a shift in our perception of this precious resource; treating water as a divine gift of nature to be shared equitably. River worship was a norm in Indian culture, and water is still deemed a cleanser that rides people of physical, spiritual, and other impurities. This is why adherents of all faiths use water before and during various rituals. Hindu

worship begins with holding Achaman, the sacred water, to set worshippers in a receptive mode. A dip in holy waters during the Kumbh, or in Ganga Sagar (near Kolkata) during the Hindu Paush month or other festive occasions, consecrates devotees through this life-giving element. The holy water of the Ganga and other rivers imbues all observances with sanctity. Those who cannot make it to take a dip sprinkle water to stay blessed. In Islam, physical and ritual purity (tahara) is essential before worship (salat). Among Christians, no initiation is possible without the application of water, which is as essential to physical survival as God is to spiritual survival. The Sikhs call holy water Amrit, and those who consume this Prasad at the holy Golden Temple are supposed to lead virtuous and dignified lives.

The mystical attributes of water are aptly outlined by Masaru Emoto, a Japanese scientist and author known for his research on water and its properties. Like many authors and artists in awe of nature and its bewildering gifts, he said, “To understand water is to understand the cosmos, the marvels of nature, and life itself.” This implies gratitude toward nature, of which water is but one gift to be accepted reverently. The more we align with nature and its gifts, the better it will be for us and future generations, whether it is water, air, or anything else.

*The writer is a blogger (at www.bluntspeaker.com) and he writes on general, social and spiritual issues.*

## SPECTRUM ENVIRONMENT

# Insuring coastal and ocean resilience

Climate change poses a growing threat to coastal and marine ecosystems, whose resilience is vital for global stability, economic prosperity, and the survival of all life on Earth. While urgent action is necessary to protect these ecosystems, many coastal communities lack the financial resources needed to recover from climate-related disasters like hurricanes, typhoons, and storm surges.

Closing the financing gap is critical to mitigating the worst effects of climate change, and the insurance industry can be a powerful driver of positive change, leveraging risk-management solutions to strengthen long-term coastal and ocean resilience. Hurricane Beryl, which tore through the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico last July, underscored the need for targeted insurance solutions in climate-vulnerable regions. The storm damaged or destroyed nearly 90% of Barbados's fishing fleet. With no income and little to no insurance coverage, many fishers and their communities were left without the means to rebuild.

Despite the heightened risks, insurers recognize that well-designed products, accurate risk pricing, and strengthened resilience measures can make climate-vulnerable markets financially viable. In many cases, partnerships with governments and development organizations

to share risk and address protection gaps further encourage insurers to stay in the market. By remaining in these regions, insurers not only preserve an important market segment but also help build more resilient coastal communities.

Parametric insurance policies offer one such promising solution. These policies are designed to serve as a financial safety net for individuals, small businesses, and even countries following environmental disasters, ensuring rapid payouts that help communities and governments recover faster. Equally important, parametric policies play a key role in risk mitigation, enabling governments and businesses to invest in long-term resilience strategies.

A notable example of a country-level solution is the parametric insurance policy for Belize, designed by the British-American insurer WTW to support the country's ability to service its blue-bond debt. This innovative financial mechanism automatically releases funds when predefined environmental events occur, ensuring that Belize can meet its debt obligations and achieve its climate-resilience goals even after natural disasters.

Beyond risk transfer, insurance can be instrumental in mobilizing private capital for resilience-building projects. Long-term institutional investors, including insurers, hold

vast capital reserves that can be directed toward sustainable infrastructure. However, unlocking these funds remains a challenge, particularly for large-scale projects in developing countries and high-risk regions.

The Infrastructure Resilience Development Fund, a joint initiative of the Insurance Development Forum (IDF) and BlackRock, seeks to tackle this challenge by mobilizing insurance-sector capital for investments in resilient infrastructure in developing and emerging economies. The Fund supports greenfield and brownfield commercial projects in sectors such as renewable energy, water, waste management, transportation, and telecommunications. By certifying that projects meet insurers' credit and risk requirements, it offers a channel for much-needed financing of infrastructure in these countries, including investments in nature-based solutions, particularly in coastal communities, thereby promoting long-term sustainability.

To close the sustainable blue economy protection gap, we must also foster partnerships among insurance companies, investors, and policymakers to harness the expertise and resources of the public and private sectors. These public-private partnerships would share a single goal: facilitating innovative adaptation and risk-management solutions

that benefit vulnerable communities. The upcoming Blue Economy and Finance Forum and the United Nations Ocean Conference, which will be held in Monaco and Nice in June, underscore the insurance sector's growing role in building ocean resilience. But achieving meaningful progress requires a multifaceted strategy for expanding access to insurance solutions like parametric coverage.

To make coverage more accessible and tailored to local realities, we must invest in data and risk modeling, thereby improving our understanding, assessment, and pricing of ocean-related threats. Perhaps most importantly, given the unprecedented scale of the climate change, closing the protection gap demands a holistic approach that integrates industry risk-management capabilities, innovative financial instruments, and strategic capital deployment.

The widespread adoption of nature-based insurance products will not only mitigate physical risks but also support biodiversity and ecosystem health. By strengthening natural coastal defenses, we can unlock the full economic and ecological potential of a resilient ocean and create a thriving blue economy.

*The writer is Secretary General of the Insurance Development Forum. ©Project Syndicate*

## Letters TO THE EDITOR

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



## Distressing Verdict

Sir, The ruling of the Allahabad High Court that trivializes the charges against two men accused of sexually assaulting an 11-year-old girl is extremely distressing. According to the Court, grabbing a minor's breasts, breaking the string of her pajamas, and trying to drag her beneath a culvert do not amount to an attempt to rape. The Court drew a distinction between preparation for rape and an actual attempt to rape. The Court's stance on an attempt to rape sends a wrong message. It does not ensure justice for victims of attempted rape. In fact, any kind of sexual assault that stops short of penetration must be considered as outraging the modesty of a girl. At a time when sexual crimes against women are on the rise, courts must treat them with the seriousness they deserve. A verdict must not trivialize the gravity of a crime. Moreover, the ruling does not conform to the laws pertaining to the POCSO Act. Courts must be committed to fighting child sexual abuse. Their verdicts must not dilute the gravity of crimes. Courts must be sensitive to the trauma experienced by sexual violence survivors. When courts fail, people tend to commit crimes with impunity. The Supreme Court needs to review this case, and justice must be served to the aggrieved..

Venu GS, KOLLAM

## Risk of losing global talent

Sir, The US decision to deport Indian scholar Badar Khan Suri over alleged Hamas ties, along with the self-deportation of Ranjani Srinivasan, highlights a growing crackdown that could alienate international students and academics. While authorities claim Suri spread Hamas propaganda and had links to a suspected terrorist, his university and legal team insist on his innocence. Such actions, driven by heightened security concerns, may deter talented scholars from choosing the US as their academic destination. Given the significant contributions of Indian students and researchers to America's economy and innovation, these knee-jerk measures risk harming the country's intellectual and economic growth. If this pattern continues, the US may find itself losing the global talent it has long benefited from.

Gopalaswamy J, CHENNAI

# Kota coaching centres hail Bill on institutes

However, the association of small coaching institutes -- Hadauti Sambhag Coaching Samiti, providing academic tutorials from Classes 6 to 12 -- called the bill a "death warrant" and demanded amendments to it



**Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill, 2025 softens the provisions of the Centre's guidelines by omitting restrictions on the minimum admission age of 16 in the coaching institutes**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kota (Rajasthan), March 21:** The Kota coaching fraternity Thursday hailed the bill tabled in the state Assembly Wednesday to control and regulate coaching centres and termed it a step towards a "structured learning environment" and "need of the time" to check financial and mental exploitation of the student.

However, the association of small coaching institutes -- Hadauti Sambhag Coaching Samiti, providing academic tutorials from Classes 6 to 12 -- called the bill a "death warrant" and demanded amendments to it.

The Bhajan Lal Sharma-led BJP government introduced the Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill, 2025, softening the provisions of the Centre's guidelines by omitting restrictions on the minimum admission age of 16 in the coaching institutes while relaxing several other regulatory measures on batch segregation, biometric attendance and aptitude test for admission.

Hailing the bill, Naveen Maheshwari, director, Allen Career Institute, said, "We welcome initiatives that contribute to a structured and supportive learning environment for students. The Rajasthan Coaching Centres (Control and Regulation) Bill, 2025 is a step in that direction, reinforcing transparency, fair practices and mental health support within the coaching ecosystem."

He said the 'Kota Cares' initiative, launched jointly by Kota district administration and

Kota Students Welfare Society, has already introduced significant reforms in student housing, safety and counselling.

"This bill further strengthens the commitment to student welfare and we remain dedicated to working alongside all stakeholders to ensure a positive and stress-free learning experience for students," Naveen Maheshwari further said.

Founding director of Career Point Coaching Institute and Career Point University, Pramod Maheshwari, an IITian himself, termed the bill most relevant in the present context to check the "exploitation" of innocent students and their parents. On relaxation in the state bill from the Centre's guidelines, Pramod Maheshwari said flexibility in a fair amount is needed for coaching institutes to operate with students favourably. However, he did not agree that the removal of the minimum age bar for admission in coaching institutes will help increase the number of admissions of students which declined to around 40 per cent in Kota last year.

## Rajasthan takes U-turn on Land Revenue Amendment

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 21:** The Rajasthan Land Revenue (Amendment and Validation) Bill, 2025 was Friday sent to the Select Committee amid concerns raised by both the ruling BJP and Opposition Congress MLAs during a debate in the House.

The amended bill gives the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited (RIICO) the right to change land use, which was one of the points opposed by a section of legislators.

Responding to the debate, Revenue Minister Hemant Meena proposed to send the bill to the Select Committee, which was passed by voice vote.

While Speaker Vasudev Devnani was about to approve the in-charge minister's proposal, Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jully demanded a division and said it should be sent to know public opinion instead of the Select Committee. However, the Speaker did not approve it.

In protest, Congress MLAs walked out of the House, prompting Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel to comment that the Congress MLAs are running away as they know the House will discuss the 'Emergency' issue imposed in the country.

This is the second bill to be sent to the Select Committee in a week. Earlier, the Rajasthan Ground Water (Conservation and Management) Authority Bill was also sent to the Select Committee.

Along with the Congress, many BJP MLAs also opposed the Land Revenue Amendment and Validation Bill.

# Govt yet to demarcate 1,072 acres of prime Jammu land

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 21:** Half a century after transferring over 10,122 acres of land to the Jammu Development Authority (JDA), the Jammu and Kashmir government is yet to demarcate and hand over possession of 1,075 acres of prime land to the authority.

The demarcation still ongoing, said government officials.

According to a government document, "The JDA has been transferred 80,976 kanals 10 marlas (10,122 acres) of land, out of which 35,353 kanals 1 marla are nazool lands transferred under government order dated October 20, 1973. About 45,623 kanals 9 marlas are state lands transferred under the Jammu and Kashmir State Land Act in Jammu and Samba districts."

It further said, "Out of the total JDA land of 80,976 kanals 10 marlas, 32,387 kanals 19 marlas are under water bodies, 12,202 kanals 19 marlas are under forest and khad, and 36,220 kanals 4 marlas are under Banjar Qadim, agricultural, and other types of lands."

The government admitted to the long demarcation process, saying, "The land demarcated to date is 72,373 kanals 13 marlas (9,046.62 acres), with 8,602 kanals 17 marlas (1,075.25 acres) yet to be demarcated."

"The JDA, with active support from the district administrations of Samba and Jammu, is conducting joint demarcations. So far, we have fenced 1,492 kanals 13 marlas (186.5 acres) of JDA land," it said.

"As the demarcation progresses, the secured land will be immediately fenced," it added.



- THE JDA HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED 80,976 KANALS 10 MARLAS (10,122 ACRES) OF LAND, OUT OF WHICH 35,353 KANALS 1 MARLA ARE NAZOO LANDS TRANSFERRED UNDER GOVERNMENT ORDER DATED OCTOBER 20, 1973
- ABOUT 45,623 KANALS 9 MARLAS ARE STATE LANDS TRANSFERRED UNDER THE JAMMU AND KASHMIR STATE LAND ACT IN JAMMU AND SAMBA DISTRICTS

A 2015-16 report of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had alleged "massive encroachment" on JDA land and criticised the organisation for failing to demarcate 7,243 acres of its land. The CAG had urged the state government to direct

the authority to register and take possession of the land.

The Jammu Development Authority was established in 1971 with the objective of promoting and ensuring the development of Jammu area. Among its duties and responsibilities, the JDA is authorised to implement the J&K Control of Building Operations Act, 1988; Unified Building Bye-Laws 2021, and J&K Control of Building Operations Regulations for orderly development within its jurisdiction, the report added.

According to officials, the Jammu Development Authority has established 14 housing colonies with 10,618 plots and regularised 31 colonies with 4,602 plot holders so far.

It is said that in broader public interest, the government has regularised 31 unauthorised colonies over state and JDA land through various orders.

# Police foil protest march of PHE daily wagers to CM Abdullah's residence

Raising slogans like 'Omar Abdullah hosh mein aao -- hosh mein aao', hundreds of daily wagers under the banner of the PHE Employees Union marched toward the chief minister's residence



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 21:** Police Friday foiled a protest march by daily wagers of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) department supporting their demand for regularization and resorted to minor cane charges to prevent them from moving towards Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's residence here.

The daily wagers have called for a 72-hour strike. Raising slogans like "Omar Abdullah hosh mein aao -- hosh mein aao", hundreds of daily wagers under the banner of the PHE Employees Union marched toward the chief minister's residence.

The daily wagers were protesting against the government's delay in addressing their regularization and pending wage release. The police had set up barricades, some of which were crossed by the protesters. This prompted the police to use mild cane charges.

A large number of police personnel prevented the protesters from marching beyond Shaheed Chowk. The leaders of the daily wagers criticized the National Conference government for failing to address their long-pending issues of regularization and

wage release despite making pre-election promises.

"For decades, many governments have deceived us. This is another deception. They gave us lollypop. The government's committee is just a delaying tactic. Such lollypops cannot support our families," a protesting leader told reporters.

Taking a dig at Chief Minister Abdullah, he said the National Conference leader ignores the poor daily wagers but can initiate an increase in salaries for the MLAs and their constituency development fund to Rs 4 crore.

"The MLAs should transfer their salaries to our department's wage account from which we receive our salaries," the protesters demanded.

The protests by them in the Assembly does not matter to us, they said.

The Jammu and Kashmir government formed a six-member committee Wednesday to examine issues related to the regularization of daily wage workers in the Union Territory.

Earlier Tuesday, the chief minister announced a committee to address the regularization issue of daily wagers in Jammu and Kashmir and said that a roadmap would be prepared for presentation in the next budget session.

# Omar unveils 45 ongoing, 73 new heritage projects in J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jammu, March 21:** The Jammu and Kashmir Government informed the legislative Assembly Thursday that work is ongoing on 45 projects, including forts and religious sites, as part of a scheme for the conservation of heritage sites in the Union Territory.

Seventy-three additional projects have been identified under Phase-II of the UT-level scheme for the revival, restoration, preservation, and maintenance of architecture and heritage. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, who is also the minister in charge of the Department of Culture, stated this.

In a written reply to an unstarred question by National Conference legislator Farooq Ahmad Shah in the Assembly, Abdullah mentioned that no heritage conservation projects sanctioned by the central government are currently being executed by the Department of Culture or the Department of Tourism in Jammu and Kashmir.

However, he said that the J&K government has sanctioned a scheme for the revival, restoration, preservation and maintenance of architecture and heritage in the Union Territory. Between 2019 and 2024, 15 projects were undertaken under capital expenditure (CAPEX) and work is in progress on 33 projects under the first phase of the government scheme, which began in 2022. Additionally, seven projects are under renovation and restoration at the Mubarak Mandi heritage complex, the chief minister said.



Furthermore, detailed project reports have been prepared for 73 projects covering various forts, monuments, religious places, and heritage buildings under Phase-II of the government scheme. Abdullah noted that an amount of Rs 310.7

crore has been sanctioned for CAPEX and the UT-level scheme to cover the first and second phases. To date, Rs 86.40 crore has been utilised for the CAPEX and first phase of the projects.

Under the restoration of the Mubarak Mandi heritage complex in the heart of Jammu city, Rs 59.69 crore has been sanctioned for seven projects, with works worth Rs 17.70 crore already completed.

Mubarak Mandi, located in the heart of the old walled city overlooking the Tawi River, was the royal residence of the Dogra dynasty rulers until 1925, when the last Maharaja moved to the Hari Niwas Palace in the northern part of Jammu.

# Asia's largest tulip garden to open for public March 26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Srinagar, March 21:** Nestled between the Dal lake and the Zabarwan hills, Asia's largest Tulip garden will open for the public March 26 to mark the beginning of the tourism season in the Kashmir valley, officials said Friday.

The Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden was set up by Ghulam Nabi Azad, the then-chief minister of the erstwhile state in 2007, to advance the tourist season in Jammu and Kashmir that was earlier limited to summers and winters.

Formerly known as Siraj Bagh, the garden will be opened to the public as tulips of different colours have started to bloom, floriculture department officials said. The department plants tulip bulbs in a phased manner so



that the flowers remain in bloom for a month or more.

"The garden will be thrown open to the public March 26," Asif Ahmad, assistant floriculture officer at the tulip garden, told PTI. Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah will throw open the garden, he added. Preparations for the garden's opening are in full swing and final touches are being given to make it ready, Ahmad said. The department has added two new varieties of

tulips to the garden this year, he further said.

"We try something new for the tulip garden every year. We are coming up with a new colour scheme this year. We have added two new varieties of tulips, bringing the total number to 74," he added. Other spring flowers such as hyacinths, daffodils, muscari, and cyclamens will also be on display. About 17 lakh tulip bulbs have been planted in the garden that spreads over 55 hectares, Ahmad said.

# Rajasthan: Pension to Emergency fighters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Jaipur, March 21:** The Rajasthan Assembly Friday passed a Bill to provide an honorarium, medical assistance and free transport facilities to those who "actively fought to protect democracy" during the Emergency and were imprisoned for participating in it. The Rajasthan Fighters of Democracy Honour Bill 2024 was passed by voice vote in the House.

Responding to a debate in the House

on the Bill, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Jogaram Patel said Rajasthan has 921 "fighters of democracy" who have 219 dependents. They will get a monthly pension of Rs 20,000 and monthly medical treatment of Rs 4,000, the minister said. As per the Bill, "fighters of democracy" refers to people having a domicile in Rajasthan who actively fought "to protect democracy during the emergency period" and who were detained at any time during this period in jail or police station.

**OFFICE OF THE BARIPADA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, BARIPADA**  
 Phone: 06792-252703, Fax: 06792-252703, Email: baripadam.hud@nic.in  
 Website: www.baripadamunicipality.in  
 No.586, Date: 20.03.2025

**DTCN PART-I (TECHNICAL BID) SECTION-II**  
**COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH 'e' Procurement**  
**No.C-1949:** The Executive Officer on behalf of Baripada Municipality, Baripada invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE only in conformity with Detailed Tender Call Notice (DTCN). Bid documents consisting of work, Estimated Cost, Cost of Tender Paper, EMD and Time of completion, Class of Contractors and the set of terms and conditions of contract and other necessary documents can be seen in Govt. website i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in.  
 Tender Reference No.BPDM-1 of 2025-2026 Tender I.D. No.:2025\_ORULB\_111830

Sl. No.	Description	Critical Dates
1	Procurement Officer-Publisher/Tender inviting Authority/Bids	Executive Officer, Baripada Municipality, Baripada
2	Name of the Work	As per DTCN
3	Nos. of Works	As per DTCN
4	Tendered cost of the works	As per DTCN
(i)	Period of availability of tenders online for bidding	From Dt. 22.03.2025 (01.00 PM) to Dt.07.04.2025 (5.00 PM)
(ii)	Last date and time of bidding online (Submission of Bids)	Dt.07.04.2025 (5.00 P.M.)
(iii)	Date and Time of opening of the Bids received online	Dt.08.04.2025 (11.30 A.M. onwards)
(iv)	To be intimated later to the bidder/s found qualified after evaluation of Technical Bids and Price Bid received on-line	

Detail Tender Call Notice (DTCN) may also be seen from the 'e' procurement portal i.e. www.tendersorissa.gov.in and Baripada Municipality Website i.e. www.baripadamunicipality.in  
 Corrigendum or Addendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can be seen in e-procurement portal as well as in Baripada Municipality website.  
**Sd./ Executive Officer, Baripada Municipality**  
 OIPR-13078/11/0029/2425

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA** E-mail: eerwssbp@gmail.com  
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, R.W.S&S DIVISION, SAMBALPUR**  
**"e"PROCUREMENT NOTICE**  
**Bid Identification No. RWSS (SBP): 12/2024-25**  
**No.O-1648:** Name of the Work: Laying of HDPE pipeline, fixing of valves, construction of valve chambers & FHTC for piped water supply to village Bhalaiapali under Dhankauda Block of Sambalpur District. 2. Total Number of Work: 01 No. (One). 3. Estimated Cost: Rs. 11.28 Lakhs. 4. Class of Contractor: D & C. 5. Period for Completion: Three Months.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender online for bidding
Executive Engineer, RWSS (SBP)- Division, Sambalpur	RWSS (SBP)- 12/2024-25	From 26.03.2025 To upto 5.00 PM of 07.04.2025

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "www.tendersorissa.gov.in" Subsequent corrigendum if required shall be appeared in the website only.  
**OIPR-25015/11/0003/2425 Sd./-(I/c) Executive Engineer, R.W.S&S Division, Sambalpur**

# national



It is with immense joy that I announce the Government of Goa has acquired a plot of land in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, for the construction of Goa Ram Nivas - a dedicated space for devotees of Shri Ramlala Virajman, especially from Goa

## 388 INDIANS DEPORTED FROM US SINCE JAN 2025

Around 388 Indian nationals have been deported from the US since January 2025, the government informed Parliament Friday. Of these, 333 Indians were deported directly from the US to India on three separate flights in February



### of the day uote

The government scrapped the previous YSRCP administration's Pay Revision Commission (PRC) without forming a new one. It has also neglected Interim Relief (IR), Dearness Allowance (DA), and timely salary and pension payments

As an organisation, we are concerned about the forces which are challenging national unity, especially raising the North-South divide, whether it is about delimitation or languages

Additionally, data from the National Judicial Data Grid indicates that there are more than five crore pending cases across different courts and tribunals. Therefore, government litigation may not be considered a major contributor to the judicial backlog

## K'taka Assembly okays Muslims quota Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 21: Karnataka Legislative Assembly Friday passed a Bill to provide 4 per cent reservation for Muslims in public contracts, amidst strong protests by Opposition BJP.

BJP MLAs climbed on the podium where Speaker U T Khader's chair is placed and threw papers at him. On Khader's direction, Marshals evicted the MLAs, who tried to surround the Speaker's chair.

Leader of Opposition, R Ashoka, termed the Bill "un-constitutional".

The Karnataka Transparency in Public Procurements (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was piloted by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil.

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

This was announced by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in his 2025-26 Budget, presented March 7.

At present, Karnataka has reservation in civil works contracts for SC/STs (24 per cent) and OBC contractors belonging to Category-1 (4 per cent) and Category-2A (15 per cent). There were demands to add Muslims under Category-2B of the OBCs with a reservation of 4 per cent.

# Experts slam Allahabad HC ruling

Allahabad High Court bench of Justice Ram Manohar Narayan Mishra ruled mere grabbing of breasts and breaking of the string of a 'pyjama' do not amount to offence of rape but such offence falls under the ambit of assault or use of criminal force against any woman with the intent to disrobe or compel her to be naked

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



crime of attempt to rape which was a travesty of justice.

"The case based on the facts such as grabbing breasts, pulling the strings on her pyjama, and trying to drag her beneath the culvert and the fact that they only ran away due to intervention, falls squarely in the category of attempt to rape, where all possible actions have been taken to rape an 11-year-old girl," she told PTI. Anand declared a time had come for a "reawakening".

"Violators of the law and offenders against women and children cannot get away and the judgment clearly errs by ignoring this. I am sure that appropriate reversals would be made to such a judgment and justice will be done," she added.

Senior advocate and Supreme Court Bar Association president Kapil Sibal took to X, saying, "God save this country with such judges adorning the Bench! The Supreme Court has been too soft in dealing with er-

rant judges (sic)." Sibal subsequently said judges, especially those from the high courts, should refrain from making such statements, as it would "send wrong message to the society and people will lose faith in the judiciary".

"I think giving such controversial statement is improper, because in current time, whatever the judges say sends a message to the society. If the judges, especially those from the high courts, give such statements, it will send wrong message to the society and people will lose faith in the judiciary," he said.

Senior advocate Sonia Mathur said the judgment was "not legally right" for the reason that facts of the case clearly reflected the intent of the accused persons, particularly considering the stage of proceedings.

"At the stage of summoning only a prima facie view has to be taken and on these facts to say that case of "attempt" is

not made out is against basic principles. Secondly, intent to commit an offence, or mens rea, is a crucial element that can only be proven in a trial to establish guilt. For high court to decide the issue in revision jurisdiction was totally wrong," she said.

Senior advocate Vikas Pahwa said the interpretation of the Allahabad High Court appeared to set a concerning precedent by narrowly defining what constitutes an attempt to rape. He said that the alleged actions of "grabbing breasts, pulling down the pyjamas, and dragging the girl towards the culvert" strongly indicated an intent to commit rape, arguably surpassing mere preparation and entering the realm of attempt to rape.

"Decisions like this risk undermining public confidence in the judicial system's commitment to protecting victims of sexual violence. They may also discourage survivors from coming forward, fearing that their experiences will be minimized or dismissed. It is imperative that the judiciary adopts a more victim-centric approach, ensuring that actions indicative of an intent to commit rape are appropriately recognised and prosecuted to uphold justice and deter potential offenders," Pahwa said.

He further said that at the summoning stage, courts typically assess whether there is a prima facie case based on the allegations, without delving deeply into the evaluation of evidence.

## TRADE-DEAL Negotiations with US underway: India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: With just 11 days left for US President Donald Trump's tariff to kick in, India Friday said its negotiations with Washington are underway to build a framework for a bilateral trade pact that would address issues relating to levies and market access.

India remains engaged with the US administration at "various levels" to arrive at a mutually-beneficial trade agreement, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. Jaiswal, however, did not directly respond to queries on whether India is expecting some kind of a waiver from Trump's reciprocal tariff that is coming into effect April 2.

The US president indicated Wednesday that Washington will not spare India from the new tariff regime, saying he has a "very good" relationship with New Delhi and has a "problem" with its tariff structure.

"India and the US are in the process of taking bilateral trade negotiations forward," Jaiswal said. "The two governments are actively working to build a framework for the BTA, which would aim to expand trade, enhance market access, reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers and deepen supply-chain integration," he said.

### SHORT TAKES

#### Goa: 14 tonnes of gunpowder explode

Panaji: A fire at a warehouse in Goa, stocked with explosives for a private small caliber ammunition factory, sparked a massive explosion destroying 14.5 tonnes of gunpowder, police said Friday. No casualty was reported in the incident which occurred around 10:30 PM Thursday on the premises of M/s Hughes Precision Manufacturing Private Limited in Naqueri-Betul village. The impact of the blast was so intense that it caused cracks in several houses, Quepem MLA Altonne D'Costa, who visited the site, told PTI.

#### Man dies after falling from train

Kota: A 21-year-old man died after allegedly falling from a moving train on the Delhi-Mumbai upline track in Rajasthan's Bundi district Friday morning, police said. The man was identified as Satyam Pandey (21), hailing from the Pejana village of Bihar's Nawada, based on an Aadhaar card found in his pocket, a police officer said. Police reached the spot around 8.30 am upon receiving information from the station master, they said.

#### Two dead in wall collapse

Korba: Two labourers, including a woman, were killed and six injured Friday in a wall collapse amid rains and thunderstorm at an under-construction rice mill in Chhattisgarh's Korba district, a police official said. The incident took place in the afternoon in Lakhapur-Barbhata village under Katghora police station limits, he said.

#### Karnataka braces for bandh today

Bangalore: Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place across Karnataka as pro-Kannada groups have called for a 12-hour statewide shutdown March 22 to protest the alleged assault on a state-run bus conductor in Belagavi last month for not knowing Marathi. According to officials, police in various districts have deployed home guards along with the City Armed Reserve unit as a precautionary measure to ensure that the bandh is observed peacefully without causing inconvenience to the public.

# Hoping to rebuild ties with Canada, says India

India's comments came days after Mark Carney, an economist and political newcomer, took charge as Canada's new prime minister following the exit of Justin Trudeau from the top office. Carney has said he wants to improve ties with India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



ada relations was caused by the license that was given to the extremist and secessionist elements in that country," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. He was responding to a question at his weekly media briefing on the current status of India-Canada bilateral ties. "Our hope is that we can rebuild our ties based on mutual trust and sensitivity," he said. Canadian Security Intelligence Service chief Daniel Rogers visited India last week to attend a conclave of top global intelligence czars, in an indication of efforts to improve the ties between the two sides. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain following Trudeau's allegations in September 2023 of the "potential" involvement of Indian

agents in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar on Canadian soil. New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". The relations nosedived further in the second half of last year after Ottawa linked several Indian diplomats including High Commissioner Sanjay Verma to the murder of Nijjar.

In October last, India withdrew Verma and five other diplomats. India also expelled an equal number of Canadian diplomats from New Delhi. In the last few months, the security officials of India and Canada resumed contacts and both sides are looking at the possibility of appointing new high commissioners.

The exit of Trudeau is being seen as an opportunity to improve the bilateral ties.



Twipra Students' Federation (TSF) activists protest demanding Roman script adoption for Kokborok, in Agartala

## Girl found dead in Manipur relief camp

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Churachandpur, March 21: A 9-year-old girl was found dead in Manipur's Churachandpur district headquarters town under suspicious circumstances in the early hours of Friday, police said.

She went missing around 6 pm Thursday, following which her family started searching, they said. Her body was later found near a relief camp for internally displaced persons in the town's Lanva TD Block, police said. She had multiple

injury marks on her body, especially her throat, besides blood stains, they added.

It is suspected that she was raped, they said, adding that the body was sent to the hospital for post-mortem examination. Police said 15 people have been detained for interrogation, but no arrests have been made yet. Condemning the incident, former chief minister N Biren Singh expressed condolences to the bereaved family members.

"I strongly condemn the heinous killing of the girl by un-

identified miscreants," he said. "My heartfelt condolences go out to the bereaved family and share their grief during this difficult time. This senseless act is a grave crime against humanity, and I urge the authorities to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice without delay," Singh posted on X. Several organisations, including the Zomi Mother's Association (ZMA) and Young Vaiphei Association (YVA), Haupi Block, have also expressed deep sorrow over the incident.

## CHINA'S 2 NEW COUNTIES

# Registered protest through diplomatic channels: Govt

The ministry was asked whether the government is aware of "China's establishment of two new counties in the Hotan prefecture, incorporating Indian territory in Ladakh", if so, the strategic and diplomatic measures undertaken by the government to address this issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

which fall in Ladakh, and has registered a "solemn" protest through diplomatic channels, the government told Parliament on Friday.

"The Government of India has never accepted the illegal Chinese occupation of Indian Territory in this area. Creation of new counties will neither have a bearing on India's long-standing and consistent position regarding India's sovereignty over the area, nor lend legitimacy to China's illegal and forcible occupation of the same," Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said this in a written response to a query in Lok Sabha.

The government has registered its "solemn protest over these developments through



diplomatic channels", he said.

The ministry was asked whether the government is aware of "China's establishment of two new counties in

the Hotan prefecture, incorporating Indian territory in Ladakh", if so, the strategic and diplomatic measures undertaken by the government to

address this issue. The query also sought details of protests lodged by India against the "creation of these counties" along with the responses received from the Chinese government, if any.

It was also asked whether the government has formulated any long-term strategies to "counter China's increasing administrative and infrastructural developments in the Aksai Chin region".

"Government of India is aware of the announcement by the Chinese side pertaining to the establishment of so-called two new counties in Hotan prefecture of China. Parts of the jurisdiction of these so-called counties fall in India's Union Territory

of Ladakh," he said. The government is also aware that China is "developing infrastructure in the border regions". "Government gives careful and special attention to improvement of infrastructure for the development of border areas, in order to facilitate the economic development of these areas, as also to meet India's strategic and security requirements," the MoS said.

The budget allocation for border infrastructure have increased in the last decade (2014-2024). The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) alone has incurred three times the expenditure level compared to the decade before, the minister said.



# national



Several villages in the state still lack Venkateswara Swamy temples and to collect funds to construct temples in those villages we will establish a trust

## 13 BANGLADESH NATIONALS DEPORTED: CENTRE TO SC

The Centre Friday informed the Supreme Court that 13 Bangladesh nationals were deported to their country so far and consultations were on to repatriate the remaining illegal immigrants living in Assam's detention centres



### of the day quote

This is the truth of ease of doing business in Uttar Pradesh, where commission is being openly demanded in the name of industrial development and when the matter is exposed, a drama of suspension is being staged



I hope the CM (Devendra Fadnavis) resolves the issue at the earliest. If this issue remains unresolved, then RPI (A) should get the guardian minister's post for Raigad



The AAP and TMC damaged the Congress in the 2022 polls. The TMC and AAP come to Goa and work as the B teams of the BJP. This should not happen in 2027. In fact, after the 2022 assembly polls in Goa, the TMC even shut its office in the state. The AAP's Goa unit chief (Amit Palekar) is making statements against the Congress since the Delhi polls



### POST OF THE DAY

Last Year, these same celebrities were promoting Lakshadweep, doing tweets against Maldives, Companies like Ease My trip suspended flight bookings to Maldives. This year, Maldives is an official destination sponsor of India's richest man's team. This is how fake Internet Outrage is.

@RoshanKrRaii

### SHORT TAKES

#### Bharadwaj appointed as Delhi AAP chief

New Delhi: After losing its home turf Delhi in the Assembly elections held last month, the Aam Aadmi Party Friday announced a major organisational rejig by appointing former minister Saurabh Bharadwaj as the new president of its Delhi unit and senior leader Manish Sisodia as its in-charge for Punjab. While Bharadwaj replaces Gopal Rai, Sisodia takes charge of Punjab, the only state in the country where the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is in power at present.

#### ED nabs ex-PFI trainer from TN

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate Friday said it has arrested a former physical trainer of the Popular Front of India (PFI) from Tamil Nadu's Coimbatore following fresh round of searches in a money laundering case against the banned organisation's political arm SDPI. Wahidur Rahman Jainullabudeen was taken into custody Thursday by the ED's Special Task Force (STF) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) from Mettupalayam in Coimbatore district, the federal probe agency said.

#### 2 men shot dead in UP

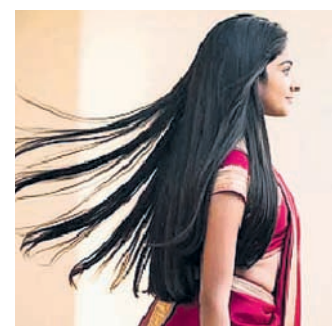
Ghazipur: Two men were shot dead in broad daylight Friday in Uchauri Bhairospur village, under the Khanpur police station area here, police said. The victims have been identified as Aman Chauhan (20) and Anurag Singh, alias Monu (27), both residents of Sidhauna village. Superintendent of Police Iraj Raja stated that authorities received information about two bodies lying at the scene this afternoon.

# Commenting on woman colleague's hair not harassment: HC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 21: Commenting on and singing a song about a woman colleague's hair in itself does not amount to sexual harassment at workplace, the Bombay High Court has said, granting relief to a senior executive of a private bank. Justice Sandeep Marne in his order of March 18 said even if the allegations against the petitioner were taken to be true, a "concrete inference" about sexual harassment cannot be drawn from them.

Vinod Kachave, an associate regional manager with the HDFC Bank in Pune, had challenged a July 2024 order passed by the industrial court dismissing his appeal against a report submitted by the bank's Internal Complaints Committee holding him guilty of misconduct under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act). Following the committee's report, Kachave was demoted



to a deputy regional manager. As per the woman complainant, the petitioner passed

a comment on her hair, and also sang a song referring to her hair. In another instance, the complainant said, he allegedly passed a remark about a male colleague's private part in the presence of other women colleagues. The high court said the bank's complaints committee did not consider whether the alleged conduct of the petitioner constituted sexual harassment. The findings of the industrial court were "clearly perverse" as it completely ignored the fact

that even if the allegations were taken as proved, "no case of sexual harassment of the complainant was made out". The high court set aside the bank's internal report of September 2022 as well as the Pune industrial court's order. Kachave's lawyer Sana Raees Khan argued before the high court that the alleged incidents did not fall under the purview of the POSH Act. Kachave had only remarked to the complainant that she must be using a "JCB" to man-

age her hair, the lawyer said. As to the other incident, advocate Khan said the complainant was not even present when the alleged remark was passed. The lawyer also pointed out that the complaint of sexual harassment was made only after the complainant tendered her resignation. The high court said considering the nature of the comment allegedly made by Kachave, it was difficult to believe that the intent was to cause sexual harassment.

## CASH DISCOVERY ROW

# Transfer unrelated to in-house probe: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 21: Following reports of alleged cash discovery from sitting Delhi HC judge Yashwant Varma's official home, the Supreme Court Friday said the Delhi High Court chief justice had initiated an in-house inquiry against him and the proposal to transfer him to the Allahabad High Court was separate.

## Bar Association slams judge's transfer

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court Bar Association Friday opposed the transfer of Delhi High Court sitting judge Justice Yashwant Varma, from whose official home a huge stash of cash was reportedly discovered, saying it was not a "trash bin". In a resolution passed soon after the news of the judge's transfer by a Supreme Court collegium was reported, the association said, "We were taken aback that the Supreme Court has transferred Justice Yashwant Varma back to Allahabad High Court..."

The purported discovery of a huge stash of cash happened following a fire at Varma's Lutyens Delhi residence at around 11.35 pm March 14, prompting the Delhi fire department personnel to rush to the spot and douse it.



Delhi Fire Services Chief Atul Garg, however, denied claims of the cash discovery by the fire fighters. The quantum of the alleged discovered amount is also not known. The incident created ripples in the legal circuit, with many voices calling for the judge's resignation while criticising the Supreme Court collegium decision to transfer him. To put to rest the supposed conjectures, the top court issued a statement which read, "There is misinformation and rumours being spread with regard to the incident at the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma." While confirming reports that the apex court collegium met to discuss the matter, the top court said Delhi High Court Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya would submit a report to Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna today. Upon receiving the informa-

tion, the apex court said, Justice Upadhyaya "commenced the in-house enquiry procedure collecting evidence and information". Justice Upadhyaya was stated to have commenced the enquiry prior to the collegium meeting March 20. It said the proposal for transfer of Justice Varma, who is the second senior-most judge in the Delhi High Court, to the Allahabad High Court was "independent and separate from the in-house enquiry procedure".

"Moreover, the reported incident has happened in Delhi," it said. The apex court said the proposal for transfer him was examined by the apex court collegium comprising the CJI and four senior-most judges March 20, and thereafter letters were shot off to the consultee judges of the top court, the chief justices of the high courts concerned apart from Justice Varma. Justice Upadhyaya, while presiding his bench, expressed shock on the matter. The chief justice's reaction came when a senior lawyer mentioned before him that he and many other advocates were pained and shaken by the incident and urged the chief justice to take some steps on the administrative side.



Peta Founder Ingrid Newkirk during a "skinned alive" alive protest against animal butchery, in Mumbai PTI PHOTO

## DISRESPECT TO NATIONAL ANTHEM

# Nitish under fire from Oppn

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 21: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Friday came under heavy Opposition fire, in both Houses of state legislature, for allegedly disrespecting the national anthem at a public function a day ago.



When the announcement for the national anthem was made after inauguration of the Sepak Takraw World Cup 2025 Thursday, Kumar had abruptly got off the stage and began exchanging pleasantries with the participants. Later, when the national anthem was played, he stood smiling and waving at bystanders

When the announcement for the national anthem was made after inauguration of the Sepak Takraw World Cup 2025 Thursday, Kumar had abruptly got off the stage and began exchanging pleasantries with the participants. Later, when the national anthem was played, he stood smiling and waving at bystanders.

Tejashwi Yadav, the leader of the opposition, demanded that an adjournment motion moved by his party on Kumar's behaviour be taken up for discussion immediately. Speaker Nand Kishor Yadav said the matter could be taken up during the Zero Hour and tried to proceed with the day's business, amid constant

sloganeering by opposition MLAs, many of whom entered the Well of the House. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary said "if they (Opposition) want an adjournment motion to be considered, they should wait for the appropriate time. As for the issue they are trying to raise, our leader needs no lessons in respecting the national anthem". However, the opposition was relentless in demanding an "unconditional apology" from the CM, and the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm.

Yadav told reporters outside the Assembly: "It is not a small issue. If the chief minister does not apologise, it would set a wrong precedent. Also, it is becoming evident day by day that he is not mentally sound and a state like Bihar, which is inhabited by close to 14 crore people, is not safe in his hands". When the House re-assembled, ruckus created by the Opposition led to another adjournment till 3.30 pm.

## 18 BJP MLAs suspended from K'taka Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 21: Eighteen BJP MLAs were suspended for six months from the Karnataka Legislative Assembly Friday for "disrespecting" Speaker U T Khader.

The suspension resolution, moved by state Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H K Patil, was adopted by the Assembly. The incident occurred on the last day of the assembly's budget session, when the Opposition BJP MLAs staged a massive protest.

The legislators climbed onto the podium where Speaker Khader's chair is situated and threw papers at him. The protest was sparked by Opposition anger over the allocation of a four percent reservation to Muslims in public contracts. Earlier, the BJP members had protested from the well of the house, accusing the government of attempting to "honey trap" a minister and demanding a judicial probe into the matter even as the Chief Minister addressed the Budget discussion.

Those who were suspended are the BJP chief whip Doddanna Gouda Patil, C N Ashwath Narayan, S R Vishwanath, B A Basavaraju, M R Patil, Chanabasappa, B Suresh Gowda, Umanath Kotyan, Sharanu Salagar, Dr Shailendra Beldale, C K Ramamurthy, Yashpal Suvarna, B P Harish, Bharath Shetty, Dheeraj Muniraju, Chandru Lamani, Muniratna and Basavaraj Mattimood.

While reading out the suspension order, Khader said, "The incident has hurt us a lot and it's painful. This seat is not just a chair. This is the symbol of democracy, truth and justice. To speak from this chair is a matter of pride. Every member should protect the dignity and sanctity of this chair. None of us are above the chair. Our personal sentiments should not be above the dignity of this chair. We should behave with commitment, calm and civilised way. Let this incident be a lesson for us. Let us in the coming days respect constitution and sanctity of this chair."

## UP SHOCKER

# Man operates on self after watching YouTube

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mathura (UP), March 21: A 32-year-old man from Uttar Pradesh's Vrindavan, who attempted to cure his recurring stomach pain by performing surgery on himself using techniques learned from YouTube, is now reportedly recovering well at home.



Babu to SN Medical College in Agra for further care. However, instead of going to Agra, Raja Babu returned home. Chief Medical Officer Dr Ajay Verma said Friday, "The EMO (emergency medical officer) Dr Shashi Ranjan, who was present at the District Joint Hospital at that time, gave him first aid and referred him to Agra, but he did not go there."

THE MAN LOCKED HIMSELF IN A ROOM WEDNESDAY AND MADE A SEVEN-INCH INCISION ON THE LOWER RIGHT SIDE OF ABDOMEN. HE WAS RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL BY HIS NEPHEW AFTER THE BLEEDING DID NOT STOP

he said that Raja Babu's condition is better than before. "Doctors at the hospital informed us that Raja Babu had only cut the upper layer of his abdomen, leaving his internal organs unharmed," said the nephew. Rahul mentioned that Raja Babu's wound has reportedly healed after dressing, and he is now recovering at home.

## CM Dhami attends 62nd All India Shastrotsav closing ceremony

POST NEWS NETWORK

Haridwar, March 21: Our scriptures are not just texts but a means to understand the mysteries of the entire creation. The Indian scriptures and texts contain such incredible principles that are reflected in modern science and knowledge.



These thoughts were expressed by Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami during the closing ceremony of the 62nd All India Shastrotsav held at Patanjali University. The Chief Minister stated that the foundation of Indian culture and tradition lies in our ancient scriptures, which encompass profound knowledge of science, yoga, medicine, mathematics and philosophy. On the occasion, Patanjali University's Chancellor Swami Ramdev stated that Sanskrit is not just a language but has the potential to lead in any field worldwide. Calling the Akhil Bharatiya Shastrotsav a confluence of Sanskrit and culture, Swami Ramdev asserted that all original languages have originated from Sanskrit and this is

a matter of great pride. During the event, Patanjali University's Vice-Chancellor Acharya Balakrishna described Sanskrit as a sacred heritage and a symbol of cultural pride while highlighting the significance of ancient Indian scriptures in life. Acharya Ji encouraged scholars, students, researchers, and followers of Sanatan Dharma from across the country to make continuous efforts to spread awareness of the importance of the Vedas and scriptures among the masses. At the Shastrotsav closing ceremony, former chief minister Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' stated that Sanskrit is not an outdated language but the one that has the power to establish its prominence worldwide.



The island's defence budget will exceed 3 per cent of its economic output as it overhauls its military in the face of the rising threat from China. WILLIAM LAI CHING-TE | PRESIDENT, TAIWAN

INDONESIA'S LEWOTOBI LAKI-LAKI VOLCANO ERUPTS

An eruption of Indonesia's Lewotobi Laki-laki volcano spewed ash clouds more than 8 kilometres (5 miles) high, authorities said as they raised the alert status to the highest level, and an Australian airline cancelled some flights into Bali Friday



of the day quote

It would be a pity if both countries miss the opportunity to resolve their disputes peacefully since they already possess an agreed template for a possible solution of the Jammu and Kashmir issue in the form of a four-point formula. KHURSHID MAHMUD KASURI | EX-FOREIGN MINISTER, PAKISTAN

Our concern over the inclusion on the list of 'Sensitive and Other Designated Countries' was explained and South Korea and the U.S. agreed to cooperate to swiftly resolve the issue under procedures provided. ANH DUK-GEUN | INDUSTRY MINISTER, SOUTH KOREA

During my visit to New Delhi this time, diplomatic efforts were also made to increase the supply of electricity from India to Nepal under the existing bilateral contract and through the IEX allowing for longer-duration power draw each day to help address Nepal's ongoing electricity deficit. ARZU RANA DEUBA | FOREIGN MINISTER, NEPAL

US SC to hear Rana's renewed plea seeking stay of extradition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, March 21: US Supreme Court justices will hear next month Mumbai terror attack accused Tahawwur Rana's renewed application, submitted to Chief Justice John Roberts, seeking a stay of his extradition to India.

Rana, 64, is currently lodged in the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles and submitted an "Emergency Application For Stay Pending Litigation of Petition For Writ of Habeas Corpus" February 27, 2025 with Elena Kagan, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States and Circuit Justice for the Ninth Circuit.

Earlier this month, Kagan had denied the application. Rana had then renewed his "Emergency Application for Stay Pending Litigation of Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus" previously addressed to Justice Kagan, and requested that the renewed application be directed to Chief Justice Roberts.

An order on the Supreme Court website noted that Rana's renewed application has been "distributed for Conference of 4/4/2025" and "application" has been "referred to the Court."

Rana is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks.

Rana was convicted in the US of one count of conspiracy to provide material support to the terrorist plot in Denmark and one count of providing material support to Pakistan-based terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba which was responsible for the attacks in Mumbai.

Global flight turmoil at London

REUTERS

London, March 21: Britain's Heathrow Airport was shut Friday after a huge fire at a nearby substation knocked out its power, stranding passengers around the world and angering airlines who questioned how such crucial infrastructure could fail.

Huge orange flames and plumes of black smoke shot into the sky around 2300 GMT Thursday as a blaze engulfed the substation, cutting the power supply and back-up system for Europe's busiest and the world's fifth-busiest airport.

Police said while there was no indication of foul play they retained an open mind and counter-terrorism officers would lead the inquiries given the critical nature of the infrastructure, and their capabilities.

Airline experts said the last time European airports experienced disruption on such a large scale was the 2010 Icelandic ash cloud that grounded some 100,000 flights.

The industry is now facing the prospect of a financial hit costing tens of millions of pounds, and a likely fight over who should pay.

The fire brigade said the cause of the fire was not known, but that 25,000 litres of cooling oil in the substation's transformer had caught fire. It had brought the blaze under control by the early morning with the transformer doused in white firefighting foam.

Heathrow had been due to handle 1,351 flights Friday, flying up to 291,000 passengers. The closure forced flights to divert to other airports in Britain and across Europe, while many long-haul flights returned to their point of departure.



HEATHROW TO BE CLOSED ALL OF FRIDAY. FLIGHTS DIVERTED AROUND THE WORLD. FIRE AT SUBSTATION NOW OUT. INDUSTRY, EXPERTS ASK HOW IT COULD HAVE HAPPENED. POLICE SAY NO SIGNS OF FOUL PLAY, COUNTER-TERRORISM OFFICERS DEPLOYED.

Passengers stranded in London and facing the prospect of days of disruptions were scrambling to make alternate travel arrangements.

Industry experts warned that some passengers forced to land in Europe may have to stay in transit lounges if they lack the paperwork to leave the airport.

Global flight schedules will also be affected, as aircraft and crews will now be out of position, forcing carriers to rapidly reconfigure their networks. Prices at hotels around Heathrow jumped, with booking sites offering rooms for 500 pounds (\$645), roughly five times the normal price levels.

Prices at hotels around Heathrow jumped, with booking sites offering rooms for 500 pounds (\$645), roughly five times the normal price levels.

Airline executives, electrical engineers and passengers questioned how Britain's gateway to the world could be forced to close by one fire, however large.

Heathrow, and London's other major airports, have been hit by other outages in recent years, most recently by an automated gate failure and an air traffic system meltdown, both in 2023.

Pictures on social media showed the airport terminals in near darkness during the night, and British energy minister Ed Miliband said it appeared that the "catastrophic" fire had prevented the power back-up system from working.

Philip Ingram, a former intelligence officer in the British military, said Heathrow's inability to keep operating exposed vulnerability in Britain's critical national infrastructure.

Willie Walsh, the head of the global airlines body IATA and a former head of British Airways said Heathrow had once again let passengers down.

Heathrow said it had diesel generators and uninterruptible power supplies in place to land aircraft and evacuate passengers safely. Those systems all operated as expected. But with the airport consuming as much energy as a small city, it said it could not run all its operations safely on back-up systems.

Experts in power supply said the type of fire that erupted overnight was extremely rare, but they added that there should be sufficient alternative supplies to get everyone back online quickly.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was receiving regular updates on the incident.

MIDNIGHT FLIGHT SCRAMBLE. As the scale of the outage became clear, flights operated by airlines including jetBlue, American Airlines, Air Canada, Air India, Delta Air, Qantas, United Airlines, IAG-owned British Airways and Virgin were diverted or returned to their origin airports in the middle of the night, according to data from flight analytics firm Cirium.

Qantas Airways sent its flight from Perth to Paris, a United Airlines New York flight headed to Shannon, Ireland, and a United Airlines flight from San Francisco was due to land in Washington, DC rather than London.

British Airways, the biggest carrier at Heathrow, had 341 flights scheduled to land there Friday.

Musk holds Pentagon meet

REUTERS

Washington, March 21: Billionaire Elon Musk held a meeting for more than an hour at the Pentagon Friday morning as the close ally of President Donald Trump called for the prosecutions of any Pentagon officials leaking false information about his visit.

Musk, who is making sweeping cuts to the US federal government, had been expected to get an overview of a number of sensitive topics. The New York Times reported he would be briefed on secret war plans for China, something Musk, Trump and others denied.

Musk arrived in a motorcade and quickly moved upstairs to meet US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. It was unclear whether US generals joined that meeting virtually.

Hegseth said on X the Musk meeting would focus on "innovation, efficiencies & smarter production."

The visit, which began shortly before 9 a.m., lasted about 80 minutes. As he departed, Musk was seen joking with Hegseth, and said the meeting went well.

Earlier Friday, before arriving at the Pentagon, Musk lashed out at the New York Times, calling it "pure propaganda."



I look forward to the prosecutions of those at the Pentagon who are leaking maliciously false information to NYT. They will be found. ELON MUSK | SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

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"I look forward to the prosecutions of those at the Pentagon who are leaking maliciously false information to NYT. They will be found."

Trump also denied the story. "China will not even be mentioned or discussed," Trump said in a post on Truth Social Thursday about the meeting.

Access to a closely guarded military plan would mark a sharp expansion of Musk's role as a Trump adviser who has spearheaded efforts to cut US government spending.

It would also fuel questions about conflicts of interest for Musk, who as the head of Tesla and SpaceX has business interests in China and with the Pentagon.

The White House has previously said Musk will recuse himself if any conflicts of interest arise between his business dealings and his role in cutting federal government spending.

Last week, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard said she had ordered an investigation into leaks from

Judge blocks Indian student's deportation over Hamas ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, March 21: A US federal judge has blocked the deportation of an Indian student at Georgetown University who was arrested after federal authorities accused him of "actively spreading Hamas propaganda".

Badar Khan Suri is a postdoctoral fellow at the Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding at the Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington DC.

In a court order dated March 20, United States District Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles said, "It is ordered that petitioner shall not be removed from the United States unless and until the court issues a contrary order."

A senior Department of Homeland Security spokesperson earlier said in a statement to PTI that "Suri was a foreign exchange student at Georgetown University actively spreading Hamas propaganda and promoting antisemitism on social media. Suri has close



connections to a known or suspected terrorist, who is a senior advisor to Hamas."

"The Secretary of State issued a determination March 15, 2025 that Suri's activities and presence in the United States rendered him deportable." Suri's lawyer Hassan Ahmad had filed a petition for a writ of habeas corpus March 18. According to the petition, the Department of Homeland Security had arrested and charged Suri with "removability" March 17.

At the time of filing, Suri alleged he was being detained at the Farmville Detention Center in Farmville, Virginia, Giles' order had noted.

Top Russian official meets N Korea's Kim

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, March 21: A top Russian security official met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang Friday and thanked him for the country's support of Moscow's war efforts in Ukraine, according to Russian state media.

The meeting came after South Korea's spy agency said in late February that North Korea appeared to have sent additional troops to Russia after soldiers fighting in the Russian-Ukraine war suffered heavy casualties.

Russia's state-run news agency Tass reported that Sergei Shoigu, Russia's Security Council secretary, during a meeting with Kim, expressed gratitude for North Korea's "solidarity with Russia's position on all critical geopolitical issues, particularly on the Ukrainian issue."

Tass said Shoigu also conveyed a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who extended his greetings and vowed to give "utmost attention" to implementing agreements reached in their recent summits.

Shrinking Andean glaciers threaten water supply of 90mn people

The glaciers that sit high in the Andes — or Andean Mountain Range — extend through Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, and provide water used for domestic consumption, hydroelectric power, industry, irrigation of arable crops and supporting livestock farming

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 21: Scientists from the University of Sheffield have warned policymakers that the shrinking glaciers of the Andes threaten the water supply of 90 million people on the South American continent at the first-ever World Day for Glaciers hosted by UNESCO in Paris.

The glaciers that sit high in the Andes — or Andean Mountain Range — extend through Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador and Colombia, and provide water used for domestic consumption, hydroelectric

power, industry, irrigation of arable crops and supporting livestock farming.

A new policy brief, 'the future of the Andean water towers', was presented at the conference Friday by scientists studying the depleting water supplies due to retreating Andean glaciers from the Universities of Sheffield and Newcastle.

It outlines how the shrinking of the glaciers poses a very real threat to the water and food security of the millions of people dependent on them.

The Andean glaciers are thinning by 0.7 metres a year,

35 per cent faster than the global average. This could result in an almost total glacier loss in the area of the Tropical Andes, with other areas of the mountain range experiencing a loss of over half its glacier coverage according to some of the worst scenarios predicted.

Dr Jeremy Ely, from the University of Sheffield's School of Geography and Planning, said, "The first Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on climate change was published in 1990, and since then, very little has been done to curb the global carbon emissions fuelling climate change."

"Our brief shows that what scientists have been predicting for years is now coming true and swift action needs to be taken if we stand any hope of saving and preserving the glaciers that so many people rely on as a source of water."

Climate change is raising air temperatures causing



more frequent and severe extreme weather events, decreasing snowfall and increasing droughts across the Andes, all of which are threatening the stability of the Andean glaciers as a water source and the security of the people who rely on them.

The brief demonstrates that the shrinking of the glaciers has accelerated in recent decades, with unprecedented rates of ice

loss post-2000, coinciding with increased greenhouse gas emissions worldwide.

For the 2015 Paris Agreement — the global treaty on climate change — countries around the world agreed to commit to take actions to keep global temperature rises within 1.5°C, as letting average global temperatures reach any higher would lead to extreme weather events, water shortages, lower

crop yields, economic losses, higher sea levels and greater damage to nature.

However, that target was already surpassed for several months in 2024, and recent projections of a higher than 2°C warming scenario, show that areas of the Andes will be entirely, or almost entirely, ice free by 2100.

The brief highlights that, as well as curbing global carbon emissions, effective management of water resources due to the consequence of changing human and natural systems and changing supply and demand affecting the region.

As glaciers shrink, supply diminishes and many countries will be forced to try and mitigate the problem by building major water storage infrastructure, such as dams. However this will take significant investment that poorer countries, and those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, may not be able to afford.

# Business

**Notwithstanding recent trends, overall, FPI flows have not been as bad as one might perhaps imagine today**

ANANTH NARAYAN G | WHOLE-TIME MEMBER, SEBI

**BIKANERVALA TO EXPAND BIZ IN UK**

Bikanervala is gearing up for its UK expansion in partnership with retail and hospitality leader The Montana Group, the Indian snack and restaurant chain said Friday. This move comes after the launch of its new outlet in Sri Ganganagar, marking a homecoming for the brand to its roots in Rajasthan



of the day **quote**

**Competitions like the Indian Web Browser Development Challenge enable an environment for indigenous technology to prosper, where it's not just about building technology, but about laying the foundation for technological self-reliance**

**MANI VEMBU | CEO, ZOHO**

**As part of our long-term growth strategy, we remain aligned with the 'Make in India' initiative and continue to invest in Research and Development, strengthening our capabilities**

**TAKEMICHI HIRAKAWA | MD AND CEO, KOBELCO CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT**

**The agricultural landscape in India presents us with a striking paradox: women constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce and educational cohorts, yet a major proportion of the graduates do not enter the formal employment structures**

**VIDYA VEMIREDDY | FACULTY MEMBER, IIMA**

**SHORT TAKES**

**Mahindra to hike prices by up to 3%**

**New Delhi:** Mahindra & Mahindra Friday said it will hike prices of its SUVs and commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from April. The price increase is attributed to rising input costs and increased commodity prices, among other reasons, the Mumbai-based auto major said in a statement. The extent of the price increase will vary across different SUVs and commercial vehicles, it added. Various automakers including Maruti Suzuki India, Hyundai Motor, Tata Motors, Kia India, BMW and Honda Cars India have announced to hike vehicle prices from next month citing rising input costs. Shares of M&M Friday ended 1.08 per cent down at ₹2,799.30 apiece on BSE.

**Air passenger traffic surges 11% in Feb**

**Mumbai:** India's domestic air passenger traffic increased 11.04 per cent to 140.44 lakh in February over the same month last year, according to monthly traffic data by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The number of domestic passengers flown by the Indian airline in February 2024 was recorded at 126.48 lakh, data show. During the month under review, IndiGo flew a total of 89.40-lakh passengers with a market share of 63.7 per cent, followed by the Air India Group, which transported 38.30 lakh passengers and chipped away with 27.3 per cent market share. Air India last year completed consolidation of its airlines business with AIX Connect merging into Air India Express in October and Vistara's merger with Air India on November 11.

**PhysicsWallah files draft IPO papers**

**New Delhi:** Edtech unicorn PhysicsWallah has filed draft IPO papers with capital markets regulator Sebi through a confidential pre-filing route. The confidential pre-filing route allows the company to withhold public disclosure of details under the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). Founded in 2020, PhysicsWallah is known for providing accessible and comprehensive learning experiences to students.

**BOOST TO SELF-RELIANCE**

## Coal output hits 1bn tonnes feat



India relies on coal for approximately 55% of its energy mix, and around 74% of the country's electricity is generated by coal-based power plants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 21:** India crossed a record milestone of 1 billion tonnes of coal production in the current fiscal, a landmark, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi described as a proud moment for the country, showing its commitment to energy security and self-reliance.

Coal, which is predominately used to produce electricity as well as fuel in several industries, is the mainstay energy source for the world's fifth largest economy.

In a statement, the Coal Ministry said the momentous milestone was achieved March 20, 11 days ahead of overall 997.83 million tonne (MT) of coal production in the last financial year.

In a social media post on X, Modi described the achievement as "A Proud Moment for India!"

He said, "Crossing the monumental milestone of 1 Billion tonnes of coal production is a remarkable achievement, highlighting our commitment to energy security, economic growth and self-reliance."

Modi said the feat also reflects the dedication and hardwork of all those associated with the sector.

Union Minister of Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy in a social media post said India has not only increased production but also ensured sustainable and responsible mining.

"This achievement will fuel our increasing power demands, drive economic growth, and ensure a brighter future for every Indian," Reddy said.

Reddy lauded the efforts of the workforce of the coal sector in achieving this milestone.

As per the Ministry of Coal Action Plan FY 2024-25, the coal production / offtake target for current fiscal is 1,080 million tonnes.

The coal ministry said the record coal output is the result of tireless efforts of Coal Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), private players, and the dedicated workforce of around 5 lakh mine workers across more than 350 coal mines.

These coal miners, who have defied numerous challenges with unmatched dedication, have played a pivotal role in achieving this historic milestone.

India relies on coal for approximately 55 per cent of its energy mix, and around 74 per cent of the country's electricity is generated by coal-based power plants.

## Healthcare a field of service: Dash

**CARE Hospitals**, one of India's leading healthcare providers, is committed to delivering world-class medical services across a range of specialties. Established in 2016, the state-of-the-art hospital is one of the premier healthcare destinations in Bhubaneswar. With a strong focus on patient-centric, innovation and community health initiatives, CARE Hospitals continues to play a pivotal role in advancing healthcare standards in India. The group operates 17 healthcare facilities serving seven cities across six states in India. The network has its successful presence in Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Vishakhapatnam, Raipur, Nagpur, Indore and Aurangabad. The hospital has emerged as a landmark destination under the guidance of **Dr Lokanath Dash, Associate Vice President (Corporate Communications)**. In an interaction with **Orissa POST**, Dr Dash shares his entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



nessed in accessing quality medical care, especially in underserved areas. This motivated me to contribute to the industry by working with leading hospitals and driving initiatives to improve healthcare accessibility, patient care, and advanced medical treatments. Today, I remain committed to making a meaningful impact in the healthcare sector through innovation and strategic leadership.

**CARE Hospitals is one of the leading healthcare facilities in Bhubaneswar. What is your USP?**

CARE Hospitals Bhubaneswar stands out as a leading healthcare provider, driven by a patient-centric approach, advanced medical technology, and a team of highly skilled specialists. Our Unique Selling Proposition (USP) lies in three key areas: leading the future of surgical innovation and medical training, comprehensive transplant programme, and holistic cardiac care. Beyond clinical excellence, we prioritise affordability, accessibility, and compassionate care, making us the preferred

healthcare destination in the region.

**Do you think that the Indian healthcare system is struggling? If yes, what are the biggest challenges and what can be done to overcome those?**

India's healthcare system has made significant progress, but it does face challenges that need urgent attention. Some of the biggest hurdles are infrastructure gaps, shortage of skilled healthcare professionals, affordability and accessibility, technology and digital health adoption. Possible solutions to these obstacles can be strengthening public-private partnerships, expanding health insurance coverage, investment in medical education and training, telemedicine and digital health initiatives and preventive healthcare focus. The Indian healthcare system is evolving, and with the right policies and innovations, we can make quality healthcare more accessible and affordable.

**The rising trend in social media is 'Health is Wealth'. Do you think a**

change in lifestyle can be a shift towards a healthy India?

Absolutely! A shift in lifestyle can play a crucial role in building a healthier India. Prioritising balanced nutrition, regular exercise, mental well-being, and preventive healthcare can significantly reduce lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart ailments. Awareness through social media is driving this change, encouraging people to make healthier choices. Small consistent habits can lead to a big transformation in public health.

**How has your journey been so far? Being the vice president, what advice will you give to the new entrants trying their luck in healthcare?**

My journey in healthcare has been enriching, filled with learning, challenges, and the joy of making a difference. For new entrants, my advice is — be passionate, stay patient-centric, embrace continuous learning, and adapt to innovations. Healthcare is a field of service — commitment and empathy will set you apart.

## Investors richer by ₹22.12L-cr

*Sensex, Nifty climb nearly 1% on fresh foreign fund inflows; extend rally to fifth day*

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 21:** Equity investors have become richer by ₹22.12 lakh crore in the five-day stock rally which saw the benchmark BSE Sensex jumping more than 4 per cent.

On Friday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 557.45 points or 0.73 per cent to settle at 76,905.51. During the day, it surged 693.88 points or 0.90 per cent to 77,041.94. In five days, the Sensex zoomed 3,076.6 points or 4.16 per cent. The NSE Nifty climbed 159.75 points or 0.69 per cent to 23,350.40.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped ₹22,12,191.12 crore to ₹4,13,30,624.05 crore (\$4.79 trillion) in five days.

"With the recent fall making stocks attractive across several



sectors, including broader mid & smallcap indices, investors continued with short covering which helped Sensex breach the 77k mark in intra-day trade," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, Nestle, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, ICICI Bank, Power Grid and

Zomato were among the gainers. However, Infosys, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan and Bajaj Finserv were the laggards.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹3,239.14 crore Thursday, according to exchange data.

As many as 2,823 stocks advanced while 1,213 declined and 126 remained unchanged on the BSE.

## TPCODL strengthens infra to ensure reliable power supply for summer

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 21:** TP Central Odisha Distribution Limited (TPCODL), a joint venture of Tata Power and the Government of Odisha, has ramped up its power infrastructure and emergency preparedness to meet the peak summer demand of 2524 MW.

A new Centralised Power Distribution Technology Centre in Bhubaneswar now enables real-time monitoring through SCADA and an Advanced Distribution Management System (ADMS).

The company has upgraded power transformers and substations, adding 152 MVA to the sub-transmission network and 181 MVA to the distribution network, alongside significant network expansion for better voltage stability. To improve customer service, TPCODL has enhanced outage management with multi-language updates, upgraded its call centre operations, and strengthened Fuse Call Centres (FCCs) for quicker



issue resolution. Over 9,000 personnel are deployed to ensure prompt responses.

In preparation for Kalabaisakhi storms, TPCODL has kept 13 mobile substations on standby, stocked emergency materials at 20 divisional stores, and deployed additional manpower and vehicles. "Ensuring reliable power supply during peak summer months is our top priority," said Arvind Singh, CEO, TPCODL. "With cutting-edge technology and a strengthened workforce, we are fully prepared to meet rising electricity demands while ensuring service reliability."

## Forex kitty zooms by \$305 million to \$654.271 billion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 21:** The country's forex reserves increased by \$305 million to \$654.271 billion during the week ended March 14, the RBI said Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves rose by \$15.267 billion to \$653.966 billion and registered the sharpest weekly rise in two years. The spike in foreign reserves was partly attributed to the \$10 billion forex swap done by the Reserve Bank of India.

The reserves have been on a declining trend recently due to revaluation, along with forex market interventions by the RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in September 2024.

For the week ended March 14, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$96 million to \$557.186 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves increased by \$66 million to \$74.391 billion during the week, the RBI said.

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were up by \$51 million to \$18.262 billion, the apex bank added.

India's reserve position with the IMF was also up by \$283 million at \$4.431 billion in the reporting week, the apex bank data showed.



## Young, rich Indians rev up high-end car sales

REUTERS

**New Delhi, March 21:** Lamborghini and Mercedes-Maybach plan to expand in India as a growing tribe of young, rich Indians splurge on super luxury cars, driving their sales to record levels.

Italian supercar maker Lamborghini, fresh from a year of record sales, is exploring a fourth showroom in India, while Mercedes-Maybach sees the country as a potential top-five market by sales, company executives said.

"India, for us, is an asset ... there is a huge potential for the future. There is the idea of having maybe a fourth dealership but this is still something in the early stages," Lamborghini's president Stephan Winkelmann told reporters at a



Lamborghini in early stages of considering fourth showroom

virtual roundtable.

The optimism is driven by "a change in generation" in the country with "momentum from

You have a lot of startups in India which are very successful. You have very young, high net worth individuals which are stepping into this type of car. So this is positive for us

STEPHAN WINKELMANN | PRESIDENT, LAMBORGHINI

youngest market after China.

Rapid economic growth in India has wrought a fundamental shift in attitude towards luxury purchases among its younger generations that differs from their elders, who were more concerned with saving.

Executives at startups cashing out after record public listings and younger generations of a family business spending with less guilt are driving up sales of all things luxury - cars, watches, bags

Mercedes-Maybach sees India as a potential top five market

younger customers", he said, adding that the average age of a Lamborghini buyer in India is below 40 years - making it the

