



Pooja's observation

Actor Pooja Hegde highlights the sinister underbelly of the entertainment industry in India

LEISURE | P2



Israel targets Lebanon

Israeli artillery and airstrikes hit south Lebanon Saturday after Israel said it had intercepted rockets fired from across the border

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Best weekly gains

Nifty and Sensex surge over 4 per cent delivering the best weekly performance in four years

BUSINESS | P11



Shuttlers disappoint

India women's badminton pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand see their impressive run come to an end at Swiss Open

SPORTS | P12

Mahanadi dispute resolution in sight

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Deo Sai Saturday agreed to find a way for a peaceful and amicable solution to the Mahanadi water sharing dispute between the two neighbouring states, an official statement said. Sai met Majhi at the Lok Seva Bhavan here during a visit to Odisha. "The chief ministers of both the states have agreed to focus on the Mahanadi water dispute issue and find a way for its peaceful resolution," the Odisha CMO statement said. P3

2 killed, 67 injured in rain, hailstorm

Bhubaneswar: At least two persons were killed, 67 others injured and over 600 houses damaged due to rain, thunderstorms and lightning in separate places across the state in the last 24 hours, officials said Saturday. Two persons died due to lightning strikes in Ganjam and Puri districts Saturday and 67 people were injured after being hit by hailstorm in Mayurbhanj district. P3

PEO pockets ₹ 3.26cr to bet on cricket, held

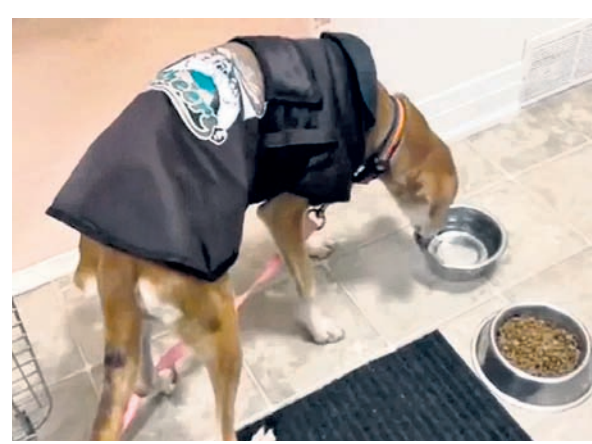
Bhawaniapatna: A suspended Panchayat Executive Officer (PEO) in Kalahandi district was arrested by the state Vigilance for allegedly embezzling government funds of over ₹3 crore for cricket betting and online gaming, an official said. The arrested PEO was identified as Debananda Sagar. He was accused of embezzling public money to the tune of ₹3.26 crore from Talnegi gram panchayat and Podapadar gram panchayat under Thumal-Rampur block in Kalahandi district by forging the signature of sarpanch of the panchayats, the official said. P5

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

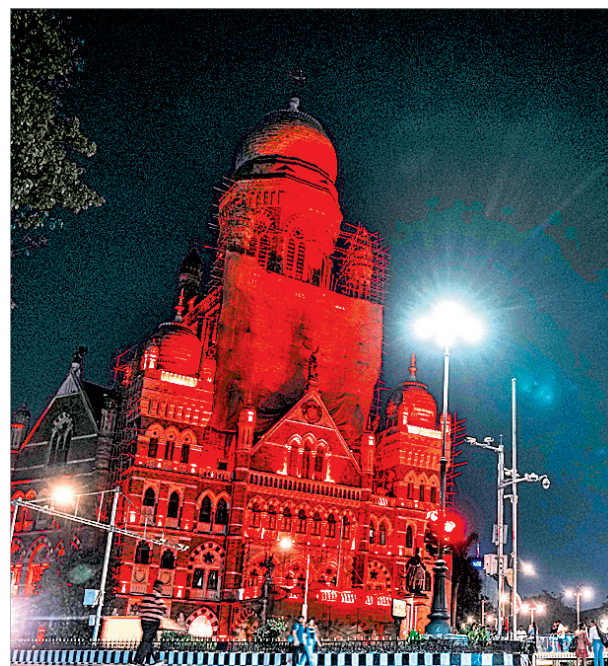


I agree, we've moved past language politics... straight into the politics of religion, hate, and divison

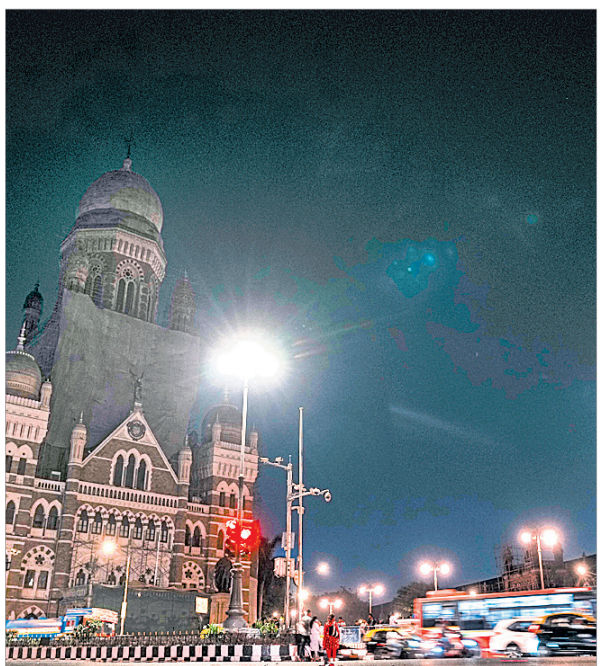
Ailing Thane stray dog finds new home in Toronto



Thane, March 22: In a heart-warming tale of compassion, an ailing stray dog from Maharashtra's Thane city has found a new home in Canada, thanks to the efforts of an NGO. Rani, who was found in a frail and fragile state in the Vartak Nagar locality of the city, was transported to Toronto, where she will begin a new life with her rescuer. Salil Navghare, who was visiting from Toronto, spotted Rani at the building where his parents lived in December last year, said



WELCOME PAUSE: The iconic Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) headquarters in Mumbai before and after the lights were turned off for Earth Hour Saturday



WELCOME PAUSE: The iconic Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) headquarters in Mumbai before and after the lights were turned off for Earth Hour Saturday

Cash pile: CJJ forms 3-member probe committee

AGENCIES

New Delhi, March 22: Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna Saturday constituted a three-member committee to conduct an inquiry into allegations against Justice Yashwant Varma from whose official residence a large stash of cash was allegedly discovered after a fire.

CJJ Khanna ordered the

in-house inquiry after getting a report from Chief Justice of Delhi High Court DK Upadhyay and asked him not to assign any judicial work to Justice Yashwant Varma.

The inquiry committee consists of Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice of the High Court of Punjab and Haryana, Justice GS Sandhawalia, Chief Justice of the High Court of Himachal Pradesh, and Anu Sivarman, Judge of the High Court of Karnataka.

"The Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi for the time being has been asked not to assign any judicial work to Mr Justice Yashwant Varma.

"The Report submitted by the Chief Justice of the High Court of Delhi, response of Mr Justice Yashwant Varma,

and other documents, are being uploaded on the Supreme Court website," a statement from the top court said.

The purported discovery of a huge stash of cash happened when a fire broke out 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.

3 child marriages in state daily

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The state has reported at least three child marriage cases every day during the last six years, with Nabarangpur district recording the maximum occurrence of the social evil, according to government data.

The data reveals that 8,159 child marriages have taken place across Odisha from 2019 to February 2025. Of them, 1,347 cases have been reported from Nabarangpur, the highest among all 30 districts of the state during that period.

While Ganjam district is in the second spot with 966 cases, Koraput comes next with 636. It was followed by Mayurbhanj (594), Rayagada (408), Balasore (361), Keonjhar (328), Kandhamal (308) and Nayagarh (308).

The lowest of 57 such instances have been found in Jharsuguda district in those six years. Activists working in this field attribute tribal practice, dowry, migration

of labourer families and parents' fear that daughters may elope to this startling figure.

Social activist Namrata Chadha said, "Child marriage cannot be fully stopped overnight. We have to create such an environment and society for the girl children and their parents so that they will not take such steps." Marrying off underage children is a traditional practice of the tribals, especially for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, she said.

Chadha said parents who usually migrate to other places for livelihood also conduct marriage of their girls before legal age hoping to secure their future and also for her safety as they fear the girl may elope with someone bringing shame to the family.

The social activist said dowry also drives such marriages, as the older the bride, the higher the demand. "The menace could come

to an end if we are able to provide them proper education or skill development training so that they become self-employed, so that they do not think marriage is the only step left for a girl's future," Chadha said.

To stop child marriages, the Odisha government has been organising awareness campaigns at panchayat, block and Anganwadi levels every three months, an official said.

The child development project officer, panchayat executive officer, and wardens/matrons of residential hostels have been designated as chief marriage prohibition officers.

Similarly, the heads of all schools and colleges have been designated as chief marriage information officers, the official said.

Besides, the government has been conducting meetings of state-level committees formed under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act every six months.

Vinod Shukla wins Jnanpith Award



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Eminent Hindi writer Vinod Kumar Shukla was Saturday named the recipient of the 59th Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honour. He will be the first writer from Chhattisgarh to receive the award.

The 88-year-old short story writer, poet and essayist, considered one of the greatest contemporary writers in the language, is the 12th Hindi writer to receive the award.

The award carries a cash reward of ₹11 lakh, a bronze statue of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of learning, and a citation.

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leisure



JONATHAN ALL PRAISE FOR WIFE MEAGAN GOOD

Hollywood actor Jonathan Majors has said that his wife Meagan Good had to sacrifice a lot in order to stand by his side. Just days after publicly announcing he and the *Harlem* actress, 43, secretly tied the knot, the *Marvel* star, 35, told *The Breakfast Club* what their relationship cost her.

REASON AMANDA TURNED DOWN GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY ROLE

Actress Amanda Seyfried revealed that she turned down a role in *Guardians of the Galaxy* over fears it would be "Marvel's first bomb" because it had a "talking tree and a talking raccoon." The 39-year-old was in the running for the part of Gamora before the role went to Zoe Saldana.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You experience a sense of freedom today. And in this mood you feel like doing all the things that you loved to do in your childhood. It is a nice time to take your family on an outing, says Ganesh. Given your mood, you may start planning for the future of your loved ones.

TAURUS
You have a hectic day ahead, says Ganesh. You will be immersed in your work all day long and will love doing so. A lot will get done by the end of the day. Make sure you do not stretch your neck or take unnecessary risks. That will be bad for business. Stick to basics. Do not be innovative or speculative. Be prepared for new challenges that are due to come up shortly.

GEMINI
Today, you will realise that close relationships need care and concern to grow, predicts Ganesh. You will have new responsibilities and achieve huge profits in all your dealings. Pay special attention to your personal health.

CANCER
Ganesh says that this will be a unique and auspicious day for you. You will get clue and hints of this from morning itself. A religious ceremony in the house, and thereby invitation to guests is indicated. The chance of shifting to a new house is indicated. Ganesh expresses his best wishes.

LEO
Few and rare are the days when creativity takes flight. After all, even Picasso couldn't make a masterpiece every day. So make the most of this auspicious day, urges Ganesh, during which your imagination peaks and touches new heights. Especially those in the media shall hit upon a new level in their imaginative capabilities. Just remember, says Ganesh, confidence is the key.

VIRGO
Today you will find yourself delving deep into your inner self. You will reap a lot of monetary rewards, and will be generous in spending it on your near and dear ones. Ganesh says that you may make up for the pressures at work by entertaining yourself with material pleasures.

LIBRA
All things passionate seem to engulf you today. It is one of those moments when chance dictates every possibility of a new romantic love episode in your life. The last time a moment like this came by, Romeo met Juliet. Ganesh expects you to try hard to please your heartthrob.

SCORPIO
You may deviate a little from mundane chores and take up creative activities like cooking and gardening. Today, according to Ganesh, you wish to do smart work and not just hard work. Family joys and pleasures will replace work satisfaction.

SAGITTARIUS
A paradigm shift in your temperament and your looks is on the cards today. Your personality will get better as you do some chic attire, jewellery and a rather loud perfume today. You're a magnet today, says Ganesh, and will charm your way through a crowd of admirers who will clamour for your attention.

CAPRICORN
You are not an impulsive person and this reflects in whatever you do. Money will be on your mind almost throughout the day. Generally, you are a penny pincher, but during the later half of the day you will go on a spending spree. Don't ignore your pocket while spending, otherwise you may end up burning a hole in it, advises Ganesh.

AQUARIUS
It is time to make addition in your possessions. Book your dream house or buy a vehicle, as today is a favourable day to do so. You, however, need to consider your financial resources before deciding anything because it will take a major chunk out of your savings, warns Ganesh.

PISCES
Sometimes you are so kind and charitable that you sacrifice your own well-being and happiness for the sake of others. This streak within you may emerge as you engage in a selfless deed. You will have a strong desire to do something for your family and your home. At work or business you will achieve your goals without any opposition, blesses Ganesh.

Rakul breaks free from stereotypes



MUMBAI: Rakul Preet Singh shared her thoughts on taking on challenging roles, she smiled and stated, "Challenging is exciting." For Rakul, every role that pushes her boundaries is an opportunity to explore uncharted territories both professionally and personally.

She elaborated that diving into complex characters not only tests her abilities but also fuels her passion for storytelling. According to Rakul, challenging roles allow her to break free from the stereotypical image that often confines actors in the industry. "Each role is a new world where I can learn something unique, something that reshapes my understanding of myself and my craft," she explained. This approach has helped her grow as an artist, continuously evolving with every character she portrays.

Rakul believes that the excitement of overcoming a challenge is what keeps the spark alive in Bollywood. It's this drive that inspires her to experiment and take risks, making her performances more nuanced and relatable. "I see every challenging role as a chance to contribute something fresh to cinema—an opportunity to engage audiences in a meaningful way," she added. Rakul's journey serves as a reminder that stepping outside one's comfort zone is not just about achieving success, but also about discovering the true essence of one's talent and potential. Her words continue to inspire upcoming talents to view challenges as stepping stones toward creative excellence. AGENCIES

27TH NATIONAL KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV - DAY I



Members of the Satabdira Kalakar, one of the oldest theatre organisations of the state and the host of the five-day event, staged Odia play *Maha Sangramara Maha Nayak* at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Saturday. Written by Biswabhusan Harichandan, the play was directed by troupe's general secretary Dhira Mallick. PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

MUMBAI: Actor Pooja Hegde was shocked to discover that people are being paid to troll her on social media. In a recent interview, Pooja said it is bizarre that PR strategies are often exploited to target and bring down actors, highlighting the sinister underbelly of the entertainment industry.

Pooja opens up about showbiz's dark underbelly

In an interview with an entertainment journal, Pooja opened up about negative PR strategy and targeted trolling. Pooja revealed, "Many times, and to me, it was a shock. The one thing I'm really bad at is PR. I remember there was a time when I was constantly getting trolled by meme pages, and I was like, why are they constantly talking negatively about me? It looked targeted."

She continued: "People are spending a lot of money on pulling down other people. When I found out about it, my parents and I were very bothered. But I also took it as a compliment because if someone feels the need to pull you down, it means you are above them. I kept reassuring my parents that it was okay. But after a point, it became too much. I found out that people were spending lakhs just to troll me."

The actor disclosed that upon instructing her team to investigate the source of the negativity by contacting popular meme pages, she was appalled to discover that the trolling was, in fact, a monetised endeavour, with individuals being paid to spread malicious content. AGENCIES



Kangana's revelation about Meena Kumari

MUMBAI: Kangana Ranaut is known for speaking her mind. The Queen actress revealed some lesser-known facts about the yesteryear diva Meena Kumari through her latest social media post.

Sharing an anecdote from Kamal Amrohi's classic drama *Pakeezah*, Kangana shared that Meena Kumari herself designed the iconic dresses worn by her in the film. Sharing some glimpses of Meena Kumari's looks from the drama, Kangana penned on her Instagram stories, "Who designed Meena Kumari's iconic costume in *Pakeezah*?" She added, "The actress herself designed the iconic costumes."

Next, she wrote, "Her green outfit with pure gold embroidery is still remembered by her fans." Kangana shared, "Her outfit re-



flected her deep understanding of the character." She concluded by saying, "She personally curated her looks & ing women, completely ignoring their intellect. The Emergency actress shared, "Do we know this? Also, do we know that she was a great poet and a lyricist as well? A beautiful woman's genius is always undermined, so that she can be easily sexualised and never intellectualised."

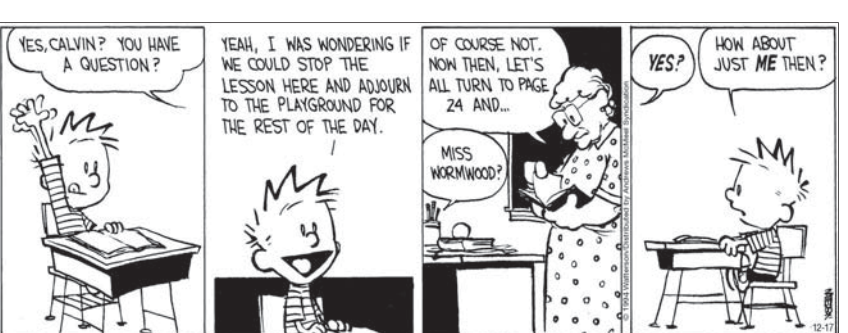
sourced her jewellery." Kangana further raised a very crucial point regarding how our society is accustomed to objectify-

ing women, completely ignoring their intellect. The Emergency actress shared, "Do we know this? Also, do we know that she was a great poet and a lyricist as well? A beautiful woman's genius is always undermined, so that she can be easily sexualised and never intellectualised."

PEANUTS



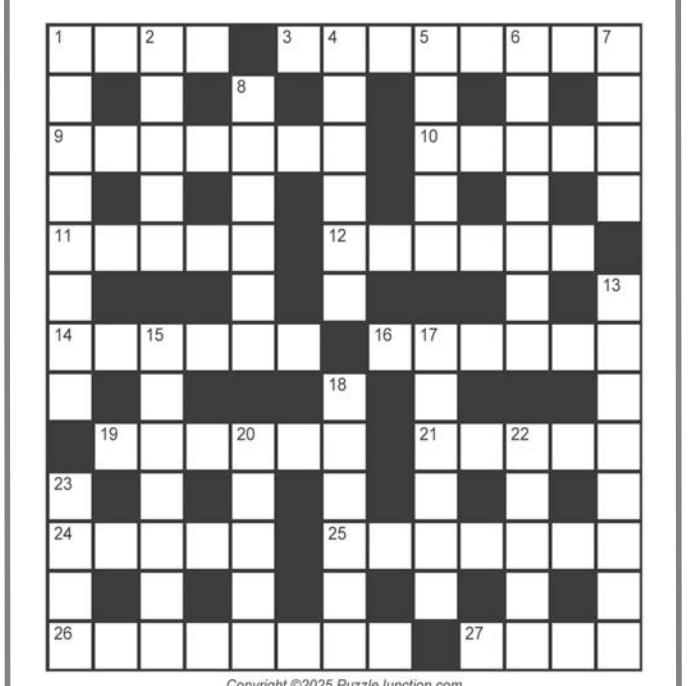
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



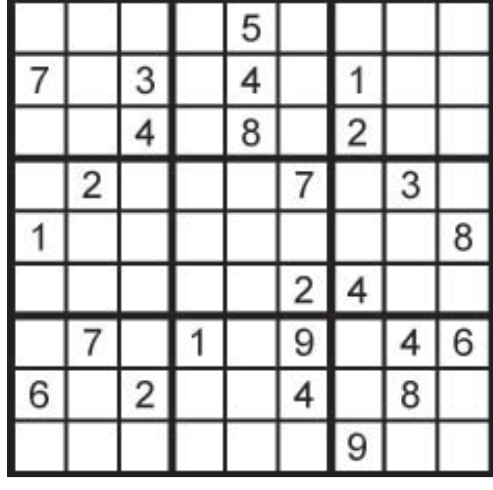
FUN POST CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 Style of poker
3 Drink before dinner
9 Denial
10 Excuse
11 Flat-topped hill
12 Horrified
14 Chickpea, e.g.
16 Ravine
19 Blight
21 Primitive weapon
- Down**
24 Malice
25 Type of toenail
26 Orchestrate
27 Large Chinese deer
- Across**
6 In need of liquid refreshment
7 Dart
8 High regard
13 Encroach
15 Emulating Trevino
17 Give out, as a chore
18 Shade of red
20 Inexperienced
22 Lyric poem
23 Cruise stopover

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

Uttar Pradesh Women Welfare, Child Development and Nutrition Minister Baby Rani Maurya with family after having a darshan of Lord Jagannath and His siblings at Srimandir in Puri, Saturday



downtown

MAJHI, SAI AGREE TO RESOLVE MAHANADI DISPUTE AMICABLY



Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi waters a plant on the occasion of World Water Day, at Lok Seva Bhavan in Bhubaneswar, Saturday. Development Commissioner Anu Garg is seen

tisgarh built several barrages and check dams on upstream of Mahanadi, blocking the free flow of water in the river's downstream. Odisha also complained that the barrages in the upper end of the river reduced water flow in Mahanadi for which it remained dry in the lean period.

However, Chhattisgarh justified its act of constructing the barrages on its territory to facilitate irrigation.

During the World Water Day function, Majhi laid the foundation stone of 18 mega lift irrigation projects worth Rs 1,227 crore and dedicated underground pipelines of 100 check dams and four small irrigation projects.

Majhi announced that the government has set a target of irrigating an additional 15 lakh hectares of land in the next five years. For the purpose, Rs14,841.72 crore has been allocated in this year's Budget.

As part of water conservation efforts, the CM said, the Water Resources department has constructed none large, 48 medium, and 3,853 small irrigation projects, collectively saving 24.65 billion cubic metres of water.

The Chief Minister stated that these water infrastructures will play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

The CM said the state government will soon formulate a new water policy and take steps to restore depleted and polluted river channels. Additionally, he launched the 'Go-Water' ERP App and released an accompanying handbook.

On the occasion, Majhi urged citizens to conserve water and prevent its misuse for domestic purposes.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister at Lok Seva Bhavan today. Since a triple-engine government is functioning at the Centre, in Chhattisgarh, and Odisha, the dispute will be resolved amicably."

The Odisha government also described the meeting between Majhi and Sai as 'positive' and both states are now focused on resolving the long-standing issue through mutual cooperation.

The matter (dispute over Mahanadi water sharing) is presently under the consideration of the tribunal.

The CMO also said that the Chhattisgarh chief minister was in favour of an amicable solution to the dispute. Majhi during the discussion highlighted that both states have language and cultural similarities.

The Mahanadi water dispute came to the fore when Chhat-

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and his Chhattisgarh counterpart Vishnu Deo Sai Saturday agreed to find a way for a peaceful and amicable solution to Mahanadi water sharing dispute between the two neighbouring states, an official statement said.

Sai met Majhi at Lok Seva Bhavan here during his visit to Odisha.

"The chief ministers of both the states have agreed to focus on the Mahanadi water dispute issue and find a way for its peaceful resolution," the Odisha CMO statement said.

While addressing a function on occasion of the World Water Day, Majhi said, "The water dispute with Chhattisgarh over the Mahanadi was discussed during my meeting with the



HOMAGE: Dharitri and Orissa POST Editor Tathagata Satpathy pays tributes to former Union minister Dr Debendra Pradhan at a condolence meet organised by Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Foundation Trust at OUAT in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

328 child labourers rescued in state

PNN & PTI

Bhubaneswar, March 22: As many as 328 children working as labourers in various parts of the state have been rescued by authorities between 2019 and February 2025, according to government data.

While 85 of them were rescued in 2019-20, the figures were four and 43 in 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively, the data revealed.

Similarly, 107 child labourers have been rescued from different parts of the state in 2022-23 and 44 the next year.

During the current financial year up to February 15, the authorities have rescued 45 child

labourers from different districts of Odisha.

So far, 159 cases have been registered under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 against those who engage children in work. Besides, a State Action Plan for Elimination of Child Labour is being implemented in coordination with nine departments.

As per the action plan, the rescue operation is being carried out with the help of other departments at the district level. A training programme is being organised for police officers and district labour officers for strict enforcement of the Child & Adolescent Labour (Prohibi-

tion & Regulation) Act, 1986.

The state government, in support of other stakeholders, also conducts massive awareness campaigns to prohibit child labour in the state, the official said. This apart, the state has been grappling with underage marriages in the period, according to the data.

As many as 8,159 underage marriages have taken place across Odisha from 2019 to February 2025, it said. While Nabarangpur reported the highest of such incidents (1,347), Jharsuguda was at the bottom of the list with 57 cases in the period.

To curb child marriages, the state government has been or-

ganising awareness campaigns at panchayat, block and Anganwadi levels every three months.

"The child development project officer, panchayat executive officer, and wardens/matrons of residential hostels have been designated as chief marriage prohibition officers," official sources said.

Similarly, heads of all schools and colleges have been designated as chief marriage information officers, the official said, adding that the Odisha government has been conducting meetings of state-level committees formed under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act every six months.

Delimitation only on population basis unfair: Naveen

State BJP criticises BJD for joining hands with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Biju Janata Dal (BJD) president Naveen Patnaik Saturday said that population should not be the only criterion to determine the number of seats in Parliament and Assemblies and sought a detailed discussion with all parties before the commencement of the delimitation process.

Virtually addressing the first Joint Action Committee (JAC) meeting on delimitation convened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, he said the BJD would do everything to protect the interests of the people of Odisha.

"Our stand is that population should not be the only criterion to determine the number of seats in the highest representative body of our country," he said.

Patnaik, a five-time former chief minister of Odisha, said, "I suggest that the Union government should take up a detailed discussion with all parties to remove any doubt on this very important issue that has far-reaching implications for



our democracy."

The BJD has sent two of its leaders to Chennai to attend the meeting, while Patnaik addressed the gathering virtually.

"This is an important meeting to ensure democratic representation and rights of people living in states that have done very well to control and stabilise population," Patnaik said.

He said population control is an important national agenda for the development of the country.

"This (population control) has been our contribution towards a positive national agenda and building a strong India. Delimitation based only on population figures will be unfair to the states that have worked hard to reduce their population growth rates in line with national priorities," he said.

Patnaik further pointed out that in case these states had not achieved what they did in stabilising population, India

would have had a population explosion today derailing our developmental progress.

"If projected population figures of 2026 are taken, we will end up losing seats in the Lok Sabha and the state Assembly," Patnaik said, adding that states like Odisha which have reduced their population growth rates after years of persistent efforts should not be disincentivised, especially as they have performed well on a national priority. Apart from Odisha, Patnaik said states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, West Bengal and Punjab have been very successful in controlling population.

Patnaik has deputed former minister Sanjay Das Burma and former MP Amar Patnaik to attend the meeting in Chennai.

After attending the meeting, Das Burma said that it was decided in the JAC that a delimitation from the eight affected

states to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and apprise him about the concerns.

"It was also decided that the issues relating to delimitation will be discussed in Assemblies of the eight states who participated in the JAC," he said, adding that the group wanted that the states should not lose Lok Sabha and Assembly seats for controlling population as part of the national agenda.

Odisha Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president Bhakta Charan Das also participated in the Chennai meeting. Meanwhile, Odisha BJP vice-president Biranchi Tripathy strongly criticised the BJD for joining hands with Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin.

"Why the BJD is in a hurry. The delimitation process is yet to start. However, the party has joined hands with Stalin who is opposed to national interests. It appears that BJD now has no power to take its decision," Tripathy said.

Senior BJD leader Debi Prasad Mishra expressed wonder over the reaction of BJP leaders. "We are a regional party and work to safeguard the interest of Odisha. In that process, the BJD joined the meeting in order to ensure that the state will not suffer in the upcoming delimitation process," Mishra said.

2 killed, 67 hurt, 600 houses damaged in rain, hailstorm

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 22: At least two persons were killed, 67 others injured and over 600 houses damaged due to rain, thunderstorms and lightning in separate places across the state in the last 24 hours, officials said Saturday.

Two persons died due to lightning strikes in Ganjam and Puri districts Saturday and 67 people were injured after being hit by hailstorm in Mayurbhanj district. Seven of them were serious and hospitalised in Mayurbhanj district headquarters hospital, they said.

A report from Ganjam district said that rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning lashed several areas in the district. The unseasonal rain caused water-logging in several areas in Berhampur town.

A Class X student died Saturday due to the lightning near Narayanpur in Patrapur block of Ganjam district. The deceased was identified as Rajesh Kumar Goud, 15. He was returning from Bamakei to his home when the lightning struck him and he died on the spot, officials said.

A report from Puri district said Manoj Kumar Nayak, 23, died Saturday due to lightning strike at Gobardhanpur village. He, along with his parents, had gone to paddy field to drain excess water caused by the heavy rains.

Around 600 houses were damaged due to hailstorm in Mayurbhanj district.

The district administration has launched relief and rehabilitation operations in Biso and Bangiriposi blocks, the two worst-hit blocks of Mayurbhanj, district Collector Hema Kanta Say told reporters.

"Biso and Bangiriposi blocks have been severely hit in the hailstorm. While 350 houses were completely damaged, 250 other dwelling units have been partially affected by the hailstorm that hit the area. As many as 18 villages under Biso



and 39 villages of Bangiriposi block have been affected," the district Collector said, adding that the administration has launched relief and rehabilitation operations in both blocks.

He said the people who have lost their houses are being provided with polythene sheets, cooked and dry food as per the norms.

Housing and Urban Development Minister KC Mahapatra Saturday undertook a visit to the Biso area and said, "The damage was massive as many people have lost their houses in the hailstorm. Chief Minister is aware of the incidents and the people will get compensation within two days."

Apart from Mayurbhanj, reports of damage to houses were also received from Keonjhar, Nabarangpur and Nuapada districts which have been hit by hailstorms, lightning, and rains, officials said.

Hailstorms created havoc in at least four districts in the last 36 hours. The IMD Saturday forecast thunderstorms, lightning and gusty wind likely to lash several parts of the state during the next three days.

Meanwhile, Fire personnel rescued a 54-year-old visually challenged woman from the slum area in Subudhi Colony in Berhampur town of Ganjam district, when the rain and drain water entered the area. "While other people came out from their houses when the wa-

ter entered, the woman could not come out. After getting information, our staff rushed to the area and rescued her," said Thakur Prasad Dalei, Fire officer, Berhampur.

The rainwater also entered the MKCG Medical College Hospital in Berhampur town causing inconvenience to patients. The Meteorological Centre, Bhubaneswar in its evening bulletin said thunderstorms with lightning and hail with gusty surface wind speed reaching 50-60 kmph may occur at a few places in Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Dhenkanal, Angul, Deogarh, and Sundargarh districts in the next 24 hours.

Heavy rain (7 to 11cm) and thunderstorms with lightning may occur at one or two places over the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Mayurbhanj, and Keonjhar during the period.

An 'orange' (be prepared) warning was issued by the weather agency for all these districts in view of the expected weather conditions.

Similarly, a 'yellow' (be aware) warning was issued about thunderstorm with lightning with gusty surface wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph at one or two places over the districts of Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Sonepur, Boudh, Nayagarh, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Puri, Gajapati, Ganjam, Rayagada, Koraput, and Malkangiri in the next 24 hours.

ANNUAL DAY FETE

Children perform during the annual day celebration of Nrutyakala Dance Academy at Bhanja Kala Academy in Bhubaneswar, Saturday

OP PHOTO



'Media has to fight for independence'



Former Orissa High Court chief justice Muralidhar stresses the need for journalists to safeguard their freedom and integrity, stating that the media plays a crucial role in upholding democracy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Former Orissa High Court chief justice S Muralidhar Friday said the media in India has had to fight for its independence as many mainstream media are either owned by "large corporate houses or by political parties".

Addressing at an event here recently, Justice Muralidhar said, "The media's role is to hold power accountable, and it cannot do so effectively if it is beholden to corporate and political interests."

Highlighting the "increasing constraints on independent journalism" and the challenges

posed by corporate and political influences on the media, he said major print and electronic media houses are largely controlled by corporate entities or political parties.

"The media in India has had to fight for its independence and for its freedom. It is a fact though that much of the mainstream print and electronic media are either owned by large corporate houses or by political parties. Both print and electronic media operate on purely commercial lines dependent as they are on government advertisements, licences and permissions, corporate sponsorships, commercials," he said.

While the information and broadcasting minister recently described the Indian press as "robust and flourishing," the former chief justice argued that this characterisation does not equate to being "free and independent."

"The mainstream media today operates on purely commercial lines, relying on government advertisements, corporate sponsorships, and political patronage," he said, and

added, "This dependence has led to rampant self-censorship, paid news, and the prioritisation of profit over journalistic integrity."

In today's India, the race for TRPs and corporate funding has led to a media landscape where independent journalism is under threat, he said.

A key concern raised by Justice (retired) Muralidhar was the "growing alignment of mainstream media with the establishment".

Recalling a recent panel discussion, he noted that a senior lawyer and MP of the ruling party dismissed any concerns about media bias, saying that corporate-controlled media was simply exercising its 'free choice' to support the government.

This 'choice,' Justice Muralidhar suggested, is often a result of pressure rather than genuine editorial independence. Despite these challenges, he expressed optimism about the resilience of independent journalists.

He cited examples of fearless investigative reporting, such as the Panama Papers, which exposed illicit financial dealings by global elites.

This groundbreaking investigation was the result of a collaboration between over 370 journalists from 76 countries, proving that cross-border coalitions can counteract suppression, he said.

He also acknowledged the role of digital media in providing alternative spaces for independent journalism.

"The internet and social media have enabled journalists to engage directly with their audiences, bypassing traditional gatekeepers," he noted.



QUENCHING THIRST: Janamangal Parishad volunteers distribute water to people at Lower PMG, Bhubaneswar, on World Water Day, Saturday

Kalabhoomi Utsav 2025 kicks off

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The seventh edition of Kalabhoomi Utsav commenced at the Odisha Crafts Museum here Saturday, bringing together artisans, craftsmen, and art enthusiasts for a five-day cultural and artistic celebration.

Inaugurating the festival, Handloom, Textiles, and Handicrafts department commissioner-cum-secretary Guha Poonam Tapas Kumar reaffirmed the government's commitment to preserving and promoting Odisha's traditional crafts.

"Our artisans are the torchbearers of Odisha's cultural legacy. The department is dedicated to providing them with the necessary support and exposure



to sustain and grow their crafts," she said. Padma Shri awardee Prabhakar Maharana, along with Handicrafts director and Boyanika MD Pranati Chhotray also graced the occasion. The event commenced with a welcome address by department's special secretary Madhumita Rath, while the additional secre-

tary proposed the vote of thanks. Following the inaugural ceremony, a stone carving workshop, 'Sthapatya: Etching Livelihood on Stone', was held, featuring a panel discussion with renowned national award-winning artisans. Experts like Uday Mohanty, Padma Charan Ojha, Indra-

mani Maharana, Maheshwar Ojha, Rajendra Mishra, Binay Bhushan Jena, Golak Patra, and Komal Kant Sahu shared insights into the challenges and future of the craft. The session was moderated by Devi Prasanna Nanda.

Highlighting the importance of skill-building among the youth, the festival has lined up several interactive sessions—a drawing competition for school and college students March 23 and a summer camp designed to engage young minds with Odisha's artistic traditions March 24. A specialised workshop in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Packaging, Kolkata focusing on product packaging for artisans will also be held March 25 and 26.

World Water Day at Vikash School

Bhubaneswar: On the occasion of World Water Day (WWD) Saturday, Vikash Residential School, Kantabada in collaboration with Orissa Environmental Society (OES) organised an event based on the WWD 2025 theme 'Glacier Preservation' here at the school premises. Water conservation is a collective responsibility, emphasised experts at the event and highlighted the alarming impact of climate change on freshwater resources. Joining the event as chief guest, OES president Sundara Narayana Patro stressed, "The survival of life on our planet is inextricably linked to water. Young minds must champion conservation efforts to ensure a sustainable future."

School principal R Vijay Kumar presided over the event. OES secretary Manoranjan Mishra, school chairman V Srinivas, vice-principal Sanjeeb Kumar Das, and other faculty members joined the event.

CLASSIFIED LOST

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Tradition & modernity key to literature: Guv

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, March 22: "The harmonious blend of tradition and modernity in language and literature signifies a thriving society," said Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, emphasising that a nation's richness is reflected in the depth of its language. Speaking at 'Tattva,' a literary festival organised by the Faculty of Arts, Communication, and Indic Studies at Sri Sri University Saturday, he stressed the importance of refining language while preserving and promoting traditions.

The festival, titled Tattva: The Essence of Art and Culture, celebrated literature and culture through diverse sessions and performances. Guru Ratikant Mohapatra, dean and head of the Faculty of Arts, Commu-



nication, and Indic Studies, welcomed the Governor and other distinguished guests.

University president Rajita Kulkarni said, "Life stretched is service, and a life stretched further is meditation. The inward journey of life leads to penance, which ultimately manifests as artistic creativity." She highlighted the university's commitment to nurturing art and creativity, adding that Art of Living has set 12 world records in various dance forms.

In the day-long festival, the

first session saw renowned Odissi dancer Rahul Acharya unveiling lesser-known metaphors and mysteries of Lord Jagannath. In the second session, Padma Shri awardee Ileana Citaristi shared insights into the warrior dance form. The third session featured Avinash Samal from TCS, Bhubaneswar, who discussed how studying the Bhagavad Gita brings inner peace. The fourth session showcased a captivating musical performance by renowned Odisha vocalist Rupak Kumar Parida.

Graduation ceremony at BIITM

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: The Biju Patnaik Institute of Information Technology & Management Studies (BIITM) hosted a grand graduation ceremony for its MBA (2020-24) and IMBA (2019-24) batches at its campus Saturday.

The event marked a significant milestone for the students as they embarked on the next phase of their professional journey.

Tata Steel Ltd executive-in-charge Pankaj Satija graced the occasion as the chief guest. Addressing the graduates, he underscored the importance of resilience and true happiness in life. "Students should learn to smile without pretense and stay motivated in every situation. Challenges

are inevitable, but one must not give in to negativity," he said.

Success is not just about achievements but about embracing each moment with positivity, he added.

Drawing from Adi Shankaracharya's philosophy, Satija highlighted key lessons on personal and professional growth.

The ceremony was presided over by Principal Mihir Ranjan Nayak, Dean Chinmay Kumar Dash, and Advisor PR Pattanayak. Senior faculty members and students attended the event, making it a memorable occasion.

Dean of Corporate Training, Sudip Ghosh, delivered the vote of thanks, acknowledging the contributions of faculty and mentors in shaping the students' academic and professional journeys.

OUTR inks pact with Kfintech



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with KFin Technologies Limited (KFin-tech) in order to strengthen industry-academia collaboration here recently.

The partnership will facilitate internships, pre-placement offers, lab visits, and industry-relevant training, equipping students with practical skills to meet industry demands. The event was attended by key representatives from OUTR, including vice chancellor Bibhuti Bhusan Biswal, registrar Ashish Kumar Jena, academics dean Achyutananda Acharya, training and placement officer Bibhu Prasad Dash, and deputy training and placement officer Samarjit Patnaik.

Representing KFintech were chief technology officer Venkata Giri Vonkayala, chief people officer Sujay Puthran, vice president Subarna Mishra, and programme manager Sumanta Hota.

Both the institutions reaffirmed their commitment to nurturing talent and bridging the gap between academia and industry. The collaboration aligns with OUTR's mission to enhance employability and industry engagement, reinforcing its position as a leader in technical education.

KIIT-DU SIGNS MOU WITH 'Literature triumphs when politics fails'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 22: KIIT Deemed to be University (KIIT-DU) Saturday entered into a strategic partnership with New Zealand's Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at expanding academic collaboration and fostering joint research initiatives.

The MoU was formalised in the presence of New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon. The agreement was spearheaded by director general of International Relations at KIIT Debraj Pradhan, along with chief executive of Te P kenga—New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology Gus Gilmore, and Consul Gen-



eral & Trade Commissioner at New Zealand Trade & Enterprise Graham Rouse.

The collaboration is expected to open new academic pathways for students, facilitate faculty exchanges, and strengthen research opportunities between the two institutions. Meanwhile, KIIT & KISS welcomed the Ambassador of Indonesia to India and Bhutan, Ina H Krishnamurthi, along with her delegation.

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Literature triumphs when politics fails, said senior Congress leader, Thiruvananthapuram MP, and noted author Shashi Tharoor, emphasising the power of literature in shaping society.

Speaking on the second day of the 11th Kalinga Literary Festival (KLF) 2025 Saturday, Tharoor highlighted the role of writers in fostering change and preserving democratic values.

During a conversation with senior journalist Satish Padmanabhan, Tharoor cited an exchange between former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Hindi poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar, stating, "When society stops responding, writers step in to bring transformation." Addressing growing political polarisation, he remarked, "A



suffocated literary space reflects the state of society. We are at a point where nothing new is expected."

On India's foreign policy, he acknowledged the government's balanced approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. "Prime Minister Modi displayed political acumen and restraint in maintaining diplomatic equilibrium," he noted. He also praised Kerala's pro-business policies, clarifying that recognising good

governance should go beyond political lines.

Regarding his future in politics, Tharoor left the doors open, saying, "Options are always available—not just within politics, but also in literature and other pursuits."

The KLF 2025 was inaugurated by Nagaland Tourism Minister Temjen Imna, Princess Gouri Lakshmi Bayi, and writer Jatindra Nayak. The festival also featured discussions on Travancore's cultural heritage.

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2nd phase of Arribada after 7 years at Rushikulya mouth

A record number of 6,98,718 Olive Ridley turtles had laid eggs on the sandy beach in the first phase of their mass nesting from February 16 to 23 in the Rushikulya rookery



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 22: The second phase of mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles began in the Rushikulya river mouth in Ganjam district Saturday, officials said.

The unique phenomena of these endangered sea species was witnessed after a gap of seven years in the Rushikulya rookery, they said.

A total of 38,779 turtles laid eggs in the stretch of the rookery from Purunabandh to Bateswar, on the first day of the second phase of the mass nesting, said Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) in-charge of Khallikote range Dibya Shankar Behera.

Experts are expecting that the mass nesting of the turtles will continue for the next few days, as a large number of the Olive Ridley turtles are still in the sea and trying to climb on to the beach to lay eggs.

"We are expecting the mass nesting to continue for some more days in the second phase," said Anil Mohapatra,

a senior scientist of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) regional centre, Gopalpur.

A record number of 6,98,718 Olive Ridley turtles had laid eggs on the sandy beach in the first phase of their mass nesting from February 16 to 23 in the Rushikulya rookery.

Though the mass hatching was yet to occur, sporadic hatchlings have started on the beach for the last few days. Generally, the hatchlings emerge from the shells after 45 to 50 days of laying eggs, turtle experts said.

The second phase of mass nesting was earlier recorded in the rookery in 2018. Over 37,000 turtles had laid eggs in the second phase of the nesting held from April 20 to 27, 2018.

Around 4.50 lakh turtles had laid eggs in the first phase of mass nesting held from February 21 to 28 of the same year,

sources said.

Rabindra Nath Sahu, president of Ganjam District Sea Turtle Protection Committee, said the second phase of mass nesting occurred several times in Rushikulya rookery and Gahirmatha, one of the largest rookeries for Olive Ridley turtles.

The ACF said they have ramped up the protection measures of the eggs following the second phase of mass nesting in the rookery. "We have deployed 20 more staff to guard the turtles which came to lay eggs," said Behera.

Earlier, they had deployed 180 personnel, including the local volunteers to guard the eggs, he said.

"As experts have predicted the mass nesting would continue for some more days in the second phase, accordingly, we have prepared," he added.

Rain forces Similipal closure for tourists

Tourists have been prevented from visiting Similipal Saturday and Sunday in view of their safety

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 22: The Similipal National Park has been closed for tourists for two days from Saturday due to heavy rain and the forecast of thunderstorms in Mayurbhanj district, an official said.

The tourists have been prevented from visiting Similipal Saturday and Sunday in view of their safety. Regional Chief Conservator of Forests and Field Director of Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR) Prakash Chand Gogineni said the situation would be reviewed, and tourists might be allowed to enter the park



The thunderstorm has resulted in heavy rainfall accompanied by lightning and hailstones wreaking damages in large areas of Mayurbhanj district

The heavy rainfall has warded off the fear of wildfires for some days and has brought respite for the Forest personnel

once the weather improves. The two gates at Pithabata and Kalikaprada of Similipal will remain closed on these two days and no vehicle will be allowed inside or to go out from Similipal, Gogineni said. Meanwhile, the rainfall

due to the thunderstorm has doused the wildfires which were already starting to spread in the Similipal wildlife sanctuary.

The thunderstorm has resulted in heavy rainfall accompanied by lightning and

hailstones wreaking damages in large areas of Mayurbhanj district. The heavy rainfall has warded off the fear of wildfires for some days and brought respite for the Forest personnel.

The Bhanjabasa forest range in Similipal has recorded highest rainfall of 73.40mm while it is 37.8mm in Naanna, 12.8mm in Dobha, 33.02mm in Pithabata, 20.57mm in Badgaon, 50.29mm in Baripada, 33.78mm in Dukura, 46.22mm in Podadiha, 23.4mm in Upar Barahakamuda, 12.7mm in Jenabila, 22.86mm in Kulipala, 17mm in Kabatagai and 3.4mm in Chahala. Similarly, it was 50.03mm in Barehipani, 59.69mm in Ramatirtha, 46.9mm in Kendumundi, 8.8mm at Thakurmunda and 30.48mm at Satakosia.

The STR field director also suggested that tourists, who are planning to visit the park, should check with the concerned authorities for updates.

Nor'wester: Pregnant woman dies after tree falls on house

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhawanipatna, March 22: A tragic incident was reported from Junagarh town in Kalahandi district, where a pregnant woman lost her life after a tree fell on her house Saturday afternoon.

The deceased, identified as 26-year-old Kaushalya Behera from Lakshmisagar locality, was inside her house when a massive palm tree collapsed due to the storm. She was

trapped under the fallen tree and succumbed to her injuries. However, her son and other family members narrowly escaped.

Notably, a severe Nor'wester storm struck various parts of Kalahandi district Saturday afternoon, bringing strong winds and heavy rainfall. The high-velocity winds uprooted several large trees in multiple locations. The storm also led to prolonged power outages in the affected areas.



Man awarded life term for uxoricide

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, March 22: A court in Ganjam district sentenced a man to life imprisonment Saturday for murdering his wife over a financial dispute in 2023. The Additional District Judge (ADJ) of Bhanjanagar, Debadatta Patnayak, convicted Raju Muli of Akhupadara village based on testimonies from 18 witnesses and imposed a fine of ₹10,000. If he fails to pay the fine amount, he will have to serve an additional year in prison.

The case dates back to May 27, 2023, when Raju murdered his wife, Geetanjali Muli, in their home. The verdict was delivered 21 months after the incident.

According to court records, Geetanjali, daughter of Jayanti Muli from Chedabhum village near Bhanjanagar, married Raju 18 years ago. Their marriage was stable for the first decade, and they had a son. However, conflicts arose over time, with Raju frequently consuming alcohol and assaulting Geetanjali. Despite being unemployed, he often demanded money from her. Their son had moved to Tamil Nadu for work. On the fateful night, Raju, reportedly intoxicated, demanded money from Geetanjali to perform post-death rituals for his late mother. When she refused citing a lack of funds, he attacked her with a sharp weapon, killing her on the spot. Upon learning of her daughter's death, Jayanti Muli filed a complaint at Bhanjanagar police station, leading to Raju's immediate arrest.



CIVIC WOES: Pedestrians and bikers negotiate a waterlogged road at Gate Bazaar in Berhampur town following incessant rainfall and thunderstorm for over two hours in the area, Saturday

PEO siphons off ₹3 crore for online gaming, arrested

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhawanipatna, March 22: A suspended Panchayat Executive Officer (PEO) in Kalahandi district was arrested by the state Vigilance for allegedly embezzling government funds of over ₹3 crore for cricket betting and online gaming, an official said.

The arrested PEO was identified as Debananda Sagar.

He was accused of embezzling public money to the tune of ₹3.26 crore from Talnegi gram panchayat and Podapadar gram panchayat under Thuamal-Rampur block in Kalahandi district by abusing his official power and forging the signature of sarpanch of the panchayats, the official said.

Sagar allegedly transferred to money to his personal bank account, he said.

Debananda Sagar joined government service as PEO in 2016 and was posted to Talnegi gram panchayat. Later he was also put in charge of PEO of Podapadar gram panchayat. He misappropriated the government money from May 5, 2018 to March 17, 2022, the official said.

He used the government money on cricket betting through online portal, the Vigilance said in a statement. Earlier, in 2023, he was booked by Vigilance for misappropriation of government funds to the tune of ₹1.04 crore and was placed under suspension.

Tribals become self-reliant with strawberry cultivation

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 22: In the cool climate of Keonjhar district, crops like tea, coffee, grapes, and apples have already seen successful cultivation.

Now, for the first time, commercial strawberry farming has begun in the tribal-dominated Harichandanpur block of Keonjhar district where the tribals have reaped success from the cultivation. Around 60,000 strawberry plants have been planted across 6 acre land with production already underway. This has become possible due to government sponsorship under the Chief Minister's Tribal Livelihood Mission and necessary support by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA). Strawberry farming is proving to be a means of self-reliance for the tribal communities. Encouraged by this success, the district administration has planned to expand strawberry cultivation to 30 acres of land in Telkoi and Saharapada blocks from next year.

Sources said that in a pilot initiative, strawberry cultivation was carried out on 6 acre land in the Junga and Balanipashi villages of Junga panchayat in tribal dominated Harichandanpur block. Each plant is expected to yield up to 200 strawberries this year, with daily yields



exceeding 20 kg. In Keonjhar town, 200 grams of strawberries are being sold at ₹100. A single strawberry plant can bear fruit for up to three years. Following the positive results from this year's trial, large-scale farming is expected to commence in Telkoi and Saharapada blocks in the upcoming season.

The strawberries, which typically ripen before the peak of winter or summer, are considered a lucrative cash crop. With proper management and continuous support from the livelihood mission, strawberry cultivation is emerging as a sustainable source of income for the local tribal population.

Farmers and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Junga and Balanipashi villages of Harichandanpur block in Keonjhar district have received assistance under the Chief Minister's Tribal Livelihood Mission. The support includes funding for incidental expenses, while organic fertilisers, pesticides, and drip-irrigation

facilities have been provided by the ITDA. Encouraged by the government's support, tribal women from the villages have come forward and actively taken up strawberry farming. Sunita Phulguinya, the president of the Krupasindhu SHG, said the cultivation has provided a steady source of income for local women.

"Our families have benefited significantly from strawberry farming. Initially, we were uncertain about its success in our region, but the produce is now fetching good prices in the market," said Indumanti Bishal, a strawberry farmer.

During his recent visit to Keonjhar, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi tasted the locally grown strawberries and honoured the local farmers for their efforts. Various outlets across the city are selling Keonjhar strawberries, with a packet priced at approximately ₹125. Consumers are also purchasing them in bulk at competitive rates.

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Sl. No.	Designation	Vacant Positions
1	Cloud Computing Expert	1
2	Software Developer (PHP, Java, Full Stack, Laravel, CI Framework, Node, Js, Dot Net, etc.)	2
3	Data Analytics Expert	1
4	Database Administrator	1
5	Solution Architect	1
6	Cyber Security Expert	1
7	Finance/Accounts Assistant	1
8	Administrative Assistant	1
9	Bid/Tendering Associate	1
10	Contract Manager	1
11	System Administrator (Linux and Windows)	1
12	Cloud Engineer	1
13	Network Designer	1
14	Information and Data Security Expert	1
15	DevOps Expert	1
16	Database Designer	1
17	Sr. Software Developer	1
18	Test Engineer	1
19	UI/UX Designer and Developer	1
20	IT Hardware Engineer	1
21	Cyber Security Audit Expert	1
22	Data Center Specialist	1
Total Vacant Positions		23

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To love is not to possess, but to give oneself.
THE MOTHER

A New Era

The combined American and European share of the world economy exceeded 50 per cent from the beginning of the 20th century right up till 2009, when it was 51 per cent. After that year it has been declining. It was 43 per cent last year and it will fall further. Europe is stagnating economically. The European Union's combined GDP grew by less than 1 per cent last year and less than 1 per cent the year before that. It may grow at 1 per cent this year, but there are no long term high growth prospects. The United Kingdom grew under 1 per cent in 2023, under 1 per cent in 2024 and might grow at 1 per cent this year.

America grew at 2 per cent last year and faces a recession this year, meaning a contraction in its economy. The people in the US, the UK, the European Union, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are together 10 per cent of the world's population. Meaning that 90 per cent of the world had a smaller share of the economy than what is referred to as 'the West' till 2009. But this is changing quickly.

And the rest of the world's champion of change is of course China. Its share of global GDP was 1 per cent in 1990, 3 per cent in 2000, 9 per cent in 2010 and today it is 17 per cent. India's was the same at China's in 1990 and today it is 3.6 per cent (of a total global GDP of around 108 trillion dollars).

India has done reasonably well but the real engine of global growth for the last 30 years has been our neighbour. The spectacular and rapid rise of China has produced anxieties in 'the West', that is seeing its total dominance over the globe begin to slip. The Western media's consistent attacks on China's infrastructure projects in Africa and Latin America and South East Asia reveals this, along with yearly reports for the last 20 years that China's economic success is soon about to end.

These anxieties are also revealing themselves in European politics and in the US. America's love for Donald Trump is premised essentially on two issues. One is stopping immigration from non-white nations and deporting those already in the US; and the other is the desire to stop being 'ripped-off' by poorer nations that export goods to the US. Americans have a per capita GDP that is more than six times that of Mexicans and 30,000 dollars a year more than that of Canadians but they feel aggrieved.

This year, according to the International Monetary Fund, American per capita GDP is likely to be just short of \$90,000. To put that in perspective, India's is less than \$3000 per person per year. The US is also at full employment, meaning that pretty much everyone who wants a job can find employment. By any measure, Americans are among the most successful and most privileged people in the world and yet they are angry over the rise of others. And the principal target is China. Trump wants to bring the jobs that Chinese are doing to the US, jobs especially in manufacturing. In 1990, manufacturing's share of the US economy was 16 per cent. Today it is 10 per cent. Manufacturing output rose from about \$1 trillion in 1990 to \$3 trillion today. So manufacturing grew, but at a slower pace than the rest of the economy. Jobs in manufacturing fell from about 18 million to about 12 million. So fewer American workers in manufacturing today produce more than 3 times what was produced in 1990. The reason is of course automation and efficiency. The US produces roughly the same amount of steel today as it did in 1990, about 80 million tons. The number of Americans hired in steel plants, however, has fallen from 512,000 in 1980 to 270,000 in 1990 to 70,000 last year.

An America that would take the jobs in manufacturing today being done in China to replace their workers in services and elsewhere would see a fall in economic output. People would be shifted from doing more productive work to less productive work.

And yet that is what is being attempted under Trump. This is being done in two ways. The first is blocking all competition. Chinese electric cars face 100 per cent tax when imported into the US, meaning they will cost twice as much. If an American would pay that tax they would still not be able to drive their Chinese car because of a ban on Chinese car software. The US Commerce Department says "cars have cameras, microphones, GPS tracking, and other technologies that are connected to the internet... and that the Commerce Department is taking a necessary step to safeguard US national security and protect Americans' privacy by keeping foreign adversaries from manipulating these technologies to access sensitive or personal information."

This ban serves the purpose of both protecting US firms and denying China. The second way is through universal tariffs and we will see what that means on 2 April when they are unveiled. This will affect the whole world, including US allies in Europe, Canada and Australia, who are bewildered because they thought themselves till this January as being partners of the US. The rise of the rest of the world has produced these fractures.

Will the US response ensure it does not slip further relative to the poorer nations? Of course not. China and India and Africa and Latin America will continue to grow. The dominance of the US and Europe and their influence will continue to decline, as they are forced to share power. What 'the West' could do 100 years ago, it no longer can. We have entered a new era in human history.

WISDOM CORNER

The greatest error of a man is to think that he is weak by nature, evil by nature. Every man is divine and strong in his real nature. What are weak and evil are his habits, his desires and thoughts, but not himself.

RAMANA MAHARSHI

There's no reality except the one contained within us. That's why so many people live an unreal life. They take images outside them for reality and never allow the world within them to assert itself.

HERMANN HESSE

Human greatness does not lie in wealth or power, but in character and goodness. People are just people, and all people have faults and shortcomings, but all of us are born with a basic goodness.

ANNE FRANK



Jennifer Clapp & Olivier De Schutter

THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY NEEDS TO LOOK BEYOND BIOFUELS AND INVEST IN TRULY SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SOURCES - BEFORE IT SAILS US INTO DISASTER

Another major source of greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions is poised to use biofuels to "decarbonize." The shipping industry has now joined the auto and aviation industries in viewing this "cleaner" alternative to fossil fuels as a means of reducing its emissions, without meaningfully changing its activities. But the benefits of biofuels have often been overstated, and their costs underestimated.

International shipping uses more than 300 million tons of fossil fuels annually - some 5 per cent of global oil production. The industry is responsible for 3 per cent of global GHG emissions - above the level of industrial powerhouses like Germany or Japan.

The United Nations' maritime regulator, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), is seeking to change this. In 2023, the IMO committed to target a 20 per cent reduction in shipping emissions (striving for 30 per cent) by 2030, and a 70 per cent reduction (striving for 80 per cent) by 2040. Since then, it has been working with its 176 member states to negotiate a set of measures that would advance these objectives and bring shipping emissions "close to zero" by 2050.

But the April 2025 deadline for a final framework is looming, and last month's negotiations in London produced limited progress. As Constance Dijkstra, IMO Policy Manager at the advocacy group Transport & Environment, noted, "We still do not know how much ships will be expected to reduce their emissions, and which fuels and technologies will count as green." The answers to those questions - including whether biofuels are embraced or rejected - will be the difference between important progress and environmental disaster.

FOCUS POLLUTION

THE BIOFUEL SHAM



While decarbonising shipping could not be more important, the use of biofuels would undermine the health and well-being of people and the planet for years or even decades to come

As matters stand, the IMO will implement a "global fuel standard," which would require ships to use lower-emission fuels during the transition to zero-emission alternatives. Some IMO members - notably, Brazil - say that biofuels should be central to this initiative. Brazil, a major producer of crop-based biofuels, would profit handsomely from such an approach. But there is nothing sustainable about it.

One recent study projects that, if included in the IMO's global fuel standard, biofuels could power up to 36 per cent of global shipping activity by 2030, 59 per cent by 2035, and 76 per cent by 2040. Since waste-based biofuels would be able to cover only a small percentage of demand from the shipping sector, production of crop-based biofuels, made from palm oil, soy, and maize, would have to increase substantially.

Cultivating these crops would require vast amounts of land - about 35 million additional hectares, equivalent to the land area of Germany or Zimbabwe, by 2030, according to the same study. That

could mean razing forested land and thus removing the stores of carbon located there. It could also mean diverting land from food and feed production, though in practice, this would likely necessitate the expansion of agricultural land to compensate.

The effects of such indirect land-use change would negate any emissions savings from switching away from fossil fuels. Moreover, as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN has warned, using farmland to fuel ships, rather than to feed people, will drive up food prices and make it harder for vulnerable populations to access sufficient nutrition at a time when hunger and malnutrition are already on the rise. According to the World Bank, a mere 1 per cent increase in global food prices can push a whopping ten million people into extreme poverty.

Making matters worse, the kind of large-scale monocropping typical of biofuel production uses huge amounts of water and polluting fertilizers. The resulting environmental degradation threatens future food production, meaning that

even the "temporary" embrace of biofuels as a transition fuel would lead to greater food insecurity, worse health, and increased poverty in the long term. The embrace of biofuels would also exacerbate poverty in another way: the economic benefits of biofuel production are disproportionately captured by large-scale agribusinesses, to the detriment of small farms.

Given all this, it is imperative that the IMO exclude crop-based biofuels from its final framework, focusing instead on sustainable alternatives like e-fuels and wind power. Early investments are essential to guarantee a sufficient supply of such fuels, so that the shipping industry can meet the IMO's targets. At the same time, strong fuel standards must be matched by an ambitious carbon levy on shipping emissions, which is necessary to generate revenues to facilitate the industry's transition toward new energy solutions in an equitable way.

The April deadline for finalising these measures is fast approaching. While decarbonising shipping could not be more important, the use of biofuels would fail to advance that imperative, and it would undermine the health and well-being of people and the planet for years or even decades to come. The shipping industry needs to look beyond biofuels and invest in truly sustainable energy sources - before it sails us into disaster.

Jennifer Clapp is Professor and Canada Research Chair in Global Food Security and Sustainability at the University of Waterloo, Canada. Olivier De Schutter is UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.

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SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

Securing access to critical minerals



Bhagirathi Jena

CRITICAL MINERALS FORM THE BACKBONE OF SEVERAL HIGH-TECH INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING RENEWABLE ENERGY, SEMICONDUCTORS, AEROSPACE, HEALTHCARE, AND DEFENCE

The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is a transformative initiative aimed at making India self-reliant across key sectors. In an era where emerging and disruptive technologies define global competitiveness, securing access to critical minerals has become a strategic imperative. As nations race to dominate the supply chains of these essential minerals, India's efforts to establish long-term security in this domain deserve commendation.

Critical minerals form the backbone of several high-tech industries, including renewable energy, semiconductors, aerospace, healthcare, and defence. With India's ambitious goal of achieving 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030 and potentially 1 TW by 2035, self-sufficiency in solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicles (EVs), and hydrogen fuel cells is imperative. This, in turn, demands a steady and reliable supply of critical minerals like lithium, silicon, titanium, and graphite, all of which India currently depends on imports, particularly from China. The semiconductor industry, projected to reach \$1 trillion globally by 2030, is another key area where India aspires

to secure a 10% market share. The success of India's \$10 billion semiconductor initiative hinges on securing rare minerals like gallium and germanium, which are vital for chip manufacturing. Similarly, the aerospace and defence sectors require minerals such as beryllium, vanadium, and rare earth elements, critical for guided missiles, satellite technologies, and national security advancements.

Recognising the strategic importance of critical minerals, the government of India has undertaken multiple measures to ensure their availability. The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has already completed 368 critical mineral exploration projects, reflecting a strong commitment to resource mapping and identification. Further, the government has forged international collaborations such as Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), partnering with Argentina for lithium exploration and engaging with Zambia for copper and cobalt supplies and various other nations like Congo, Tanzania, and Rwanda for accessing different critical minerals. Policy reforms, including the elimination of customs duty on certain mineral imports, aim to promote domestic production and processing. Opening the

mining sector to private players under a liberalised regime allows greater participation from junior mining companies, specialised exploration firms, and global investors, thereby unlocking India's deep-seated mineral reserves. The new mineral policy is a game-changer, allowing private sector exploration for 29 critical and deep-seated minerals, and auctioning exploration licenses for up to 1,000 sq.km per license. This ensures a transparent and systematic approach, reducing India's reliance on foreign sources while enhancing domestic capabilities.

India's e-waste generation has surged significantly, from 1.01 million MT in 2019-20 to 1.751 million MT in 2023-24. A strong e-waste management framework can unlock a sustainable source of critical minerals, akin to Japan's model, which has significantly reduced its dependency on imported minerals through advanced recycling. The establishment of a Center of Excellence for Critical Minerals is a forward-thinking step, aiming to boost research, recovery, and efficient utilisation of minerals from industrial scrap and electronic waste. Policies such as mandatory take-back schemes for used electronics and batteries will further aid

in the extraction of minerals like cobalt, nickel, and rare earths, ensuring a steady domestic supply without excessive dependence on imports.

To ensure seamless access to mineral-rich regions, integrating Bharatmala and Sagarmala projects into India's critical mineral strategy is crucial. These projects will enhance logistical efficiency, enabling the transport of extracted minerals to processing hubs with minimal bottlenecks. Moreover, specialised training in mining technology and vocational education in rare earth processing must be integrated into India's technical education framework. Investing in human capital will not only boost employment but also equip the workforce with the necessary skills to support the country's long-term mineral security.

The recent policy shifts and strategic collaborations reflect a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to critical mineral security. With these reforms, India is poised to reduce its dependency on imports, strengthen domestic industries, and emerge as a global leader in the new-age mineral economy.

The writer is a senior officer at the Parliament of India.

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



Judicial accountability

Sir, This refers to "Row over cash at judge's residence," Orissa Post, March 22. The news reports alleging that unaccounted cash was found at the residence of Delhi High Court's Justice Yashwant Varma have once again brought the issue of judicial accountability into sharp focus. While the allegations remain unproven, they have reignited a long-standing debate about how India's judiciary deals with corruption within its ranks. Despite the gravity of such accusations, no Supreme Court or High Court judge in India has ever been impeached or convicted for corruption. This raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms to address judicial misconduct and the need for systemic reforms to restore public confidence in the judiciary. The Constitution provides two primary avenues to hold judges accountable for corruption: an in-house procedure adopted by Supreme Court, and an impeachment process conducted by Parliament. However, both mechanisms have proven to be inadequate in addressing the problem. However, the in-house procedure has been criticised for its lack of transparency and effectiveness. The SC has ruled that inquiry reports under this mechanism are confidential, citing a 2003 judgement. As a result, the public remains unaware of the number of judges who have been discriminated against, and the actions taken against them.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Disrespect to anthem

Sir, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar recently sparked outrage after being caught on camera laughing and chatting during the National Anthem at a sports event in Patna. The video quickly went viral, leading to significant backlash from Opposition leaders and citizens alike. Our National Anthem holds great significance as it represents unity and pride among the citizens of our country. "Jana Gana Mana" is more than just a song; it embodies the spirit of India and its diverse culture. During public events, it is customary for individuals to stand in attention and refrain from talking or moving while the anthem is played. This conduct is not only a mark of respect but also a reflection of national pride. Disrespecting the National Anthem can have serious implications under Indian law.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

DEEP-SEA MINING OFF KOLLAM COAST

Kerala fishermen up in arms

The Kerala government, which is strongly opposing this project, passed a resolution in the Assembly urging the Centre to withdraw it

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kollam (Kerala), March 22: "They can bring in the navy or even the army, but we will not allow sea mining off our shore. This is a matter of life and death for us, and we will not let anyone take away our livelihood," Robin said passionately about their stance on the Union government's proposed deep-sea sand mining.

The fishermen in Kerala have already launched several protests against the proposed plan to open up the sea to private mining companies as part of the Union government's 'Blue Economy' initiative.

All the fishermen's associations stand united in their protests against this proposal, alleging that it would bring an end to the fisheries sector in the country, not only in the Arabian Sea but also in the Bay of Bengal.

"The mining, according to the scientific report we have, can disturb the seabed and completely destroy fish spawning habitats. It can also release poisonous gases trapped on the deep-sea floor, causing severe environmental issues," Kerala Minister for Fisheries, Saji Cherian, told PTI.

He said that deep-sea mining requires huge investments and heavy machinery, meaning only multinational corporations will be involved, making these areas completely inaccessible to poor fishermen.

The Kerala government, which is strongly opposing this project, passed a resolution in the Assembly urging the Centre to withdraw it. The minister said the proposed site, off the Kollam shore in Kerala in the Arabian Sea, is very rich in marine resources and serves as a lifeline for fishermen from Kerala and other states.



"We have a highly diverse and extensive fish population in this area. The mining will completely wipe out this habitat, severely affecting the livelihood of fishermen in our region," Saji Cherian said.

Experts have warned that Kerala's coastline is already severely affected by the impacts of climate change, with the Arabian Sea warming rapidly, leading to more cyclone formations and fewer working days at sea for fishermen.

"If ocean temperatures exceed 28 degrees Celsius, they support strong weather activities such as cyclones. Until recently, the Arabian Sea temperatures were below 28 degrees Celsius, but now they have increased by more than 1 degree Celsius, making the region more conducive to cyclonic formations," a scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology told PTI.

The fishermen believe that, under the present circumstances, sea sand mining will sound a death knell for the fisheries off the Indian coast.

"Making changes to nature means disturbing the soil about one and a half feet below the surface which is found along the Kollam coast. When this

silt is removed, it disrupts the formation of a protective bank. The Kollam shore is home to a large fish population, and if this silt is removed, it will destroy the habitat that supports them. If that happens, we may no longer need the Fisheries department, either at the state or the Centre," Robin, a fisherman from Kollam, added.

The fishermen say that the mining would not only impact fisheries in the sea but also adversely affect fish populations in inland water bodies, another vital source of steady income for the people of Kerala.

"We are organising fishermen across Kerala, regardless of political affiliations, to unite and protest against this. We will not allow them to remove a single grain of sand from our seas, even if we have to lay down our lives for it," Apton, another fisherman, said.

According to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), systemic utilisation of our coastline can bring in wonderful economic benefits. Sea mining can have some impact on fisheries, but it would be minimal if conducted outside territorial waters, beyond 12 nautical miles, it says. "Most of our fishing pres-

sure occurs within territorial waters. We have three categories involved in fishing and related activities: traditional, motorised, and mechanised. Among these, only mechanised vessels tend to operate beyond 12 nautical miles," Dr Grinson George, Director of CMFRI, Kochi, told PTI.

He said various scientific agencies have closely studied the project and said this has been worked out after a lot of research and developmental activities.

"There were organisations that were looking closely at the seismic data that is coming from the Indian exclusive economic zone, to know what is happening to the resources in the coastal area. They were looking into oil and natural gas, gas hydrates, some people were looking on polymetallic nodules and organisations like Geological Survey of India were looking at the sand and minerals part of it also, and wanted to use these resources optimally and sustainably, to support the Blue Economy concept which is promoted by Government of India," Grinson George added.

Deep sea mining is the process of extracting minerals and other resources from the ocean floor using advanced machinery. It is proposed to mine rare earth minerals, polymetallic nodules, and other resources found at greater depths of the ocean floor.

The Centre has approved a proposal for deep-sea mining along the Kerala coast, arguing that it would reduce dependence on imported minerals and boost the Indian economy.

Amendments to the Offshore Areas Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act have enabled the government to increase private sector participation and introduce an auction system.

Jharkhand govt to study 'reduced' central grants, impact on schemes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, March 22: The JMM-led dispensation in Jharkhand Saturday alleged that the Union government has slashed its grants for several centrally sponsored schemes, which impacted the state's development.

Replying to a question of Congress MLA Pradip Yadav in the Assembly, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Sudivya Kumar said that the government would soon conduct a comprehensive study over grants-in-aid and loans provided by the Centre to the state and their impact on various centrally sponsored schemes and other aspects.

The Congress' Poreyhat legislator asked the government whether grants on the centrally sponsored schemes were slashed in the state in previous financial years.

The government, in its written reply, said that the state received Rs 8,828.89 crore in 2022-23, Rs 8,980.63 crore in 2023-24 and Rs 5,736.27 crore till January of the current financial year of 2024-25 as grants from the Centre for centrally sponsored schemes in Jharkhand.

"There has been a decline in central tax and grants-in-aid provided to the state. The Centre's step-motherly approach has impacted Jharkhand's development," Kumar claimed in



the House.

The Jharkhand minister said that an assessment would be carried out to ascertain the impact on various centrally sponsored schemes and people in light of the "reduction of central grants".

Yadav claimed that neighbouring Bihar received Rs 1.65 lakh crore as central tax and grants in 2023-24, while Jharkhand got a meagre Rs 46,000 crore during the period.

He demanded a study on the central grants comparing the figures of Jharkhand with neighbouring states.

In response, Kumar said, "The government will carry out a comprehensive study over central loans and grants provided to Jharkhand and its neighbouring states. A compar-

ative assessment will also be conducted over the reduction of funds for Jharkhand. Thereafter, a report will be made public."

Gandey MLA Kalpana Soren, wife of Chief Minister Hemant Soren, also wanted to know about loans that were received from the Centre.

Kumar said the state received Rs 20,825 crore as loan from 2008-09 to 2013-14, Rs 42,956 crore between 2014-15 and 2018-19 and Rs 9,593 crore in 2019-20 from the Centre.

He said that the state received Rs 2,002 crore till January 2025 as loans from the Central government.

"Jharkhand's financial management has been one of the best in the country in the past six years," he claimed.

J'hkhand Ophthalmological Society adjudged best in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, March 22: The Jharkhand Ophthalmological Society (JHOS) Saturday said it has been adjudged as the "best eye society in the country" for promoting scientific and educational activities, besides organising public health awareness camps.

JHOS will be conferred the award by the All India Ophthalmological Society during

the inaugural ceremony of the 40th Asia-Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress April 3 in New Delhi.

"The Jharkhand State Ophthalmological Society has been shortlisted for the Overall Best State Society Award among all member eye societies of All India Ophthalmological Society for promoting scientific and educational activities among practising ophthalmologists

and postgraduate students as well as organising public eye health awareness camps in 2024-2025," JHOS managing committee member cum chairperson of scientific committee, Dr Bharti Kashyap, told PTI.

JHOS will also receive, for the third consecutive year, the award for 'Best State Society in 100-500 members category' for educational and scientific pursuits, she said.

7,000 held across Kerala in month-long anti-drug drive

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 22: Kerala Police Saturday said that as part of its special drive, D-Hunt, to prevent the sale and use of psychotropic substances like MDMA, it has registered 7,038 cases and arrested 7,307 individuals across the state within a month of launching the initiative.

A statement issued by the State Police Media Cell (SPMC) said the drive also aimed to curb law and order issues arising from the use of narcotic and psychotropic substances in Kerala.

It claimed that since the launch of the special drive, the sale and use of narcotics have significantly declined in the state, primarily due to public participation.

The fact that people from different sections of society

are joining the fight against narcotics indicates the growing awareness among the public about drug use, it said.

The police added that significant efforts were made to raise awareness and mobilise society against narcotics.

As part of the drive, 70,277 individuals were checked across the state, leading to the registration of 7,038 cases and the arrest of 7,307 individuals, it said. Additionally, large quantities of drugs—MDMA (3,952 kg), cannabis (461,523 kg), and cannabis bidis (5,132 units)—were seized during the operation, police said.

Operation D-Hunt is being jointly implemented by the Range-based NDPS Coordination Cell and District Police Chiefs under the leadership of State Anti-Narcotics Task Force Head and ADGP (Law and Order) Manoj Abraham, it said.

UDF to protests against Central, state govts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Thiruvananthapuram, March 22: The Opposition Congress-led UDF Saturday announced a series of protests against the Union and state governments next month over various issues, including the permission granted for deep-sea mining.

Announcing the protests at the KPCC headquarters here, UDF Convenor MM Hassan said that front leaders and workers would carry out a protest march through the state's coastal belt from Nellikunnu Beach in the northern Kasargod district April 21 to Vizhinjam here April 29.

Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan will lead the march, which will be attended by major UDF leaders at various locations, he said.

Criticising the Centre, the



veteran leader said that it is moving ahead with deep-sea mining plans at a time when the coastal community is facing severe hardship.

The Union government must withdraw from deep-sea mining plans, which endanger the state socially, economically, and environmentally, he claimed.

He also demanded that the

Kerala government should end its hide-and-seek game on the deep-sea mining issue.

Although a resolution was passed in the state Assembly against deep-sea mining due to the opposition's firm stand, a public sector undertaking under the state government provided financial assistance to the Union Ministry

of Mines to survey the Kollam coast, he alleged.

The UDF will also demand that the state government provide fuel subsidies to fishermen, as done in other states, and strengthen measures to check sea erosion along the state's coastlines.

He further stated that the opposition wants the government to rehabilitate coastal residents who are being evicted for the construction of the coastal highway within their hamlets.

The UDF will hold a day-and-night protest in front of local self-government institutions April 4 and 5 against the state government's decision to cut funds for them.

The Congress-led front has also decided to stage a protest march in front of forest range offices in hill districts April 10 against the increasing wild animal attacks, Hassan added.

Idukki is 'golden goose' of Kerala Tourism: Minister

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Idukki, March 22: The hilly district of Idukki known for its breathtaking view and the rough terrain is now identified as the 'golden goose' of Kerala Tourism marking the highest rise in foreign tourist footfalls among all the 14 districts of the state, said Tourism and Public Works Minister PA Mohamed Riyas Saturday.

Though it is the largest district in the region in terms of area, it has the lowest population density among all the districts in the state.

Another feature of Idukki is a sizeable area comes under reserved forests and wildlife sanctuaries, both crucial for tourists.

Riyas arrived in Idukki to inaugurate the new Eco-lodge and renovated heritage Guesthouse at Peerumedu.

The Eco-lodge has been completed at a cost of Rs 5.05 crore under the Swadesh Darshan project.

Elaborating on the roadmap for tourism which today is the biggest money-spinning industry in the state, Riyas who is also the son-in-law of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, said Kochi will soon be hosting a MICE Tourism Conclave besides a Wellness Tourism Conclave in Kozhikode to promote new products in the sector.

"Kerala Tourism is adopting a 'Look East' policy to increase the number of tourists from East Asian countries. As part of this strategy, we are collaborating with Malaysian Airlines to bring influencers and travel and tourism agents from eight East Asian countries to Kerala and Idukki and Wayanad will be the biggest beneficiaries," said Riyas.

Local legislator Vazhoor So-man recalled that in the yester-years Peerumedu was a popular spot, especially during the time when the state was ruled by the erstwhile royal family.

Normal life affected in Ranchi as tribal outfits enforce bandh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, March 22: Normal life was affected in the Jharkhand capital Saturday as activists of various tribal outfits enforced an 18-hour Ranchi bandh in protest against the construction of a flyover close to a sacred 'Sarna Sthal', officials said.

Vehicular movement was affected as the bandh enforcers blocked key roads, burnt tyres, and shut down markets in the city.

The protesters demanded that a ramp of the flyover being constructed in Siram Toli be removed as it obstructs access to the religious site and could disturb its sanctity due to traffic movement.

Agitators scuffled with the police in various parts of the city, including in Hinoo and Argora areas. Examinees and journalists claimed they were harassed by the bandh enforcers.

Harmu, Kanke, Hinoo, Kokar-Lalpur, Kantatoli and other



Tribal people block the Ranchi-Jamshedpur road during 'Ranchi bandh' in protest against the construction of a flyover near a Sarna Sthal, a sacred tribal religious site, in Ranchi, Jharkhand, Saturday

verely affected, with city buses and motorised and battery-operated auto-rickshaws remaining off the roads.

Mobile app-based taxi services were also scarce, leaving passengers in the lurch.

Travelers using railway and airline services also faced inconvenience, as limited transport options made it difficult for them to reach railway stations or the airport.

Many commuters resorted to walking long distances in an attempt to reach their destinations.

The Ranchi district administration had made elaborate security arrangements and given strict instructions to the agitators to ensure that their stir did not cause any disruption or obstruction to the movement of traffic, dignitaries, students, members of educational institutions, or the general public.

"Barring a few incidents of traffic jams and burning of

tyres, no major incident was reported from any part of the city," Ranchi Sub-divisional Police Officer Utkarsh Gupta said.

He said no arrest or detention of agitators was reported till 4pm. The protesters alleged that the government ignored their concerns. They said when thousands of tribals gather at Siram Toli Sarna Sthal during Sarhul, the most significant tribal festival which is scheduled April 1, the flyover ramp would disrupt access to the site.

Kendriya Sarna Samiti president Bablu Munda said they were forced to call Ranchi bandh as the government was not ready to listen to their grievances.

The construction of a 2.34-km-long elevated road, which includes a 132-metre section over a railway line, is aimed at easing traffic movement by connecting Siram Toli to Mecon. The Rs 340-crore project was launched in August 2022, an official said.

roads were blocked by the agitators who erected temporary bamboo structures and burnt

tyres to enforce the bandh, which began at 6am. The Ranchi-Lohardaga Road

was blocked near Titla Chowk in Ranchi. Public transportation was se-



I welcome all these BJP black flags. I was never afraid when they sent me to Tihar Jail (in New Delhi)
DK SHIVAKUMAR | DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, KARNATAKA

MAMATA LEAVES FOR VISIT TO UK

Urging the people to maintain peace, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee left for a visit to the UK Saturday to seek investments for the state. Speaking to reporters outside the airport, Banerjee said though she will not be in the state, she will continue to keep a tab on the affairs here



of the day note

Modi Govt's 'Make in India' is a classic case of giving importance to publicity rather than delivery. In its 2014 Manifesto, the BJP made 10 promises to make India a "Global Manufacturing Hub", none of which have been fulfilled
MALLIKARJUN KHARGE | CONGRESS PRESIDENT

This politicisation of the educational system, educational institution, should not be tolerated
RAJENDRA VISHWANATH ARLEKAR | KERALA GOVERNOR

The gas turbine at Pampore is going through the process of decommissioning and its over-56-acre land is being utilised to set up the largest utility-scale power plant in the Union Territory
OMAR ABDULLAH | CHIEF MINISTER, JAMMU AND KASHMIR

ROW OVER CASH 'DISCOVERY' FROM JUDGE'S RESIDENCE

Delhi HC chief justice submits report to CJI

Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna Saturday constituted a three-member committee to conduct an inquiry into allegations against Justice Yashwant Varma from whose official residence a large stash of cash was allegedly discovered after a fire



New Delhi, March 22: Delhi High Court's Chief Justice DK Upadhyaya has submitted a report to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna in connection with the alleged discovery of cash from Justice Yashwant Varma's official residence here. Justice Upadhyaya had commenced an in-house enquiry procedure over the incident, collecting evidence and information. He submitted his report to the CJI Friday after talking to all the authorities concerned, including the fire department and police.

initiated an in-house inquiry against Justice Varma and separately, there was a proposal to transfer the judge to the Allahabad High Court. "There is misinformation and rumours are being spread with regard to the incident at the residence of Justice Yashwant Varma," the statement said. Upon receiving the information, the apex court said Justice Upadhyaya "commended the in-house enquiry procedure, collecting evidence and information".

examined and, thereupon, the collegium will pass a resolution," the court said. The issue was raised in the Rajya Sabha Friday, with Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar saying he will find a mechanism for holding a structured discussion on it. Raising the issue in the morning session, Congress MP Jairam Ramesh sought the chair's response on judicial accountability and reminded him about a pending notice regarding the impeachment of a judge of the Allahabad High Court.

The apex court collegium will look into the report and may initiate further action. The purported discovery of a huge stash of cash happened following a fire at Justice Varma's Lutyens' Delhi residence at around 11:35 pm on the night of Holi March 14, prompting the fire department personnel to rush to the spot and douse the flames. In a statement Friday, the Supreme Court said the Delhi High Court chief justice had

Justice Upadhyaya was stated to have commenced the enquiry prior to a meeting of the apex court collegium March 20. The Supreme Court said the proposal for transferring Justice Varma was examined by the apex court collegium comprising the CJI and the four senior-most judges March 20 and thereafter, letters were shot off to the consultee judges of the top court and the chief justices of the high courts concerned, besides Justice Varma. "Responses received will be

The procedure entails the CJI, after a preliminary inquiry, forming a committee of three Supreme Court judges to enquire into the matter after seeking the response of the judge concerned. A judge of a constitutional court can only be removed from office through an impeachment motion passed by Parliament.

Delimitation like 'sword of Damocles': Kerala CM



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chennai/Kerala, March 22: Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan Saturday termed the proposed delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies as a 'sword of Damocles' hanging over the states, especially in southern India, which reduced their population. He urged the Centre to engage in "meaningful dialogues" before going ahead with the process.

the sudden move was clear, it was imperative the union government consider the broader implications of its decision on Indian federalism and the preservation of the country's cultural and linguistic diversities. Bharat Rashtira Samithi Working President K T Rama Rao alleged that the current policy of delimitation "poses a threat to the future of southern states", undermining their economic contributions, governance achievements, and democratic representation.

Vijayan, addressing the first Joint Action Committee meeting convened in Chennai by Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin, said the Centre was suddenly going ahead with the delimitation process without any consultation as it was driven by "narrow political interests" and not by Constitutional principles or democratic imperatives.

He claimed that the present delimitation policy, based on population, could lead to the centralisation of funds and fiscal control, "jeopardizing" the progress of southern states. The proposed delimitation exercise by the Centre was not just a numbers game but a planned attack on the non-BJP ruled states to reduce their representation in the Parliament, Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin said.

In the meeting, attended by CMs of Punjab and Telangana - Bhagwant Mann and A Revanth Reddy, Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, and senior BRS leader KT Rama Rao among others, he further said that if the delimitation was done after the Census, it will lead to an increase in seats for northern states and a reduction for southern states.

"If not rewarded, we should at least not be penalised. This move is a direct threat to the federal structure. So, we must act quickly, and we must act together. We must demand an extension of the freeze on Lok Sabha seats based 1971 census beyond 2026," he said. Delimitation exercise based only on population cannot be fair and equitable, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said.

"Such a cut in seats for the south and an increase for the north will suit the BJP as it holds greater influence in the north," he contended. Vijayan said that while the "political maneuvering" behind

NABARD delegation visits Patanjali Research Institute



Haridwar: A one-day event, sponsored by India's premier National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), was successfully conducted at the auditorium of Patanjali Research Foundation. NABARD, as the apex supervisory body for regional rural banks, state cooperative banks, and district central cooperative banks, organized the event focusing on investment in various developmental activities in rural areas and promoting sustainable agriculture. The program commenced with a traditional Yajna (ritual offering). Revered Acharya Balkrishna warmly welcomed the guests by presenting them with shawls, garlands, and mementos. NABARD representatives and experts actively participated in the event. Presiding over the program, Revered Ayurveda Shiromani Acharya Balkrishna Ji stated that NABARD is the most significant institution for the development of rural enterprises in the country. It has several schemes for animal husbandry, including the Kisan Credit Card Scheme, Interest Subvention Scheme, Long-Term Loans, and the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund. The objective of these schemes is to increase capital investment, ensure stable income, and create employment opportunities. NABARD oversees regional rural banks and cooperative banks across India while also enhancing agricultural processes. Furthermore, NABARD has played a crucial role in fostering innovations, social transformation, and the establishment of social enterprises in rural areas. Highlighting Patanjali's future plans, Acharya Balkrishna mentioned that the organization's initiatives in the agricultural sector focus on increasing farmers' income, promoting organic farming, and adopting natural farming techniques.

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A pair of rose-ringed parakeets drink water from an earthen pot, on 'World Water Day', in Gurugram, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

Dhami gives 'report card' on 3 yrs of second term

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami highlights achievements in office, including UCC, anti-conversion laws, and crackdown on illegal structures

challenge his government faced and affirmed that it will continue to take actions like removing encroachments and verification drive to address the issue. Dhami said his government has tackled issues that were put on the back burner by previous governments. "Illegal mazars, constructions, and madrassas across the state were a big problem. We are conducting a drive against them, and action will continue until Uttarakhand is entirely encroachment-free. We won't hesitate to act against anything illegal," he said at a press conference on the eve of completing three years of his second tenure as Uttarakhand chief minister.



Dehradun, March 22: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami Saturday marked three years in office, highlighting the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), strict anti-conversion laws, and a crackdown on illegal mazars and madrassas as key achievements. Giving a "report card" on the state government's performance, Dhami said demographic change was a significant

Dhami said his government was preparing for challenges the state might face over the next decade and had asked all departments to propose three to five schemes that could be transformative. Traffic management, he said, could become a significant issue after the Delhi-Dehradun expressway is operational, re-

ducing travel time to 2.5 hours. A ring road linked to the expressway is being planned in consultation with the Centre to manage congestion, he added. Dhami, who took oath as the chief minister of the state for the second time in a row March 23, 2022, said some of the worst disasters hit the state during his tenure and every time he

The chief minister asserted that his government had taken strict action against 'love jihad, land jihad, or spit jihad' but did not associate them with any particular community

the recent avalanche at a BRO camp in Mana village in which the lives of 46 out of a total of 54 workers were saved. Dhami said he has asked the main departments to come up with "game-changer" schemes to deal with the challenges and realise the state's growth potential over the next ten years. He said the women of Uttarakhand will play a major role in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a developed India. Products manufactured by the women of Uttarakhand villages and their impressive packaging under the House of Himalayas brand are being recognised across the country and abroad, Dhami said. Women of Uttarakhand have been given 30 per cent reservation in government jobs in the state, he said describing it as a major step towards their empowerment.

lost no time in reaching ground zero and being in the midst of the affected people. He gave the examples of the Silkyara tunnel collapse in 2023 in which all 41 trapped labourers were rescued alive after an enormous multi-agency rescue operation that lasted 17 days, the Kedar Valley disaster last year in which lakhs of people were evacuated to safety and



If Bangladesh, with a population of 16 crore, can excel in readymade garment exports, why can't India, with 140 crore people, achieve similar success?

YOGI ADITYANATH | CHIEF MINISTER, UTTAR PRADESH

PM MODI TO VISIT SRI LANKA APRIL 5

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Sri Lanka April 5, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has announced. Dissanayake was delivering a statement in Parliament Friday when he announced the date for Modi's visit



of the day note

Mentioning that secessionist forces are active in some states even today, Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan said the thoughts of unity and integration propounded by RSS Founder Dr K B Hedgewar are more relevant today than ever

If anything good happens to Bengal, it makes us happy. Also we are proud that the CM is going to Oxford

Their enthusiasm for the IT sector, in particular, is very exciting! Looking forward to collaboration with Reliance Group of Industries for transforming Tripura's future together

MANIPUR'S ETHNIC CONFLICT

Justice Gavai urges unity for restoring peace

Gavai, along with Supreme Court judges Vikram Nath, MM Sundresh and KV Vishwanathan, visited a relief camp in Churachandpur district and met internally displaced persons



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Churachandpur/Imphal (Manipur), March 22: Justice BR Gavai, who led a delegation of Supreme Court judges that visited Manipur Saturday, called upon people of the ethnic strife-torn state to work together to restore peace and harmony.

They also virtually inaugurated a legal services camp, a medical camp and a legal aid clinic for the Mini Secretariat at Lamka in the district, they said.

Chief Justice of Manipur High Court, Justice D Krishnakumar, and Justice Golmei Gaiphulshilu were also present.

Addressing the gathering, Justice Gavai said, "The Constitution of India guarantees equal rights to all citizens of the country." He also urged the people of the state to restore peace and normalcy.

He said that the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), of which he is the executive chairman, has sanctioned Rs 2.5 crore for providing relief materials to internally displaced persons, besides the Rs 1.5 crore given earlier.

He said that 109 medical camps have been set up across the state to provide basic healthcare services. Justice Gavai also stressed the need for readmission of students who had to drop out of school due to the conflict.

He called upon the educational institutions and the public to ensure all students complete their education.

Earlier in the day, the top court delegation was accorded a warm welcome by the lawyers' fraternity of the state at Imphal airport.

Later, they visited the Sadbhavana Mandap relief centre and interacted with the internally displaced persons.

Several health officials were also facilitated by the judges.

"Sanad" was distributed among 41 newly enrolled advocates and stationery was distributed among IDP students.

More than 250 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

CRPF jawan killed, 1 injured in blast during anti-Naxal ops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chaibasa, March 22: A CRPF personnel was killed and another was injured in a blast in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district Saturday, police said.

The IED blast happened around 2.30 pm near Vangram Marangponga forest in Chotanagra police station area when an anti-Naxal operation was underway, they said.

The Improvised Explosive Device (IED), planted by Maoists to target security forces exploded during a search operation. Superintendent of Police Ashutosh Shekhar said.

CRPF personnel Sunil Kumar Mandal and Partha Pratim Dey were injured in the blast, he said.



They were airlifted to Ranchi for treatment, he added. "Mandal, a sub-inspector in CRPF's 193 battalion, succumbed to his injury during treatment," Shekhar said.

NAGPUR VIOLENCE

Bulldozer will roll if needed: Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, March 22: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Saturday that the government will recover the cost of property damaged during the recent Nagpur violence from rioters and roll bulldozer "if necessary".

Addressing the media, he said if the perpetrators of violence failed to compensate, their properties would be seized and sold to recover the losses.

He emphasised that strict action would be taken against those who attacked police officers during the unrest.

Replying to a query whether "bulldozer action" will be initiated against rioters in Nagpur on the lines of Uttar Pradesh, Fadnavis said, "The Maharashtra government has its own style of working...bulldozer will roll when necessary".

"Wherever wrong things are happening, they will be crushed. Nobody (perpetrators) will be spared," he added.

Fadnavis stressed that the incident cannot be termed "intelligence failure", but the intelligence (gathering) could have been better. "Police will be alert. We won't tolerate any kind of disturbance".

He said 104 individuals have been identified so far, following an analysis of CCTV footage and video recordings. Action has been initiated against 92 people, including 12 minors, as per the law.

The violence erupted March 17, after rumours spread that a 'chadar' with religious inscriptions had been burnt during



Quotes--The cost of properties damaged during Nagpur violence will be recovered from rioters and the failure to pay would lead to the seizure and selling of their properties to recover losses

DEVENDRA FADNAVIS | CHIEF MINISTER, MAHARASHTRA

protests led by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) demanding the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb in Chhatrapati Sambhajanagar.

The clashes resulted in widespread stone-pelting and arson across several parts of the city, leaving 33 police personnel, including three Deputy Commissioner of Police-rank officers, injured. Fadnavis said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to Nagpur March 30 would proceed as planned, unaffected by the violence.

"The cost of properties damaged during Nagpur violence will be recovered from rioters and the failure to pay would lead to the seizure and selling of their properties to recover losses."

"My government will not rest until those responsible for attacking the police are found and dealt with sternly," said Fadnavis, who also heads the Home Ministry.

X POST OF THE DAY



Tamil Nadu did something unique, never done in history of Hinduism. They managed to stay solidly Hindu while diluting the caste system. Not to say they aren't casteist, but they are comparatively better than other Hindu societies.

SHORT TAKES

4.5kg of cannabis seized in Chimpu

Itanagar: Police have seized 4.497 kg of cannabis (ganja) in Chimpu area here and arrested four persons linked to an organised drug network operating from Assam, an officer said Saturday. During a routine naka checking at the Chimpu check post here March 17, police intercepted a motorcycle and seized 1.440 kg of cannabis concealed under the seat, Capital Superintendent of Police (SP) Rohit Rajbir Singh said. The two motorcycle riders were immediately taken into custody. Both are residents of Chimpu-I village, here.

India deports 27 Myanmar nationals

Imphal: Altogether 27 Myanmar nationals who had entered Manipur illegally were deported by the Indian authorities, officials said Saturday. The foreigners, including a minor, were handed over to the authorities of the neighbouring country at Indo Myanmar Friendship Gate in Moreh in Manipur's Tengnoupal district Friday. They had been lodged at the Foreigners' Detention Centre at Sajiwa Jail in Imphal.

Pregnant woman, unborn child die

Muzaffarnagar: A pregnant woman and her unborn child died during delivery at an unregistered "hospital" in Budhana town here, leading to the arrest of an unqualified woman posing as a doctor, police said Saturday. The incident occurred at "Raj Health Care," a facility that was found to be operating illegally. Lalit Kasana, in charge of the Budhana police outpost, said, "One Kusum (25) was admitted for delivery at Raj Health Care Friday evening, but both the mother and the child died during delivery in the early hours of Saturday.

MEERUT KILLING

Autopsy reveals savagery of murder

Police plan trial in fast-track court



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Meerut/Shimla (UP), March 22: The Uttar Pradesh Police Saturday said they plan to take the Saurabh Rajput murder case to a fast-track court while a post-mortem revealed the extreme brutality with which he was killed and the body dismembered allegedly by his wife and her lover.

Rajput's head was severed from the body, both hands were cut off from the wrist and his legs were bent backwards, suggesting an attempt to fit the body in a drum, the autopsy report disclosed. The cause of death has been attributed to shock and excessive bleeding.

After the murder, Muskan Rastogi and her lover Sahil Shukla travelled to Himachal Pradesh's Kasol March 10 and checked into a hotel by introducing themselves as husband and wife. They left March 16, the hotel operator said, adding the accused duo's driver accompanied them.

They stayed in their hotel room the whole day, going out once a day in their car which was unusual, and had minimum interaction with the staffers who were not allowed to clean their room, he said. During check-out, they told the hotel operator that they had come from Manali and would return to Uttar Pradesh.

Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada told PTI that the police will prioritise filing a charge sheet in the case as quickly as possible.

"We will try to run the case in a fast-track court so that the accused get punishment as soon as possible," he said, adding police will seek to take Muskan and Sahil in their custody once their 14-day judicial custody ends.



Vintage cars on display during the 26th Vintage & Classic Cars exhibition, in Jaipur, Saturday

PTI PHOTO

India-NZ partnership grown much stronger: PM Luxon

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Describing India as an increasingly important nation, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon Saturday said the partnership between the two sides has grown "much

stronger" during his visit this week to the country.

Wrapping up his India trip, the Kiwi prime minister said he was delighted that negotiations on a comprehensive free trade agreement between India and New Zealand have now

been launched. Luxon and PM Narendra Modi held extensive talks March 17 that saw the two sides firming up an ambitious pact to institutionalise bilateral defence ties and a resolve to boost cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

"India, the world's most populous country, is an increasingly important partner for New Zealand. That partnership has grown much stronger during my visit this week," Luxon said in a social media post.

Traditional healers catalyst in TB elimination drive in Meghalaya

The Meghalaya government has roped in traditional healers to intensify screening, detection and treatment of the dreaded disease, making it possibly the first state to employ this innovative approach for TB elimination at the grassroots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, March 22: In a unique endeavour, traditional healers have been acting as a bridge between local remedies

and modern medicine in the fight against tuberculosis in Meghalaya.

Around 80 per cent of the population in the northeastern state live in rural areas with poor road connectivity and scarce healthcare facilities.

In such as setting, these healers have been serving as the first point of contact for healthcare services for a long time. Now they also act as the primary screening points for tuberculosis.

The Meghalaya government has roped in traditional healers to intensify screening, detection and treatment of the dreaded disease, making it possibly the first state to employ this innovative approach for TB elimination at the grassroots.

Having earned the trust and confidence of the locals in the



Around 80 per cent of the population in the northeastern state live in rural areas with poor road connectivity and scarce healthcare facilities

hills over the years, these healers identify suspected tuberculosis patients and ensure that they reach the nearest primary health centre where they are screened for TB with portable X-ray machines and tested with

NAAT machines.

For each positive diagnosis, the healers receive Rs 500 as an incentive from the state government.

In the Ri Bhoi district, Elington Syiem, a traditional healer, said, "Whenever villagers come

to my clinic with ailments, I try to detect possible TB cases through verbal assessment."

"We don't directly tell them to go for TB screening because of the stigma attached to the disease that deters people from seeking treatment. Instead, we tell them to visit the nearest primary health centre for a health checkup," he said.

Like Syiem, many traditional healers are mobilising vulnerable people to primary health centres for screening under the ongoing pan-India 100-day Intensified Campaign to Eliminate TB.

Recognising that many people first seek care from traditional healers before reaching healthcare facilities, the state has launched an initiative to engage these trusted community figures in the fight against tuberculosis, said Ramkumar

S, the mission director of the National Health Mission.

"They are acting as a bridge between tradition and modern medicine, ensuring earlier detection and better adherence to treatment," he said.

Pointing out that around 36 per cent of the population seek health services from these traditional healers, Ramkumar S said, "By leveraging their deep community trust, Meghalaya is proving that tradition and modern medicine can work hand in hand in the TB elimination drive."

Deputy Commissioner of Ri Bhoi district Abhilash Baranwal said this approach aims to address and overcome several challenges such as poor telecom connectivity, difficult terrain and the hesitancy among people in seeking TB treatment due to the stigma attached to it.



Given the increasingly severe international situation, I believe we may truly be at a turning point in history
TAKESHI IWAYA | FOREIGN MINISTER, JAPAN

HUNDREDS THROG BEIJING'S VASANT MELA

The diplomatic enclave of the Chinese capital came alive Saturday as over 4,000 Chinese people thronged the third edition of Vasant Mela marking a "new beginning" in Sino-India ties as the two countries sought to normalise the ties breaking the four-year chill



of the day note

We will invariably support Russia in the struggle for defending the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and security interests
KIM JONG UN | LEADER, NORTH KOREAN



In the end, Americans are going to lose from American trade action and that's one of the reasons I am confident that there will be that discussion with the appropriate amount of respect and the breadth
MARK CARNEY | PM, CANADA



For over three years, the rights of girls in Afghanistan have been violated. All girls must be allowed to return to school now. If these capable, bright young girls continue to be denied an education, then the repercussions will last for generations
CATHERINE RUSSELL | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, UNICEF



RESPONSE TO CROSS-BORDER FIRE

Israel strikes Lebanon

The exchange was first since Israel effectively abandoned a separate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip with Palestinian militant group Hamas, an ally of Hezbollah, both backed by Israel's arch-foe Iran



All security and military measures must be taken to show that Lebanon decides on matters of war and peace
NAWAF SALAM | PM, LEBANON

The Lebanese government bore responsibility for any rocket salvos from its territory. We will not allow rocket fire from Lebanon on the Galilee communities
ISRAEL KATZ | DEFENCE MINISTER, ISRAEL

Beirut, March 22: Israeli artillery and airstrikes hit south Lebanon Saturday after Israel said it had intercepted rockets fired from across the border, a clash endangering a shaky truce that ended a year-long war between Israel and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah. That conflict marked the deadliest spillover of the Gaza war, rumbling across the border for months before escalating into a blistering Israeli offensive that wiped out Hezbollah's top commanders, many of its fighters and much of its arsenal. The Israeli military said earlier it had intercepted three rockets launched from a Lebanese district about 6 km (4 miles) north of the border, the second cross-border launch since a US-brokered ceasefire in November ended the fighting. Israel's Army Radio said the military was returning artil-

lery fire. Lebanon's state news agency said Israeli artillery hit two towns in southern Lebanon with airstrikes on three other towns closer to the border. Signalling it could further escalate its response, the Israeli military said it would "respond severely to the morning's attack." However, the Israeli military said it was still looking into who was responsible for Saturday's cross-border launches towards the northern border town of Metula. Hezbollah did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. Under the November ceasefire deal, Hezbollah was to have no weapons in southern Lebanon, Israeli troops were to withdraw from the region, and Lebanese army troops were to

deploy into the area. The agreement specifies that Lebanon's government is responsible for dismantling all military infrastructure in southern Lebanon and confiscating all unauthorised arms. The ceasefire brought an end to Israel's intense bombardment and ground operations in Lebanon and Hezbollah's daily rocket barrages into Israel. Each side, however, has accused the other of failing to implement the deal in full. Israel says Hezbollah still has military infrastructure in the south, while Lebanon and Hezbollah say Israel is occupying Lebanese land by continuing to carry out some airstrikes and keeping its troops at five hilltop positions near the frontier.

Heathrow airport reopens, chaos eases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

London, March 22: London Heathrow Airport said it was "fully operational" Saturday, after an almost daylong closure sparked by an electrical substation fire. But thousands of passengers remained stuck, and airlines warned that severe disruption will last for days as they scramble to relocate planes and crews and get travellers to their destinations.

Friday's travel mayhem raised concerns about Britain's ability to withstand disasters or attacks on critical infrastructure. Inconvenienced passengers, angry airlines and concerned politicians all want answers about how one seemingly accidental fire could shut down Europe's busiest air hub. "This is a huge embarrassment for Heathrow airport. It's a huge embarrassment for the country that a fire in one electricity substation can have

such a devastating effect," said Toby Harris, a Labour Party politician who heads the National Preparedness Commission, a group that campaigns to improve resilience. Heathrow said it had "hundreds of additional colleagues on hand in our terminals and we have added flights to today's schedule to facilitate an extra 10,000 passengers." It advised passengers to check with their airline before going to the airport. British Airways, Heathrow's biggest airline, said it expected to operate about 85 per cent of its 600 scheduled flights at the airport Saturday. It said that "to recover an operation of our size after such a significant incident is extremely complex."



SHORT TAKES

Stirs against Mayor: Turkey detains 343

Ankara: Turkish authorities have detained 343 people during overnight protests in several cities against the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, the Interior Ministry said Saturday. Demonstrations took place in more than a dozen cities including Turkey's biggest city Istanbul and the capital Ankara, the ministry said in a statement. It said the detentions were made to prevent "disrupting of public order" and warned that authorities would not tolerate "chaos and provocation." Tens of thousands of Turks have taken to the streets in mostly peaceful demonstrations since Wednesday, when Imamoglu was detained on charges such as graft and aiding a terrorist group. He is President Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival who leads him in some opinion polls.

South Korea hit with multiple forest fires

Seoul: Two firefighters were found dead in South Korea and two were missing as more than 20 wildfires flared across the nation Saturday, including the deadly one in the southeast of the Korean Peninsula. Acting President Choi Sang-mok urged all-out efforts to extinguish the fire before sunset as wildfires were spreading rapidly due to strong winds. The dead firefighters were attempting to quell a fire in South Gyeongsang province that began Friday and had affected 275 hectares (680 acres) as of Saturday afternoon. More than 200 residents had been evacuated.

Unrest in Balochistan

Karachi: A shutter-down and wheel jam strike was observed in many parts of Pakistan's restive Balochistan province Saturday after violence broke out between police and the Baloch Yakjehti Committee's (BYC) a day earlier. Many parts of the province including the capital city Quetta remained closed on the call of the BYC's leader Mahrang Baloch, who was arrested on Saturday from a sit-in with some other workers and activists. The strike call came after the BYC claimed a police crackdown on a peaceful sit-in near Balochistan University on Sariab Road in Quetta Friday, which was held as a protest against alleged enforced disappearances in the province. Mahrang claimed in a statement on social media on Friday night that three BYC activists were killed and 13 others including women injured due to the alleged police brutality.



Lava rises from Mount Etna, Europe's most active volcano, in Italy, March 20
REUTERS



A motorcyclist rides past a burning barricade during a protest in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, March 19
REUTERS



NASA astronaut Sunita Williams smiles after returning to Earth in a SpaceX capsule Tuesday with a soft splashdown off Florida's coast, nine months after their faulty Boeing Starliner craft upended what was to be a week-long stay on the International Space Station
REUTERS



Women dance as they attend spring equinox celebrations at Stonehenge stone circle, near Amesbury, Britain, March 20
REUTERS

Italy allows singles to adopt foreign minors, ending 40-year ban

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Rome, March 22: Italy's Constitutional Court ruled Friday that unmarried people can adopt foreign minors, ending a 40-year-ban on the practice and setting a precedent that could pave the way to allowing Italian singles to adopt from within the country. Friday's court ruling declared unconstitutional the exclusion of singles from international adoptions under a 1983 Italian law, which allowed only married couples to pursue international adoptions. According to Italy's top court, the exclusion of single people risked undermining "the effectiveness of the child's right to grow up in a stable and harmonious family environment." The court decision also reflects concerns among adoption advocates over a downward trend in Italy's international adoption over the past few years, due to increasing difficulties for couples in completing adoptions abroad and the high costs related to the lengthy process. Italy's right-wing government headed by Premier Giorgia Meloni has opposed singles' adoptions in court, but the country's centre-left opposition hailed Friday's ruling as a "historic turning point." "It puts the rights of minors and the freedom of self-determination of every individual first," said Democratic Party's lawmaker Alessandro Zan, who has promoted battles for the parenting rights of singles and gay couples.

US revokes legal status for over 5L Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans under deportation fears

Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans under deportation fears



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miami, March 22: The Department of Homeland Security has said that it will revoke legal protections for hundreds of thousands of Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans, setting them up for potential deportation in about a month. The order applies to about 5,32,000 people from the four countries who came to the United States since October 2022. They arrived with financial sponsors and were given two-year permits to live and work in the US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said they will lose their legal status on April 24, or 30 days after the publication of the notice in the Federal Register. The new policy impacts people who are already in the US and who came under the humanitarian parole programme. It follows an earlier Trump administration decision to end what it called the "broad abuse" of the humanitarian parole, a long-standing legal tool president have used to allow people from countries where there's war or political instability to enter and temporarily live in the US. During his campaign President Donald Trump promised to deport millions of people who are in the US illegally, and as president he has been also ending legal pathways for immigrants to come to the US and to stay. Before the new order, the beneficiaries of the program

Since late 2022, more than half a million people have come to the US under the policy, also known as CHNV. It was a part of the Biden administration's approach to encourage people to come through new legal channels while cracking down on those who crossed the border illegally

could stay in the US until their parole expires, although the administration had stopped processing their applications for asylum, visas and other requests that might allow them to remain longer. The administration decision has already been challenged in federal courts. A group of American citizens and immigrants sued the Trump administration for ending humanitarian parole and seeks to reinstate the programs for the four nationalities. The Biden administration allowed up to 30,000 people a month from the four countries to come to the United States for two years with eligibility to work. It persuaded Mexico to take back the same number from those countries because the US could deport few, if any, to their homes. Cuba generally accepted about one deportation flight a month, while Venezuela and Nicaragua refused to take any. All three are US adversaries. Haiti accepted many deportation flights, especially after a surge of migrants from the Caribbean country in the small border town of Del Rio, Texas, in 2021.

WEEK'S BEST PICS



Students and anti-government demonstrators light the flashlights of their mobile phones during a protest, which has become a national movement for change following the deadly November 2024 Novi Sad railway station roof collapse, in Belgrade, Serbia, March 15
REUTERS

Business



Just as international brands like McDonald's and KFC have adapted to Indian tastes, we aim to introduce authentic Indian flavours to a global audience
MONTY SINGH | CO-FOUNDER, THE MONTANA GROUP

TWITTER BIRD SIGN SELLS FOR \$35,000 AT AUCTION

Twitter's iconic bird logo that was removed from the company's former San Francisco headquarters when Elon Musk took over the social media company and rebranded it to X has sold for nearly USD 35,000 at an auction.



of the day quote

At Godrej Agrovet, we believe the future of agribusiness lies in empowering women through education, workplace inclusivity, and leadership development
BALRAM SINGH YADAV | GODREJ AGROVET MANAGING DIRECTOR



Research will have to be further strengthened to make India a leader in the agricultural sector
SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN | AGRICULTURE MINISTER

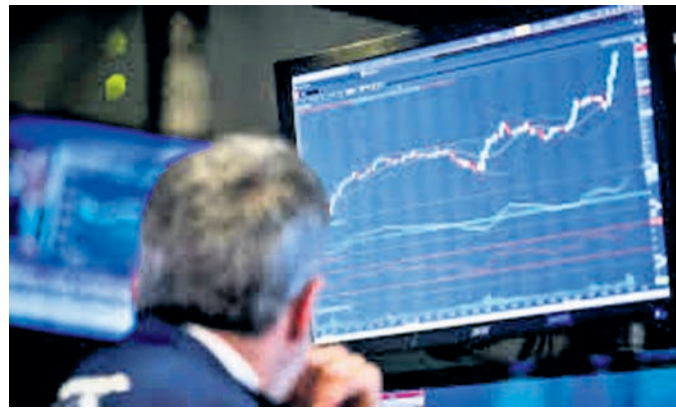


Two new segments have opened up for us, where the growth is almost 30-40 per cent -- one is the quick commerce, and one is the regular e-commerce. Both are growing quickly
PIRIZ KHAMBATTA | RASNA INTERNATIONAL CHAIRMAN



STOCKS SEE BIGGEST WEEKLY GAIN IN 4 YRS

The resurgence in market sentiment was fuelled by the comeback of FIIs amid a strengthening Indian rupee



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 22: The Indian stock markets witnessed a strong rebound this week, with benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex surging over 4 per cent – the best weekly performance in four years – and the rally was fuelled by improving investor sentiment, improvement in foreign flows and positive global developments, experts said Saturday.

The Nifty gained over 4 per cent, the highest weekly since February 2021. The Sensex also surged 4 per cent, the most since July 2022.

The resurgence in market sentiment was fuelled by the comeback of FIIs amid a strengthening Indian rupee. Additionally, the steep correc-

tion in many stocks over recent months created opportunities for value buying, attracting investors looking to capitalise on lower valuations.

Nifty closed at 23,350.4, while Sensex ended the week at 76,905.51 – both near their weekly highs.

Benchmark indices rose for fifth straight session on Friday as broad-based buying propelled the market higher. Broader market extended up move as Nifty midcap and smallcap closed higher by 1.4 per cent and 2.1 per cent, respectively, according to Bajaj Broking Research.

“Several factors contributed to the sharp recovery. Easing pressure from foreign institutional investors (FIIs), marked by positive flows in both cash

and derivatives segments, provided much-needed stability. Additionally, crude oil prices and the dollar index remained at lower levels after a recent decline, supporting market sentiment,” said Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

Further, dovish signals from the US Federal Reserve regarding future rate cuts, coupled with reports of de-escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, added to the optimism.

The rally was broad-based, with all key sectors participating. Realty, energy, and pharma emerged as the top gainers, while midcap and smallcap indices surged between 7.7 per cent and 8.6 per cent, adding to the overall market buoyancy.

According to experts, with no major domestic economic events scheduled, focus will remain on the expiry of March derivatives contracts and FII activity.

On the global front, the US markets will be closely watched, with tariff-related updates and GDP growth data expected to influence investor sentiment. Although US markets saw a temporary respite after a sharp decline, mixed signals suggest potential volatility in the coming sessions.

Traders are advised to adopt a “buy on dips” strategy, focusing on sectors that have demonstrated consistent strength. Banking, financials, metals, and energy stocks remain preferred picks, while selective opportunities can also be explored in PSU and auto stocks, said market watchers.

No shortcut to success: Baksh

A civil engineer by qualification, Mansur Baksh, Managing Director of MSB Automotive Pvt Ltd, has transformed Odisha's two-wheeler market with an extensive dealership network. He followed his passion for automobiles, starting with Mahindra two-wheelers in 2014 and later expanding with Bajaj. With a strong presence in both urban and rural markets, Baksh discusses the industry's growth, challenges, and the future of sustainable mobility. From navigating infrastructure costs in Bhubaneswar to embracing electric and CNG-powered vehicles, he remains committed to innovation and customer satisfaction. In an interaction with Orissa POST, he shares insights into his entrepreneurial journey and future expansion plans....Excerpts



Can you share your early journey and what led you to the two-wheeler industry?

My journey in the automotive sector began in 2014. Although I was a civil engineer, I always had a deep fascination for automobiles. When I got an opportunity to start a business with Mahindra two-wheelers, I seized it. In 2017, I expanded my operations with Bajaj two-wheelers, starting my dealership in Nayagarh, which is also my birthplace. That marked the beginning of my long-term commitment to the two-wheeler industry.

The two-wheeler market in India is witnessing a surge, driven by rural sales. Are you experiencing similar growth in Odisha?

Absolutely! The rural economy has grown significantly, and the gap between rural and urban markets is diminishing. The government's infrastructure development initiatives have played a cru-

cial role in increasing disposable income in rural areas, leading to higher demand for two-wheelers. I started in Nayagarh, and over time, rural markets have proven to be the driving force behind our growth. If you look at my business, I have three branches in urban locations like Bhubaneswar, Puri, and Nayagarh, but the majority—14 to 15 branches—are in rural areas.

As a leading motorcycle dealer in Bhubaneswar, what are the biggest challenges you face?

Bhubaneswar has immense potential, and the market is growing rapidly. However, one of the biggest challenges is the high cost of infrastructure and rentals. While these expenses are significantly higher, they also bring good returns. The key is to balance investment with sustainable growth.

Bajaj launched its first CNG motorcycle last year. How do you see the future of electric vehicles?

Bajaj has always been a leader in automotive technology. The launch of the world's first CNG motorcycle was a revolutionary step, and the response has been excellent. Sustainability is the future, and Bajaj is already making a strong impact in this space. In the electric vehicle segment, the Chetak model holds a special place. It carries the rich heritage of the Bajaj brand, and its relaunch in an electric avatar has been well received. Electric mo-

bility is undoubtedly the way forward, and we are excited about it.

How important is customer satisfaction in your business?

Customer satisfaction is the foundation of our business. Unlike manufacturers, our role as dealers revolves around customer relationship and delivering an exceptional buying experience. A successful dealership is built on trust, and we ensure that every customer feels valued and supported.

What are your expansion plans?

We have expanded to multiple locations, including Bhubaneswar, Puri, Phulbani, Pipili, Banki, Charichhak, Dasapalla, Sunakhala and more. We also have a Triumph dealership in Cuttack and Berhampur, along with an exclusive Chetak center in Puri. Looking ahead, we have ambitious plans for further expansion to cater to the growing demand in both urban and rural areas.

As a successful entrepreneur, what advice would you give to newcomers in the industry?

Hard work and determination are the keys to success. The automotive industry is dynamic, and challenges will always be there. However, perseverance and a customer-first approach can help build a strong and sustainable business. There's no shortcut to success—dedication and continuous learning are essential.

SEBI cracks down on misleading social media content

Mumbai: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) said it has taken strict action against misleading content on social media, removing over 70,000 posts and accounts since October 2024. This move is part of the SEBI's ongoing efforts to tackle misinformation and regulate online financial influencers. The market regulator has been working closely with social media platforms to ensure such content does not mislead investors. SEBI whole-time member Ananth Narayan highlighted these efforts while speaking at the Association of Registered Investment Advisors (ARIA) summit here. “A common worry for all of us is the menace of unregistered investment advisors/research analysts who are cashing in on the rising interest in investments,” he said. He added that the SEBI's proposal to use the UPI ‘Payright’ handle will enable investors to easily identify registered entities and protect them from fraudsters. “The increasing interest in investments has also led to a rise in unregistered investment advisors and research analysts who misguide investors,” Narayan said. To tackle this, the market regulator has introduced the UPI ‘Payright’ handle, which will help investors identify registered entities and avoid fraud. Narayan also announced that the SEBI is planning a nationwide survey to better understand investor behaviour and improve its outreach strategies.

PLI schemes clock ₹1.61L-cr in investment

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, March 22: The production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes have clocked Rs 1.61 lakh crore in investment, Rs 14 lakh crore in production and Rs 5.31 lakh crore in exports while creating 11.5 lakh jobs, the government said Saturday.

To date, 764 applications have been approved under PLI schemes for 14 key sectors and 176 MSMEs are among the PLI beneficiaries in sectors such as bulk drugs, medical devices, pharma, telecom, white goods, food processing, textiles and drones, according to a Ministry of Commerce and Industry statement.

The PLI schemes have witnessed exports surpassing Rs 5.31 lakh crore (around \$61.76 billion), with significant contributions from sectors such as large-scale electronics manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food processing, and telecom and networking products.

The PLI schemes for 14 key sectors are under implementation to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities and exports. Incentive amount of around Rs 14,020 crore disbursed under PLI schemes for 10 sectors, informed the ministry.

In the PLI scheme for speciality steel, about Rs 20,000 crore of investments have been made by companies – out of Rs 27,106 crore committed – and these projects have given a direct employment of 9,000. The incentive of Rs 48 crore has been released to the in-



The schemes have witnessed exports surpassing ₹5.31 lakh crore, with significant contributions from sectors such as large-scale electronics manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food processing

dustry so far. The Ministry of Steel estimates that an incentive of Rs 2,000 crore will be disbursed by the end of the scheme tenure. About 14 of 58 projects withdrew from the scheme either because of change in business plans of

the company and project execution delays.

As many as 35 companies have shown interest in the second round of the PLI scheme for speciality steel. A further commitment of Rs 25,200 crore investment has been committed by these companies.

Under the PLI scheme for the food processing industry, the deadline for filing claims is November 30 for Millets and December 31 for other categories.

For the FY 2022-23 claim year, an incentive of Rs 474 crore has been disbursed. For FY 2023-24, the disbursement target is Rs 700 crore, which is on track to be achieved,” informed the ministry.

Under the PLI scheme for promoting domestic manufacturing of medical devices, 19 green-field projects have been

commissioned and production of 44 products including high end medical devices such as Linear Accelerator, MRI machines, CT-Scans, Mammograms, C-Arms and Ultrasound machines etc., which were previously imported into the country has started.

About 84 companies under the PLI Scheme for White Goods (ACs and LED Lights) are set to bring investments of Rs 10,478 crore, strengthening domestic capacity in AC and LED segment.

“India has achieved 60 per cent import substitution in telecom products under the PLI scheme for telecom and networking Products. Global tech companies have set up manufacturing units, turning India into a major exporter of 4G and 5G telecom equipment,” the ministry said.

SEBI chief: FPIs need to live with current taxation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, Mar 22: Sebi Chairman Tuhin Kanta Sataruday said there is no point unsettling the current taxation, and the foreign portfolio investors need to “live with” the system.

Pandey, who took over as the Sebi chief three weeks ago, also said some companies are making “blatantly false disclosures” and the capital markets regulator does not “hesitate” to act against such malpractices.

On the issue of taxation, Pandey listed out a slew of advantages which India – the fastest growing large economy in the world – offers, including delivering superior returns, stable policy environment and inflation being under control.

“If some certainties have already come in terms of taxation, let us not unsettle it,” he said, listing out positives with India like delivering over 11 per cent per annum returns on the MSCI over the last five years, fastest growing large economy, stable inflation, and fiscal consolidation.

Consumption is picking up, and there is an upswing in capital formation both by the government and private companies, he said, while speaking at the Business Today Mindrush 2025 event here.

Pandey said the tax system has actually responded to the problems of these investors and facilitated moves even in the latest Budget.

There were concerns of FPI pullouts after a government



clarification declaring that FPIs will have to pay long-term capital gains tax at 12.5 per cent from April 1 as against the earlier rate of 10 per cent.

The FPIs segment has seen outflows in 2024, a trend that is being attributed to global events. The career bureaucrat-turned-regulator said materiality should decide the level of disclosures, and added that the Industry Standards Forum (ISF) constituted by Sebi has defined the same and frequency of making the disclosures.

“There are corporate disclosures (where) there are malpractices... there are blatantly false disclosures being made. We will not hesitate in taking actions against such disclosures,” he said.

Sebi's surveillance system is throwing out details of the entities indulging in such wrongful disclosures, he said.

On the issue of taxation and the regime's impact on the FPI interest in the Indian markets, Pandey seemed to suggest that the investor community should not expect any change.

RCB starts with a bang

KOHLI'S CLASS ON FULL DISPLAY AS RCB CRUSH KKR IN IPL 2025 OPENER BY SEVEN WICKETS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 22: 'Chase master' Virat Kohli once again showcased his class with a sublime unbeaten half-century as Royal Challengers Bengaluru, backed by Krunal Pandya's game-changing triple strike crushed defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders by seven wickets in the IPL opener Saturday.

Ajinkya Rahane, who has transformed his T20 game, dazzled on his Kolkata Knight Riders captaincy debut with a 25-ball fifty, but it was Krunal's 3/29 that ensured that the defending champions fell well short of the 200-mark, managing a below-par 174/8.

During chase, Phil Salt, rubbing salt into his former franchise's wounds, gave RCB an explosive start with a 31-ball 56 laced with nine fours and two sixes. His whirlwind knock, in a 95-run opening stand with Kohli, set the tone for the chase.

Kohli then raced to a 30-ball fifty, raising his bat to deafening chants of his name in a signature 36-ball knock studded with three sixes and four fours as they sealed the chase in just 16.2 overs.

Moments after he reached fifty, the frenzy peaked when a pitch invader ran onto the field and fell at Kohli's feet, summing up the adulation he commands across all venues.

Earlier Salt came out swinging against India's in-form spin-



ner Varun Chakravarthy, who was fresh from his Champions Trophy heroics.

He smashed him for 4-6-4-4 in succession in a brutal 21-run over—first over mid-off, then

a six tonked over the same region, followed by a powerful drive over mid-on, before finishing with a slog-swept boundary to deep square leg.

Kohli soon joined the six-fest, taking on Spencer Johnson with effortless strokeplay.

A length ball outside off saw Kohli shuffle across and launch it straight over the bowler's head for a 63-meter six.

The next delivery was an action replay, only this time the ball soared 75 meters into the stands.

RCB raced to 80/0 in the powerplay, firmly in command.

KKR finally found a breakthrough in the ninth over when Salt, was dismissed by Varun.

But Kohli was in no mood to relent. In the much-anticipated matchup against Chakravarthy, he showcased his class, slog-sweeping the leg-spinner over long-on before raising his bat to the dugout and pumping his fists.

In the process, Kohli also surpassed 1,000 IPL runs against KKR. With the chase well under control, skipper Rajat Patidar (34 from 16 balls; 5x4, 1x6) joined Kohli and ensured there were no hiccups.

He took Rana apart in the 15th over, smashing four boundaries in five balls, virtually sealing the contest as RCB required just 18 runs from the final 30 balls.

The 36-year-old veteran, who last played a T20I for India in 2016 and replaced Shreyas Iyer

The 18th season of the IPL kicked off with a grand spectacle, featuring a 35-minute musical performance followed by Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's iconic introduction of Virat Kohli, which electrified the crowd that outnumbered home team KKR's fans with chants of "RCB, RCB" echoing through the stands

at the helm, played a fearless knock of 56 off 31 balls.

Sunil Narine contributed 44 off 26, in a 103-run third wicket partnership off 55 balls to lay a solid platform scoring at 10 plus an over.

But their efforts were undone by left-arm spinner Krunal's brilliant 3/29 in the middle overs where he dismissed a well-set Rahane, and the two KKR heavyweights duo of Venkatesh Iyer (6) and Rinku Singh (12) in successive overs.

The inability of KKR's lower middle order -- featuring their most expensive INR 23.75 crore signing Venkatesh, a horribly out of form Rinku Singh, and Russell—to fire cost them dearly as they managed just 23 runs and lost two wickets in the last four overs.

Josh Hazlewood, who started brilliantly with the new ball, finished with tidy 2/22 after RCB opted to bowl.

Treesa-Gayatri's run ends in semis



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Basel, March 22: India's women's badminton pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand saw their impressive run come to an end with a narrow three-game loss to the world number one Chinese duo of Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning in the semifinals of the Swiss Open here Saturday.

The world number 9 Indian pair squandered an opening-game advantage, going down 21-15, 15-21, 12-21 to the top seeds Liu and Tan in a match that lasted an hour and 32 minutes.

This defeat marked the end of India's campaign at the BWF Super 300 tournament, as Sanakar Muthusamy Subramanian, the only Indian left in the singles draw, lost 10-21, 14-21 to world number 31 Christo Popov of France, a 2019 World Junior Championships silver medalist, Friday night.

India vs China
The match was a battle of attrition as both pairs engaged in energy-sapping rallies, many surpassing 70 shots. In the end,

it was the Chinese top pair who made fewer mistakes and held their nerves to secure the victory after a long, grueling battle.

The Indian duo started strong, opening up a 4-1 lead and extending it to 11-6 at the break. Treesa and Gayatri controlled the pace, earning the early advantage.

After the change of sides, the young Indian pair maintained their momentum, going 6-3 up. However, Liu and Tan turned the tables, leading 11-7 at the interval.

Despite the Indian pair's best efforts, Liu and Tan won a 77-shot rally at 15-12, and the momentum shifted with that. The Chinese pair soon stretched their lead to 18-12 and secured six game points after Gayatri hit wide. While Gayatri saved one point, a long smash from Treesa saw the match head into the decider. In the third game, Liu and Tan dominated the rallies, establishing an 11-6 lead at the break. The Indians kept fighting, but the Chinese pair gradually increased the gap to comfortably close out the match.

SHORT TAKES

Foreman passes away

Austin: George Foreman, the fearsome heavyweight who lost the "Rumble in the Jungle" to Muhammad Ali before his inspiring second act as a 45-year-old champion and a successful businessman, died Friday night. He was 76. Foreman's family announced his death on social media. A native Texan, Foreman began his boxing career as an Olympic gold medalist who inspired fear as he climbed to the peak of the heavyweight division by stopping Joe Frazier in 1973. His formidable aura evaporated only a year later when Ali pulled off one of the most audacious victories in boxing history in Zaire, baiting and taunting Foreman into losing his belt in one of the greatest fights ever staged.

Women's coaching camp

New Delhi: Hockey India named the 65-member core probable group for the upcoming senior women's national coaching camp to commence in SAI, Bangalore Sunday. The group has been selected basis the recent performance at the 15th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship in Panchkula where Hockey Jharkhand lifted the title beating Hockey Haryana in a tense shootout.

Bhubaneswar to host National Para Fencing Championship from March 28



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 22: Top para fencers from across the country will compete for honours at the National Championship, scheduled to be held here from March 28 to 31.

The prestigious event, organised by the Para Sports Association of Odisha (PSAO) under the aegis of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI), will take place at the Biju Patnaik Indoor Stadium and Kalinga Sports Complex.

Supported by the Sports and Youth Services Department, Government of Odisha, the championship is expected to witness participation from over 25 states and 20 additional teams, with approximately 200 para fencers vying for top

We look forward to creating an inspiring atmosphere for these remarkable athletes to compete at the highest level

KAMALA KANTA RATH | PRESIDENT, PSAO

honours.

"We are thrilled to host the National Para Fencing Championship in Bhubaneswar. This event will not only highlight the exceptional talents of our para-athletes but also underline Odisha's strong commitment to sports development," said Kamala Kanta Rath, President of PSAO. "We look forward to creating an inspiring atmosphere for these remarkable athletes to compete at the highest level."

Hamilton claims first Ferrari win

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Shanghai, March 22: Lewis Hamilton said it was "really special" to register his first victory for Ferrari after winning the sprint race at the Chinese Grand Prix Saturday in dominant fashion. Hamilton had trailed home 10th in Melbourne on his Ferrari debut, but it was a different story six days later in Shanghai.

The seven-time world champion powered to the win from pole position to add a sprint victory to his six grands prix triumphs at the circuit. The Englishman took the chequered flag 6.889 seconds ahead of McLaren's Oscar Piastri with Red Bull's Max Verstappen third.

Hamilton emerged from his car after the finish line to a crescendo of cheers from the massed Shanghai fans, who unfurled huge banners displaying his number 44.

"That is a really, really special weekend so far," the 40-year-old told reporters. "China and Shanghai has always been really good to me since my first race here back in 2007. It's a track that I really do love driving on. It's hard to put into words what it feels like. Obviously it's a sprint race, it's not



the main race, but it's a good stepping stone."

Hamilton used his vast experience to take advantage of the clean air at the front of the pack and nurse his tyres over 19 laps on the newly resurfaced 5.451km Shanghai International circuit.

"I think it is generally pret-

ty close between all of us," said Hamilton, now in the red of Ferrari after his move from Mercedes. "But the tyre degradation today was pretty huge I think for everybody. I was just trying to manage that early on and then the last, like, five laps or something, I was in a really comfortable position."

Argentina a draw away from WC qualification

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Montevideo, March 22: Argentina didn't miss Lionel Messi, Lautaro Martínez and other key players and beat Uruguay away 1-0 in convincing fashion in their South American World Cup qualifying match.

Thiago Almada scored the winner with a powerful curled shot from the edge of the box Friday, putting the defending champions one point away from its direct spot in the tournament next year.

Argentina leads the round robin competition with 28 points after 13 matches, and could secure its place with a home draw with Brazil Tuesday. The team of coach Lionel Scaloni already has 15 points ahead of 7th-placed Bolivia, with only five rounds to the end of the competition.

The last time the two soccer powerhouses clashed, Argentina won 1-0 at the Maracana Stadium in Rio de Janeiro.

Earlier, Ecuador defeated Venezuela 2-1 and moved into second place in South American World Cup, edging close to reaching the tournament once again.

Brazil is third with 21



points, one ahead of Uruguay and Paraguay. Colombia, with 19 points, has the sixth position.

The top six teams will secure direct berths to the tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada. The seventh-place team among the 10 of the region will still have a chance to qualify through an international playoff.

NO MESSI, NO PROBLEM
Argentina had to accommodate key absences beyond Messi. Lautaro Martínez, Lisandro

Martínez, and Rodrigo De Paul did not play in Montevideo. So coach Lionel Scaloni gave a place to Giuliano Simeone in the starting lineup, with Julián Álvarez and Thiago Almada up front.

Uruguay, playing in a full Centenario Stadium against its archrival, took the initiative and had the clearest chances in the first half. But Argentina managed to hold its ground and started getting the better opportunities after halftime.

Almada's goal in the 68th minute, after Argentina had wasted several other opportunities in front of goalkeeper Sergio Rochet, still didn't push Uruguay forward as Marcelo Bielsa's team finished the match with only four shots on goal.

"I was a little anxious, very willing to play and to show why I was making the squad," said Almada, a world champion with Argentina in 2022.

"Now we have to rest and wait for this match against Brazil, they will rest one more day than us."

Argentina's Nico González will miss the match against Brazil. He was sent off after a challenge against Nahitan Nández in injury time.

Brazil has selection problems of its own for Tuesday's match at the Monumental de Nunez Stadium, as starting goalkeeper Alisson, defender Gabriel Magalhães and midfielder Bruno Guimarães are all ineligible to play.

Uruguay will have a chance to recover against Bolivia Tuesday. If the Bolivians fail to beat the Uruguayans, Argentina will qualify for the World Cup even if it loses against Brazil.

ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

FMSCI honours 170 drivers



AGENCIES

Chennai, March 22: The Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) on Saturday presented awards to 170 drivers across 17 disciplines, and along with them honoured volunteers and officials, a first in its annual felicitation ceremony.

The volunteers and officials were awarded for the smooth and flawless conduct of all the events. "The volunteers and officials are one among the five connecting pillars of motor sports and they deserve all the accolades," FMSCI President Arindam Ghosh said during the function here.

"The others are participants, officials, corporates and media. If all the five are inter-connected in a proper manner, motor sports will grow by leaps and bounds," Ghosh added.

He also spoke about the substantial enhanced bidding for events, a sign of the growing

popularity of motor sports in India. The officials and volunteers who were honoured on the day among others included: Manoj P Dalal (Race Director), Subash H (Marshal), Gowthaman (Marshal), Dr. Paramesh Kumar (Doctor) and Shirrang Machhe (Competitor's Relation Officer). Coimbatore Auto Sports Club bagged the award for the Best Marshal Team.

Diana Pundole was one of the star attractions of the award ceremony as she had become the first Indian woman to win a National Championship in the history of Indian motor sports where female racing drivers compete on equal footing with male drivers. She won the National title in the MMSC FMSCI Championship last year in the saloon cars class. The FMSCI also honoured three drivers for their 'Outstanding Performances' in international events and they were: Aishwarya Pissay, Sarthak Chavan and Sanjay Takale.

Pranati Nayak wins bronze in vault final at FIG World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 22: Indian gymnast Pranati Nayak Saturday secured a bronze medal in the Vault Final at the FIG Artistic Gymnastics Apparatus World Cup in Antalya, Turkey.

The 29-year-old, who represented the country at the Tokyo Olympics, came up with a total score of 13.417 in the vault final to finish third, behind American duo of Jayla Hang (13.667) and Claire Pease (13.567).

"It is a great feeling to start the year with a medal. It is a good confidence booster for me. I had won last year as well, so I'm feeling really happy," Nayak, who had scored 13.317 in the vault qualification, told PTI from Antalya.

"My eyes are now on winning medals at Asia Championships and World championships, that's the target for the year," she added.

Pranati had clinched the bronze medal in the women's vault event of the FIG Apparatus World Cup in Cairo before the Paris Olympics last year.

She also won vault bronze medals at the Asian Championships in 2019 (Ulaanbaatar) and 2022 (Doha).

Nayak has battled through a series of injuries and was left disheartened after missing out on a berth for the Paris Olympics. However, with the support of her coach Ashok Kumar Mishra, she has regained her confidence.

"She has been with me for the last four years, and I am extremely pleased that she was able to secure a bronze medal this year after finishing third last year as well," said Mishra, who now trains athletes at the Odisha AM/NS India Gymnastics High Performance Centre.

Pranati is the third Indian gymnast to win an international medal on the vault, after Dipa Karmakar (2018 Mersin Gold, 2018 Cottbus bronze) and Aruna Reddy (2018 World Cup in Melbourne). She competed at the 2014 and 2018 Commonwealth Games, as well as at the 2014 and 2018 Asian Games. Additionally, she also represented the country in the 2014, 2017, and 2019 World Championships.

