



Tamannaah's take

Tamannaah Bhatia, who was recently seen in *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*, speaks up on the importance of self-love

LEISURE | P2



Unrest in Turkey

Turkish court jails Prez Erdogan's main political rival, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, in a move likely to stoke severe protests

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Cars to get costlier

Cars are set to get costlier from April, with automakers announcing price hikes due to rising input costs and operational expenses

BUSINESS | P11



SRH hammer RR

Sunrisers Hyderabad bury Rajasthan Royals under a deluge of runs to start its IPL 2025 campaign in style

SPORTS | P12

Nigerian man held from New Delhi over sextortion charges

AGENCIES

Cuttack, March 23: The Odisha Police has arrested a Nigerian for his alleged involvement in a sextortion case leading to death of a woman doctor by suicide, an official said Sunday.

A special team of Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Commissionerate of Police arrested the accused from New Delhi Friday and brought him here Sunday. The accused has been identified as Djedje Raymond alias Chijioke John Okoye, 31, a Nigerian man from Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

A case had been registered March 1 at Dharghabazar police station in Cuttack in connection with the death of a woman doctor by suicide, "who became a victim of the accused," a police officer said. Sextortion typically involves the exploitation of intimate images and videos to extort money or favours from victims, officials said.

"In her suicide note, the victim had mentioned international WhatsApp numbers and domestic phone numbers. She also mentioned that some persons cunningly obtained her private photographs and blackmailed her," said Khilari Rishikesh Dnyandeo, DCP (Cuttack).

"During investigation, we found that calls were made using the internet through a mobile number operating in Uttam Nagar and Palam area of Delhi. Acting on that input, our special team visited New Delhi and arrested the accused," he told reporters here.

The accused has been staying in New Delhi since 2020, he said. The DCP said the arrested person used to survey online Facebook accounts of professionals like doctors, and managed to steal their identity by creating fake profiles. He used those profiles to send friend requests to other online accounts, and "lure them to obtain their mobile and WhatsApp numbers", another police officer said.



WAR SCARS: A boy looks on as Palestinians inspect the rubble of a structure hit by an Israeli bombardment in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip. As per the latest toll announced Sunday by Gaza's Health Ministry, more than 50,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israel-Hamas war. (Report P10)

Stones hurled at Min's cavalcade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Baripada/Bhubaneswar, March 23: A group of people in Mayurbhanj Sunday hurled stones at a vehicle, which was part of the cavalcade of a state minister, as they sought to know why officials did not visit areas affected by a recent hailstorm in the district and assess damages.

A constable was injured in the attack, a police officer said. The incident took place after the cavalcade of Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari was returning, after dropping him at a helipad in the district.

A group of locals, who were staging protests, hurled stones at one of the vehicles, the officer said. The car's windscreen was damaged in the attack, he said.

The constable, who was present near the vehicle, was injured and taken to a nearby hospital, police said.

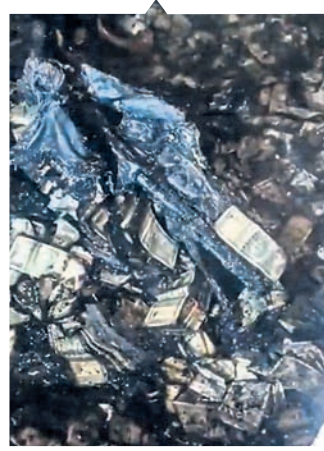
Earlier in the day, Pujari visited the hailstorm-affected areas of Bisoi and Bangriposi blocks of Mayurbhanj district.

"I was supposed to visit the areas Saturday, but my helicopter could not take off due to bad weather. So, I went to those areas today. Compensation will be provided to the people affected by the hailstorm in Mayurbhanj district by Monday," Pujari said.

Probe enters crucial stage

The CJI's decision to upload the crucial documents, along with photos and videos, linked to the alleged discovery of a massive cash stash during a fire at Delhi High Court Judge Yashwant Varma's residence is a significant step setting a precedent for transparency and accountability. The widely praised rare move offers an unprecedented level of insight into an inquiry that is typically handled behind closed doors, highlighting accountability within the highest echelons of the judiciary. However, the uploaded content directly contradicts the statement made by Delhi Fire Services Chief Atul Garg, who had earlier claimed that no cash was found when firefighters doused the flames at Varma's official residence. This discrepancy raises serious questions about the credibility of the initial claims and could deepen public scepticism if not properly addressed. Now, the real test lies in ensuring a fair and thorough inquiry that leads to concrete actions, thereby restoring confidence in the judicial system.

CASH PILE ROW



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: With Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna constituting a three-member panel to probe the discovery of four to five semi-burnt sacks of Indian currency notes after a fire incident at the residence of Delhi High Court Judge Yashwant Varma, the in-house procedure has entered the crucial second-stage

whose findings will decide the fate of the judge.

The fire incident at the store-room of the official residence of Justice Varma March 14 in posh Lutyens' Delhi locality purportedly led to the discovery of the cash by firefighters and police personnel.

The CJI constituted the three-member panel after the Delhi High Court Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya in his report dated March 21 and made public Saturday evening called for a deeper probe into the allegations.

However, no timeline has been fixed for the inquiry committee to conclude the probe.

In 2014, while dealing with a case of alleged sexual harassment of a subordinate court judge in Madhya Pradesh at the behest of a sitting judge of the high court, the top court laid down the in-house procedure meant to probe the allegations against a judge of the constitutional courts.

It said in the first stage of the in-house procedure, the prima facie veracity of the allegations contained in the complaint is

ascertained; if so, whether a deeper probe is called for. The first stage does not contemplate an in-depth examination of the allegations. It requires merely an assessment based on the contents of the complaint, and the response of the concerned judge.

All that the Chief Justice of the High Court is required to do, is to determine whether a deeper probe is required. This is to be done, on the basis of a logical assessment made on a consideration of the response of the concerned judge (with reference to the allegations levelled in the complaint), it had said.

The top court had said it is the second stage of the in-house procedure relating to sitting judges of high courts which could lead to serious consequences.

The second stage is monitored by none other than the CJI, it had said. Only if the CJI endorses the view expressed by the Chief Justice of the High Court, that a deeper probe is called for, he would constitute a three-member Committee, and thereby take the investigative process to the second stage.

AIMPLB calls nationwide protest against Waqf Bill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) Sunday announced a nationwide agitation against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024, with large sit-ins planned in front of the state Assemblies in Patna and Vijayawada March 26 and 29, respectively, as part of the first phase of the protest.

AIMPLB spokesperson SQR Ilyas said leaders from JD(U), RJD, Congress and Lok Janshakti Party, including Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, have been invited in Patna.

In Andhra Pradesh, he said, invitations have been sent to the ruling Telugu Desam Party (TDP), YSR Congress, Congress and Left parties.

Ilyas expressed gratitude on behalf of the board to all Muslim organisations, civil society groups and leaders from Dalit, Adivasi, OBC and other minority communities.

Without the grace of Allah and the united support of these groups, the success of the Delhi

demonstration would not have been possible, he said.

He also extended thanks to the opposition parties and members of Parliament who not only participated in large numbers but also firmly rejected the proposed legislation.

The AIMPLB's 31-member Action Committee has resolved to adopt all constitutional, legal and democratic means to oppose the Bill, which it has described as controversial, discriminatory, and damaging. As part of the first phase of the agitation, large sit-ins have been planned in front of the state Assembly in Patna March 26 and Vijayawada March 29.

The senior leadership of the AIMPLB, along with representatives of national and state-level religious and social organisations, will participate in these demonstrations, a statement said.

Leaders from civil society, prominent personalities from other minority communities and key figures from Dalit, Adivasi, and OBC sections have also confirmed their participation.

Stray dog attacked with swords; case registered

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Berhampur, March 23: Odisha Police Sunday registered a case of animal cruelty against unidentified persons for allegedly assaulting a stray dog with swords in Berhampur in the early hours of Saturday, an official said.

The case was registered against unknown persons under different sections of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and the Arms Act at the town police station after a person from the area lodged a complaint, Berhampur SP Savarana Vivek M said.

Police are trying to identify and apprehend the accused persons through CCTV camera footage, he added.

The dog's condition was good as the local residents took care of it, police said.

The accused persons were seen arriving on two-wheelers. The exact reason for attacking the dog is not yet known. The motive will only be determined after the arrest of the culprits, the SP said.

Animal rights activists condemned the incident and urged police to take stringent action against the attackers of the stray dog. P4

Rules allow secret sitting of LS; never used

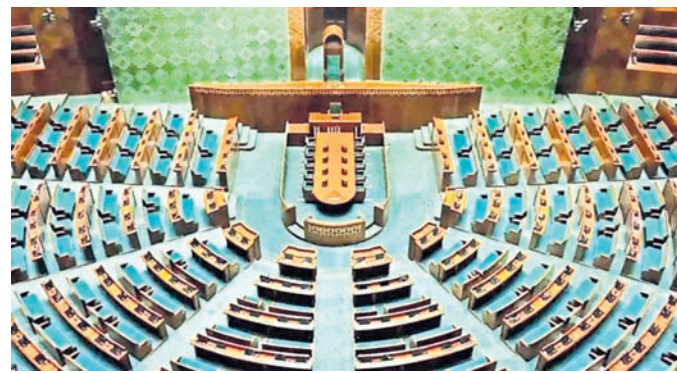
■ During the China-India conflict in 1962, some opposition members had proposed a secret sitting to discuss the sensitive issues. But Nehru did not agree, saying the public should know

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: Rules allow the government to convene a secret sitting of the Lok Sabha to discuss sensitive issues, but the provision has not been used so far.

According to a constitutional expert, during the 1962 Chinese aggression, some opposition MPs proposed a secret sitting of the House to discuss the is-

LITTLE KNOWN FACT



sue. But the then prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not agree to it.

Chapter 25 of the 'Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha' has enabling provisions to hold secret sittings at the request of the

Leader of the House. According to Rule 248, subclause one, on a request made by the Leader of the House, the speaker will fix a day or a part of it for sitting of the House in secret.

Subclause 2 says that when the House sits in secret no

stranger will be permitted to be present in the chamber, lobby or the galleries. But there are some who will be allowed during such sittings.

Another rule in the chapter says the speaker may direct that a report of the proceedings of a secret sitting be issued in such manner as the chair thinks fit.

But no other person present shall keep a note or record of any proceedings or decisions of a secret sitting, whether in part or full, or issue any report of, or purport to describe such proceedings.

When it is considered that the necessity for maintaining secrecy in regard to the proceedings of a secret sitting has ceased to exist and subject to the consent of the Speaker, the Leader of the House or any authorised member can move a motion that the proceedings during such a

sitting be no longer treated as secret.

If the motion is passed, the secretary general will prepare a report of the proceedings of the secret sitting, and publish it at the earliest.

Rules warn that disclosure of proceedings or decisions of a secret proceeding or sitting by any person in any manner will be treated as a gross breach of privilege of the House.

Constitutional expert and former Lok Sabha secretary general PDT Achari said there has been no occasion to hold a secret sitting of the House.

Citing his interactions with old timers, he said during the China-India conflict in 1962, some opposition members had proposed a secret sitting to discuss the sensitive issues. But Nehru did not agree, saying the public should know.

leisure



OSBOURNE'S HUGE PLANS FOR COMEBACK GIG

The Black Sabbath frontman, Ozzy Osbourne, has huge plans for his comeback gig despite him not being in the best of shape. Ozzy, who is referred to as the 'Prince of Darkness', plans to perform on a throne for the gig, reports *Mirror.co.uk*.

TAYLOR SWIFT COMES OUT OF INSTAGRAM HIATUS

Taylor Swift made a return to Instagram after more than three months to appreciate fellow singer-songwriter Selena Gomez's new album *I Said I Love You First*. Swift heaped praise on the *Emilia Pérez* star's new musical collaboration with her fiancé Benny Blanco.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
Today, you are raring to go. It's best you put that adrenaline to good use. This is the time to WORK and not plan. It's a day you can lift mountains and cross the seas. You can party hard later, says Ganesha.

TAURUS
Spontaneity, predicts Ganesha, is the need of the hour. Ignore the negative aspects and focus on the positive side. Your action rather than thoughts will yield results today. Listen to some light music to soothe your soul, suggests Ganesha.

GEMINI
You will feel all warm and fuzzy owing to the love, care and concern bestowed upon you by your near and dear ones. This is all owing to the good karma you have gathered in the past. You will be busy with finances in the evening, however, do not let money be a factor when it comes to family and relatives, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You will have more interest in spirituality and philosophy. An ordinary day on the career and business front. It means there will be no major incidents. You will get support from subordinates. Keep an eye on rivals and foes in the afternoon and their actions, so that you can thwart their moves.

LEO
You will have to fulfill all your responsibilities carefully, and will be duly rewarded for your troubles. Begin all auspicious work and new projects in the afternoon. Your generosity and capability will keep you at peace today, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Ganesha says that if your authority is questioned today, you will probably take to wielding your stick. A risky financial venture is a distinct possibility. Something unexpected and unpleasant in the evening will give you cause for some worry. However, Ganesha advises you not to take it to heart, as there is a lot of hope.

LIBRA
Ganesha says do not have blind faith in your relatives and friends and always remember even your enemies will prove beneficial to you in the long run. There may be people who are jealous of your reputation and may try to put a dent in it. You may want to go further with matters relating to your heart and will be able to spend the evening with your beloved.

SCORPIO
You may call it an 'awesome' day, while Ganesha may call it just perfect. Unexpected financial gains on cards today. Academically and professionally, you may push your limits higher, proving your expertise. You may be on an emotional high, express yourself freely.

SAGITTARIUS
Unlike chirpy and cheerful, you will be in a grumpy mood today; blame it on the office's petty issues, says Ganesha. Another thing that lingers on your mind would be financial matters. Keep yourself balanced and let nothing affect you.

CAPRICORN
In the fast paced life of today, rarely anyone gets time to spend with their old friends. Today, you're one of those rare people. Also, you will have a blissful love life, blesses Ganesha. You will develop a better level of understanding with your partner. Family members, your support system, will motivate you to fulfil their demands and expectations.

AQUARIUS
You will now deal with issues which you have brushed under the carpet for some reasons. Keep your affairs neat and tidy so that can avoid further complications, advises Ganesha. If you are seeking a job, you will pass the day scanning through job advertisements and applying for interviews.

PISCES
The day will start on an energetic and enthusiastic note, says Ganesha. Your day will be enjoyable up to afternoon but there will be some unexpected reasons that will make you fidget in your seat after that. Make sure to take a deep breath and do not let small problems overwhelm you. Avoid over thinking and it will lead to unnecessary mental stress.

27TH NATIONAL KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV - DAY II



Members of Purba Ranga, a troupe from Assam staged Ahamiya play *Dronacharya* at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Sunday. Written by Mrinmaya Bhuyana, the play was directed by Gunakar Devgoswami. Three more plays will be staged in next three days.

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK



Hrithik turns cheerleader for ladylove

Mumbai: Actor Hrithik Roshan couldn't help but gush over his girlfriend Saba Azad's latest glamorous photoshoot. The actor took to the comments section of Saba's post and praised her stunning look. Hrithik commented, "Beautiful," followed by a red heart emoji. Sunday, Saba took to her Instagram handle and shared a series of her alluring photos in a stylish white outfit. In the photos, she could be seen exuding glamour as she strikes different poses. Saba looked so hot in a white monokini paired with a chic frill jacket and long socks. Notably, Hrithik often shows his support for Saba by cheering her on and leaving sweet comments on her social media posts. Whether it's praising her work or simply showing admiration, the War actor never misses an opportunity to express his love and appreciation for Saba. For the unversed, Hrithik and Saba's romance began to bloom in 2022. As per reports, their connection started on Twitter when the actor liked and shared a video of Saba collaborating with a rapper. In response, Saba thanked Hrithik, which led to them striking up a conversation. Their exchange marked the beginning of their love story.

Tamannaah on self-love

Mumbai: Actress Tamannaah Bhatia, who was recently seen in *Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*, has spoken up on the importance of self-love and respecting oneself.

The actress is gearing up for her upcoming theatrical film *Odela 2*, in which she essays the role of Shivashakti. She also spoke on the tag "Milky Beauty" that she is often associated with. The actress had an empowering response.

She said, "Why did you look at a milky beauty and thought she could be Shivashakti? He doesn't look at a milky beauty as something that has to be shamed or to feel bad about, glamour in a woman is to be celebrated and we women must celebrate ourselves, then we can expect others to celebrate us".

She further mentioned, "If we look at ourselves in a certain way then nobody can respect us right. Here we have a wonderful gentleman who does not look at women like that, he looks at women like divine, and divine can be glamorous, divine can be lethal, divine can be powerful, divine can be many things. A woman can be many many things".

Her words reflect her confidence and the changing perception of women in cinema, where strength and glamour can co-exist.



Deepika's French connection

Mumbai: Deepika Padukone revealed her French connection from school during her Paris visit for the Paris Fashion Week.

The diva uploaded an Instagram video from Paris where she was seen revealing that "I was very good in French." She added, "I did French in the 11th and 12th and I was real-

ly good." We see Deepika flaunting her French prowess saying, "Le monde est nous" which translates to "The world is ours." She also introduced herself in French saying, "Je m'appelle Deepika. Je suis Indienne." which translates to "I'm Deepika. I'm Indian."

Towards the end of the clip, we get a glimpse of Deepika's behind-the-scenes chaos from the Paris Fashion Week.

The *Tamasha* actress was a sight to behold in a white oversized blazer, matching hat, and black leggings and heels. Deepika accessorised the look with black leather gloves, a scarf, and some classic red lipstick.

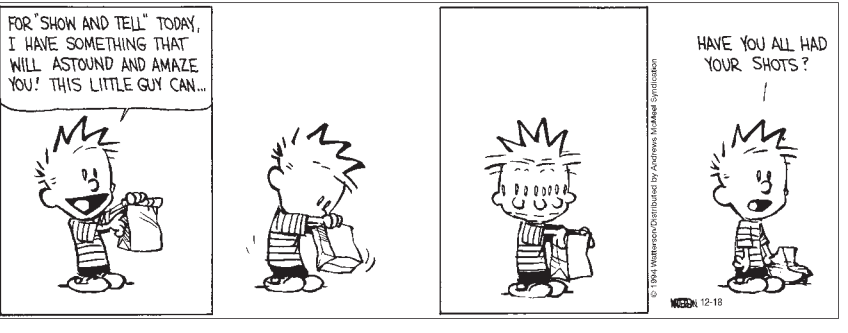
A few days back, she shared a couple of looks of herself on social media ahead of attending the Louis Vuitton Fashion Week.

The pictures featured her standing on a rooftop with the iconic Eiffel Tower in the backdrop.

PEANUTS



CALVIN AND HOBBS

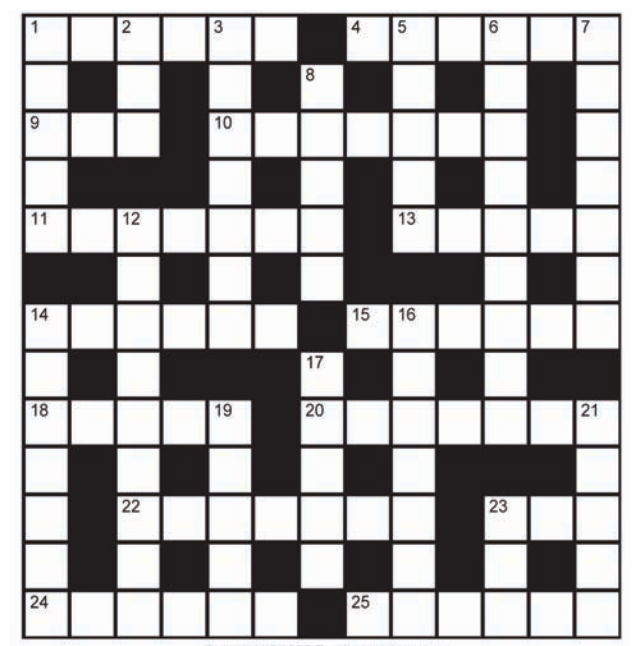


BREVITY



FUN POST

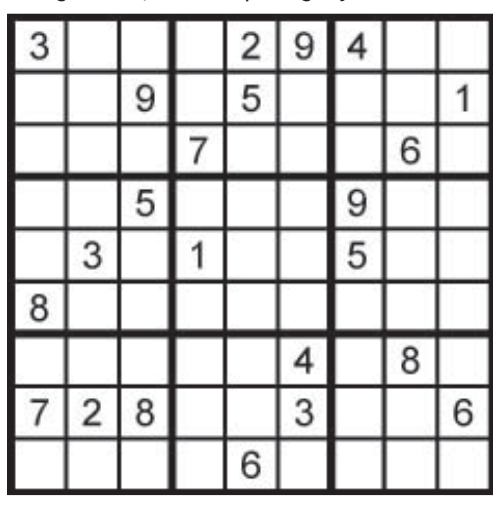
CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 1 Playwright's offering
 - 4 Islands off Portugal
 - 9 Hotel amenity
 - 10 Flightless bird
 - 11 Japanese dish
 - 13 Sidestep
 - 14 Young swan
 - 15 "To your health!"
 - 18 Having little experience
 - 20 Remus's twin
 - 22 Perfect in every way
 - 23 Polynesian paste
 - 24 Smelled awful
 - 25 Lissome
 - Down**
 - 1 Pink-legged bird
 - 2 Seafood delicacy
 - 3 Vegetables
 - 5 Belgian Congo, in the past
 - 6 Wedding forerunner
 - 7 Loch Ness monster, maybe
 - 8 Digress
 - 12 Earthquake measurement
 - 14 Frankness
 - 16 Russian imperial line
 - 17 Waste pipe
 - 19 Irregularly notched
 - 21 Boar
 - 23 Sidekick

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

A carcade rehearsal in progress in Bhubaneswar, Sunday, on the eve of President Droupadi Murmu's visit to the state. The President is scheduled to attend the foundation day ceremony of Bharatiya Biswabasu Shabar Samaj at Kalliapalli in Nayagarh district Monday



downtown

BJP, BJD cross swords over Mahanadi water dispute



INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, March 23: A war of words ensued between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Sunday over the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute following the meeting of the Chief Ministers of Odisha and Chhattisgarh here Saturday.

The principal Opposition party Sunday took a dig at BJP saying that Chhattisgarh should first stop the ongoing construction work of barrages on the river for a fruitful deliberation on the issue.

Speaking on the discussions held during the meeting of CMs of both states, senior BJD leader Prasanna Acharya said: "We welcome the discussions on the issue by CMs of both states. If both governments want a fruitful discussion and mutual solution to the issue without hampering the interests of Odisha,

then the Chhattisgarh government should immediately stop the ongoing construction of work on various projects and hold discussions."

He also noted that the ruling BJP, without making any complaints or blaming others, should now work to resolve the Mahanadi water-sharing dispute as there is a triple-engine government - Odisha, Centre, and Chhattisgarh.

He also raised questions on the efforts to resolve the issue through dialogue between the CMs as the matter is currently in the tribunal.

"The Union government convened a meeting of the representatives of the two states in 2016 to resolve the issue. The Centre has held three meetings on the issue. The then CM of Odisha went to the first meeting while skipping the rest two meetings. The previous BJD-led Odisha government moved to a tribunal only to serve its own po-

litical interests," said Law Minister Prithiviraj Harichandan.

He said that the ruling BJP, which was in Opposition then, had warned the BJD led government against approaching the tribunal due to its lengthy process.

He also stated that BJD should stop doing politics on the Mahanadi water dispute issue as the government will take all the necessary steps to resolve the issue at the earliest keeping in view the interests of Odisha.

Notably, Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai met his Odisha counterpart Mohan Charan Majhi at the Lok Seva Bhavan Saturday.

The meeting, held in a cordial atmosphere, included discussions on several issues, with a key focus on resolving the Mahanadi water dispute amicably.

Both leaders agreed to prioritise the issue and explore peaceful and constructive ways to resolve the dispute, ensuring the welfare of the citizens in both states.

It is pertinent here to mention that sharing of Mahanadi river water has been a bone of contention between the states of Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

Odisha has asserted that the Chhattisgarh government is constructing dams and weirs (small dams) upstream the Mahanadi river which affect the flow of the river downstream and affect drinking water supply.

Union min reviews urban devpt projects

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal Sunday reviewed the progress of urban development projects in Odisha during his visit to the state.

According to an official statement, the minister emphasised the need to develop Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri and Khurda as growth hubs to drive regional economic development.

The focus will be on improving infrastructure, encouraging industrial and commercial growth, and promoting sustainable urbanisation through strategic planning and public-private partnership.

In the statement, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said that a major point of discussion was the proposal for developing a new city as part of the Greater Bhubaneswar area.

During his meeting, the minister assured support for the project and advised the state government to explore funding opportunities under the



Union Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs and Power Manohar Lal calls on CM Mohan Charan Majhi at State Guest House in Bhubaneswar, Sunday

15th Finance Commission and the Urban Challenge Fund, the statement said.

To promote sustainable urban mobility, the Union government has approved the deployment of 400 electric buses for Odisha under Pradhan Mantri e-Bus Sewa Scheme, it added.

Lal also reviewed the proposed Bhubaneswar metro project and reaffirmed full support from the Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry to address the city's growing public transport needs.

In a key housing initiative, Bhubaneswar served as the launch site for Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY).

"The proposal for 50,000 new houses under PMAY-Urban was discussed, and the minister assured continued coordination with the state government for its expeditious approval. He lauded Odisha's progress under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), particularly in achieving milestones such as the 24x7 water supply project currently underway in 18 cities," the statement further said.

Under Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0, the state has shown commendable improvements in sanitation and waste management, the ministry said,

adding that the Union minister directed the state to prioritise clearing legacy waste sites to reclaim land and create greener urban spaces.

Further, he emphasised intensified implementation of the PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi scheme, urging the government to ensure wider outreach and faster credit access for street vendors across Odisha.

The minister also reviewed the state's power sector development Sunday. Issues including fly ash utilisation, capacity addition, transmission infrastructure and power allocation figured for discussion during the review meeting. On the issue of achieving fly ash utilisation targets, Lal assured that a joint meeting with the Ministries of Coal, Environment and Railways will be convened to address the issue comprehensively. The minister encouraged the development of more pit-head thermal power plants in Odisha. He said a proposal for establishing a Green Energy Corridor within the interstate transmission network will be taken up by MNRE after March 31, 2025.

Auto driver's son secures AIR-12 in IIT JAM exam



Shubha Prasad Samal

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Determination and hard work have paid off well for Shubha Prasad Samal, son of an auto-rickshaw driver, as he has secured All India Rank (AIR) 12 in the IIT Joint Admission Test for Masters (JAM) exam-2025.

Hailing from Korkada village under Dhamnagar block of Bhadrak district, Shubha's father Rajesh Kumar Samal drives an auto-rickshaw to make ends meet. Rajesh always had high hopes on Shubha, his eldest son, who was interested in studies since his

childhood. Despite financial constraints, Shubha sacrificed sleep and burnt - the proverbial - midnight oil to achieve this feat.

"It's like dream come true for me. I'm a Class X pass-out and drive an auto-rickshaw. I'm extremely happy for his success. In fact, the entire village feels proud of him," said Shubha's elated father.

On his success, Shubha said, "I always wanted to pursue research in chemistry, and I have a dream to pursue further studies abroad. It was tough for me to attend classes in the college while preparing for the entrance. But I made it up through late night studies. I believe if I can do it, anyone can. Money is never an obstacle if one is committed to do something in life."

Significantly, IIT JAM is a nationwide online entrance test conducted by IITs for admissions to postgraduate programmes (MSc and Joint MSc-PhD etc) at IITs, and other participating institutions.

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POLITICKLE by MANJUL



8-YEAR-OLD GIRL BATTLES FOR LIFE

POST NEWS NETWORK

Astaranga/Kakatpur, March 23: Eight-year-old Mamata Behera has been battling for her life for the past three years as financial constraints have hindered her treatment, leaving her parents in a state of distress.

Mamata, a resident of Madhupur under Jhadling panchayat of Puri district, has been confined to a hospital bed following a severe head injury she sustained while playing in a swing at home.

The injury on the back of her head caused unbearable pain while severe swelling was witnessed in her neck.

Her parents rushed her to Capital Hospital in Bhubaneswar, where doctors diagnosed her with a neurological disorder. When her condition did not improve, she was transferred to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack. Despite undergoing three months of treatment there, her health showed little progress.

In a bid to save their daughter, Mamata's parents later took her to AIIMS in Bhubaneswar. However, mounting medical expenses have pushed the family into financial distress. Now, they are appealing to the public and the government for support.

Those willing to help can send money via his PhonePe number 9827780341.

Thunderstorms likely in six districts today: IMD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) Sunday forecast thunderstorms in several districts of the state Monday.

According to the Bhubaneswar centre of the IMD, thunderstorms with lightning are expected in

Light to moderate rainfall was recorded in coastal and interior pockets of the state Saturday, with heavy downpour in Ganjam

Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Cuttack and

Jagatsinghpur districts.

In its Sunday evening bulletin, the weather office said light rain is likely to occur in the coastal districts.

Notably, light to moderate rainfall was recorded in coastal Odisha and interior areas Saturday, with heavy downpour in Ganjam district.

The highest rainfall was recorded at Rangeilunda (8

cm), followed by Chhatrapur (7 cm) and 5cm in Aska, Buguda and Ganjam, said the weather office in City.

Likewise, Kakatpur and Gop in Puri district recorded 5 cm of rain each.

The MeT department also predicted a rise in day temperatures by 4-6 degree Celsius over the next four-five days in the state.

Experts call for urgent vulnerability mapping, action plans

Feeling the summer heat already? You're not alone. Many parts of India are experiencing intense temperatures, with the IMD issuing heatwave alerts for Delhi, Karnataka, Goa and Jharkhand.

On March 15, Boudh recorded a scorching 43.6 degrees Celsius, making it the hottest place in the country, followed by Jharsuguda and Bolangir.

Experts attribute this early heat surge to climate change, shifting weather patterns, terrestrial warming and urbanisation. With February marking the hottest in 124 years, March is already shaping up to be even hotter, weeks before peak summer begins.

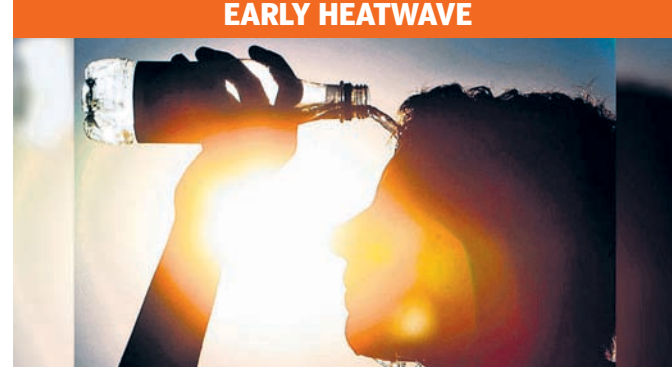
Environmentalist Akash Vashishtha attributes the phenomenon of sudden spurt in the heat and the occurrence of the heatwave to a number of factors. "Of course, one is the fact

that India is a tropical country, situated in the tropical parts of the world, which means that we get a very high degree of solar radiation. The landmass gets heated very quickly and has a lot of intensity," he says.

India is experiencing heatwaves in March due to a combination of meteorological and climatic factors. An exceptionally dry winter, with rainfall levels 93 per cent below normal in February, has contributed to clear skies and rapid temperature increases.

A weakening La Nina and neutral Indian Ocean Dipole have further disrupted weather patterns, causing above-normal heat nationwide. In coastal areas, high humidity is intensifying the impact by hindering the body's cooling process, raising health risks and mortality rates.

"Oceans absorb greater



heat, and when oceans absorb greater heat, there is greater evaporation; a lot of energy is absorbed, which results in cyclones and extra-coastal phenomena. Whenever there are these kinds of cyclones, there is greater atmospheric moisture in the atmosphere, of course greater release of energy, which also causes a lot of warming and other incidents

to be experienced in the areas which are near," Vashishtha adds.

A study on heat wave preparedness in nine Indian cities, including Delhi, found long-term measures lacking and poorly targeted. It recommends stronger heat action plans, funded specialist roles in climate-vulnerable districts, and capacity-building for local

officials to enhance India's heat resilience.

With heatwaves posing serious health risks, experts stress the need for urgent, sustained action at the city and district levels.

"So we need vulnerability mapping to be done very urgently in every town and city as well as in every district, which means that so that the authorities know exactly where are the vulnerable spots and who are the people who are vulnerable," says Soumya Swaminathan, former WHO's chief scientist.

"In cities, there are heat island effects. So, using technology, you can now be able to map out and you'll know exactly which wards are going to be more impacted by heat, because there are always some greener parts of the city where the temperatures are lower, and some parts which are highly built up.

And again, those are usually the places where low-income people are living," Swaminathan points out.

"So then, you have to focus more attention there, prepare health system, train the health workers, make sure supplies in health system - like ice, saline, cool rooms, and if possible, to put the people who come with heat cramps," she adds.

Heatwaves in India typically occur between March and June, with May being the peak month.

However, the unusually high temperatures experienced in early March 2025 have raised concerns among experts. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecasted above-average temperatures throughout March, which could adversely affect winter-sown crops like wheat, chickpeas and rapeseed. PTI

Activists urge CM to act on animal cruelty



INJURED DOG AT BERHAMPUR

Bhubaneswar, March 23: Rising cases of animal cruelty in Odisha have sparked outrage among animal welfare activists and citizens, who are now demanding urgent intervention from the state government. Recent incidents of brutal attacks on stray dogs in Bhubaneswar and Berhampur have highlighted the increasing cruelty towards animals and the alleged apathy of law enforcement agencies in addressing these cases.

Videos and messages appealing for action have flooded social media, with animal

lovers tagging the Chief Minister's Office and the Police Commissioner, urging them to take immediate steps against such heinous acts. Among the concerned organisations, the Animal Welfare Trust Ekamra (AWTE) has taken a proactive stance, writing to Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi to bring attention to the issue.

One of the most shocking cases cited in AWTE's letter was the brutal killing of a dog in Bhubaneswar's VSS Nagar. The incident, which occurred earlier this month, was reported to the Saheed Nagar police station, and an FIR was registered March 1.

However, despite legal procedures being initiated, no significant action has been taken against the culprits. AWTE chairperson Purabi Patra condemned the police's indifferent attitude, revealing that the IIC reportedly excused the delay by claiming they were occupied with other cases. Patra stressed that such negligence not only undermines the rule of law but also sets a dangerous precedent, encouraging further cruelty against animals.

To ensure stronger action against such crimes, AWTE has proposed a series of measures in its letter to the chief minister. The organisation has urged the government to establish a dedicated animal welfare unit within the police department, which would focus exclusively on cases of animal abuse. Additionally, they have called for specialised training programmes for police personnel to familiarise them with animal welfare laws, enabling them to handle such cases with the seriousness they deserve.

Meanwhile, in Berhampur, another horrifying case of animal cruelty was reported when a stray dog was allegedly attacked with sharp weapons in the early hours of Saturday. The town police have registered a case under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, and the Arms Act. Berhampur SP Savarana Vivek M confirmed that an investigation is underway, with police analysing CCTV footage to identify the accused. Fortunately, local residents have stepped in to care for the injured dog.



IN MEMORIAM: All India Democratic Students' Organisation members hold a 'Masal Sobhajatra' at College Square in Cuttack, Sunday to commemorate the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev

2 arrested for jewellery shop heist in City

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: In a significant breakthrough, the Commissionerate Police arrested two men Sunday for their alleged involvement in a jewellery store heist in the Nayapalli area in City. The police seized over 500 grams of stolen jewellery during the operation.

The accused, identified as Rakesh Mukhi (21) and Santosh Kumar Pradhan (27), were caught while attempting to sell the stolen ornaments near Indradhanu Market. Acting on a tip-off, the police intercepted them and made the arrests, said DCP Jagmohan Meena.



A total of 83 pairs of toe rings, 82 pairs of rings, 66 lockets, five silver items, and two key rings were recovered from the duo, DCP Meena added.

According to police records, Rakesh Mukhi has been

booked three times by Nayapalli police, while Santosh Kumar Pradhan has a history of 11 cases registered across various police stations in the City.

The burglary occurred around 5am Sunday when the

duo broke into Prakash Chandra Sahoo's jewellery shop in the Unit VIII area and fled with the ornaments. Following the report, police launched an investigation, reviewing CCTV footage from the crime scene.

Around 9am, the police received information that two suspects were planning to sell stolen jewellery near Indradhanu Market. Acting swiftly, a team intercepted them at the busy marketplace and recovered the stolen items.

The Nayapalli police have charged the duo under Sections 331(4), 305(a), and 3(5) of the BNS. They were produced before a local court Sunday for remand.

CLASSIFIED

AFFIDAVIT

I, **Jagatjiban Maharathy**, S/o Sarbeswar Maharathy, Resident of Ward No. 08, At-Adiapada, PO-Kunjuri, PS-Tangi, Dist-Khordha, PIN-752027, Odisha. Declare by this Affidavit No. - 347 on date 07.03.2025 that now onwards I shall be known as Jagajivan Moharathi for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit No. - 4034, dt- 20.03.2025 before Executive Magistrate, Cuttack, I, Chinmayee Jena, W/o-Dibya Sankar Jena, At- Rajendra Nagar, P.O./ P.S.- Madhupatana, Cuttack, states that I have changed my name Chinmayee Rout to Chinmayee jena. Chinmayee Rout and Chinmayee Jena is one and same person. Henceforth, I shall be known as Chinmayee Jena for Bank, Educational Certificate & all purposes.

LOST

Before Notary Public Kodala (No. 566/19.03.25), I Smt. Gita Jena (55), W/o Iswara Jena, Vill/PO-Polasara, PS-Polasara, Ganjam while I am travelling from my house to market I lost my bag carrying sale deed vide document no. - 504/16.04.2004, S.R.O. - Kodala, Khata No. - 1220, Plot no. 4932. Ext of Ac 0.08.1/2 dcml under mouza Polasara on dated 16.03.2025 and never found traced out everywhere. Anybody found may contact Advocate Niranjan Mahapatro, Mob - 9438236781.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	25.4°	26.0°
Min Temp	19.5°	18.2°
Humidity	77%	84%
Rainfall	12.2	28.0
FORECAST	Cloudy Sky	

Ayush docs announce strike from March 27

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The All Odisha Ayush Doctors Association (AOADA) has announced a statewide strike beginning March 27.

The decision stems from several longstanding demands, including permanent employment, equal pay for government Ayurveda and Homeopathy doctors, access to higher education, regular medicine supplies, inclusion in health insurance scheme for themselves and their families, and a one-time compensation for families of doctors who die in service.

Ayush doctors, who have been serving under the National Health Mission (NHM) for 18 years, argue that despite their vital role in community health, emergency care, maternal and child healthcare, and



health programme implementation, they remain on temporary contracts without job security or fair compensation.

Currently, 1,485 Ayush doctors working in Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Primary Health Centers (PHCs) are still denied regularisation.

The strike comes after years of discussions with the government, during which promises

were made but not fulfilled. Despite other healthcare workers being regularised in 2019, Ayush doctors were excluded from this decision.

AOADA president Prashant Kumar Padhi expressed frustration over the lack of action, stating that their demands have been ignored for nearly two decades. AOADA state general secretary Pravas Chandra Swain emphasised

that the government's failure to act has left the association with no option but to begin an indefinite strike.

The protest will involve a peaceful demonstration at Lower PMG in City. The AOADA has warned that if their demands are not met, the responsibility for any disruption to healthcare services across the state will lie with the government.

Odisha's Lakhpati Didi: Boosting rural women's economy

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 23: The Lakhpati Didi initiative in Odisha has emerged as a transformative force, empowering rural women to achieve financial independence and fostering inclusive economic growth. With over 9.36 lakh women earning ₹1 lakh or more annually, Odisha stands as the second-best state in the country in implementing this initiative, bringing new opportunities to countless households.

A shining example of this transformation is Dipanjali Chotray from Kumbhilo village in Khurda district. Struggling with financial instability due to reliance on sharecropping and a small grocery store, her family faced persistent economic challenges. In 2021, Dipanjali joined the Biswa Ja-

gruti self-help group (SHG) and learned about the Prime Minister Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) loan scheme, which became a stepping stone toward a better livelihood.

With a ₹40,000 seed capital loan and additional support of ₹15,000 from the Gram Panchayat Level Federation, Dipanjali expanded her grocery business into a diversified enterprise. She ventured into spice processing, packaging, and the production of traditional 'Badi' (sun-dried lentil dumplings), leveraging local demand. Participating in district and state-level melas provided her with wider market exposure, significantly boosting her earnings.

Her annual gross income soared to ₹3.36 lakh, yielding a net profit of ₹2.16 lakh. This remarkable turnaround not only secured her family's financial



well-being but also ensured better educational opportunities for her children.

The Odisha Livelihoods Mission (OLM) has been instrumental in enabling such success stories through a comprehensive support system. By offering capacity-building programs, financial inclusion

measures, and market linkages, OLM has empowered thousands of women entrepreneurs. Events like the Subhadra Shakti Mela have further facilitated business expansion, generating over ₹5 crore in sales and providing SHGs with valuable exposure.

To ensure long-term sus-

tainability, OLM has integrated modern solutions such as digital platforms, e-commerce, and export opportunities. Certifications like ISO, Organic, and Fair Trade enhance the credibility of SHG products, helping them reach wider consumer bases.

This structured approach ensures that rural women entrepreneurs can scale their businesses and compete in broader markets.

Another inspiring example of the initiative's impact is Tilottama Mahanta from Dhakotha village in Keonjhar district. After the loss of her husband, she took charge of her family's survival despite limited financial and technical resources.

She joined the Raghunathpur Gram Panchayat Level Federation (GPLF) and Dhakotha Cluster Level Federation (CLF), which provided

her with essential financial aid, including a ₹5 lakh bank loan and ₹50,000 from the Community Investment Fund (CIF).

With this support, Tilottama diversified her income streams by engaging in vegetable cultivation, tailoring, and duck farming. Her perseverance and business acumen helped her generate an annual income of ₹1.8 lakh. Her success has had a ripple effect on her community, inspiring fellow SHG members and allowing her children to pursue higher education, creating a legacy of economic resilience.

The Lakhpati Didi initiative is a game-changer for women in Odisha, driving both social and economic transformation. By prioritising financial inclusion, capacity building, and market accessibility, the programme is reshaping the role of women in rural areas.

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OMDC STRIKE ENTERS 45TH DAY

Kumaraswamy assures steps to address employees' demands

POST NEWS NETWORK
Keonjhar, March 23: Union Minister of Steel and Mines HD Kumaraswamy has reportedly assured Keonjhar MP Ananta Nayak to initiate steps to address the demands of Orissa Mineral Development Company Limited (OMDC) employees who have been staging a protest over unpaid salaries and benefits for more than 45 days now. Sources said that owing to the strike, production at the Bagaburu Iron Ore Mines - operated by OMDC - has been severely hit causing an approximate loss of ₹100 crore to the company. According to sources, the Union minister's assurance came after Nayak met the former in New Delhi Friday and submitted a memorandum regarding the ongoing strike, and the employees' demands. Nayak also appealed for the immediate release of employ-



ees' unpaid salaries. Nayak informed the minister that the public sector company is losing lakhs of rupees daily due to the stoppage of work, sources added. OMDC, a subsidiary of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) under the Ministry of Steel, operates in the Joda mining sector of Keonjhar district. Hundreds of employees began their strike February 6, 2025, by gathering at the company's Thakurani office gate in Barbil. They are demanding payment of six months' salaries, four months' unpaid wages, and

overdue medical expenses. Protesters said financial difficulties have made it challenging to support their families and pay for their children's education. Despite OMDC reportedly earning approximately ₹50 crore in profits over the past few months, the company has failed to disburse the employees' legitimate claims, which amount to around ₹6.2 crore for about 450 employees, they alleged. "We depend on our monthly salary to support our families. Due to the delay in payments, we are struggling to manage our financial obligations," said Jyoti Ranjan Mohanty, a senior employee. "Despite numerous appeals to company authorities and the ministry, no steps have been taken to address our concerns. We are left with no choice but to continue the strike," added Debakanta Ratha, general secretary of OMDC Karmachari Sangha.



DRAMA FEST: Artists from Sai Cultural and Dramatic Society in Jamshedpur stage a play, 'Surya Ke Antim Kiran Se, Paheli Kiran Tak', at a national level theatre festival - 5th Hirakhand Natya Mahotsav - organised by Adarsha Natya Ashram in collaboration with School of Performing Arts of Sambalpur University, at the varsity's Biju Patnaik Auditorium Sunday. The play was written by Nruparaj Sahu, and directed by Nilamber Manik Puri.

Woman, son critical in LPG cylinder fire

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Phulbani, March 23: A 55-year-old woman and her son suffered severe burn injuries after an LPG cylinder in the kitchen of their house in Kandhamal district caught fire, police said Sunday. The incident took place in Kumbharsahi village in Balliguda police station area Saturday, a police officer said. The injured persons, identified as Geetanjali Panda and her son Chandan, were first admitted to a local hospital and later shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur as their condition remained critical, the officer said. "When Geetanjali was preparing food in her kitchen Saturday, the LPG cylinder suddenly started leaking and caught fire. She started screaming for help and her son rushed to the kitchen to save her. Both sustained severe burn injuries," he said. The mother-son duo, were, rescued by the villagers who admitted them to the Balliguda Sub-divisional Hospital. As their condition deteriorated, they were shifted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital at Berhampur.



Fake mobil manufacturing unit busted; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK
Rourkela, March 23: The Birsa police in Rourkela unearthed a fake mobil manufacturing unit running at Zeenat Colony here, and confiscated several thousand litres of duplicate lubricants during the raid, Sunday. DSP Amit Mohanty said two persons - Abdul Mana and Md Biraz - have so far been arrested for running the fake business, while 4000 litres of duplicate mobil, 5000 empty bottles and pouches of several established brands like Castrol and Servo have been confiscated during the raid. Giving details of the crackdown, Mohanty said the fake unit was running out of a single



room in a multi storied building in Zeenat Colony area. He said the raid was subsequent to an actionable lead the Birsa police received some time ago. "The raid was conducted late in the morning. The prepared oil and packaging materials were recovered from the spot. The two counterfeiters were rounded up subsequently," Mohanty added. Preliminary investigation revealed that the duo was running the business for quite some time.

Boy drowns while bathing in pond

POST NEWS NETWORK
Keonjhar, March 23: A 16-year-old boy drowned while bathing in a pond in Naranpur village under the Town police station Sunday morning during a visit to his sister's house. According to sources, the victim, Sameer Behera, a Class X student from Tangiriapal village under Daitari police station limits in Keonjhar district, was bathing in the pond at around 8 am when he suddenly slipped and fell in deep water. Upon receiving the information, police and fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and launched a search operation. After several hours of effort, they retrieved the body at around 1:30 pm. Sources said Sameer had



travelled to Naranpur, near Keonjhar town, with his family to visit his sister. Locals said that he went to bathe in the pond near the village when the unfortunate incident occurred. The incident has cast a pall of gloom over the area. Police have sent the body to the district headquarters hospital for a post-mortem examination and have initiated an investigation

THREE KILLED AS DUMPER CRASHES INTO TEA SHOP

POST NEWS NETWORK
Sundargarh/Tensa, March 23: Three people were killed Sunday evening when driver of a speeding dumper lost control over the vehicle and crashed it into a roadside tea shop near the Jamudihi toll gate under the K Bolang police limits in Sundargarh district. The deceased include the tea shop owner - Geeta Chakraborty, 35, and two unidentified truck drivers who were present at the spot. The dumper, which was carrying iron ore from Koira, remained lodged inside the wrecked shop following the accident. Authorities said efforts are ongoing to remove it. Police said that the accident occurred near the Jamudihi toll gate on National Highway 500. The speeding dumper - bearing registration number OD O9P 9922 - veered off the road and



rammed into the tea shop in the vicinity, they said. Police and local residents rushed to the scene to assist in rescue operations. Police suspect more individuals may still be trapped inside the debris. Tension prevailed in the area as residents expressed their anger over frequent accidents on the highway. K Bolang police have launched an investigation into the cause of the crash.

84 kg ganja seized from Bihar-bound truck; 2 held

POST NEWS NETWORK
Sonepur, March 23: Eighty-four kilograms of dry cannabis (ganja) was seized and two persons were arrested in that connection during a joint operation carried out by the Excise department sleuths, in coordination with the Sonepur Range, district mobile unit, and Sadar police near the Tarbha Namaste Gate in Subarnapur district Sunday. Acting on specific inputs, the sleuths intercepted a truck (registration number UP84-AT-8233) traveling from Kantamal in Boudh district near Tarbha Namaste Gate. During searches the sleuths discovered a secret compartment, in the otherwise empty vehicle, containing four packets of cannabis. The contraband weighed 84 kg. The arrested individuals have been identified as the truck driver, Pradeep Verma, 64, from Bahadurpur police



limits in Patna of Bihar, and a cannabis trader, Vinod Kumar, 50, from Chilkapand area under Shaktinagar police limits in Sonbhadra district of Uttar Pradesh. Preliminary investigations suggest that the accused were smuggling canna-

bis from Boudh district, crossing the Tel River Bridge, and transporting it via the Tarbha route to Bihar. To evade law enforcement, the smugglers had made a concealed chamber inside the truck for transporting the con-

Investigations suggest that the accused were smuggling cannabis from Boudh district, crossing the Tel River Bridge, and transporting it via the Tarbha route to Bihar
traband. A case (No. 215/24-25) has been registered by the Sadar Excise Police, and both the truck and cannabis have been confiscated. The accused are likely to be produced before a NDPS court Monday. The raid was carried out under the direction of Excise Superintendent Prabir Kumar Samal. The team included Mobile Inspector Hara Prasad Rana, Sonepur Range Inspector Prakash Sa, Sub-Inspectors Shantanu Pattanayak and Bishwanath Bhoi, ASIs Santosh Kumar Swain, Lokanath Behera, and Renupriya Bhoi.

Mahua harvest: A seasonal lifeline for Kandhamal tribals

POST NEWS NETWORK
Khajuripada, March 23: With the arrival of the Phalgun month, an air of excitement spreads across tribal villages in Kandhamal district as mahua flowers begin to bloom and fall from the trees. This annual occurrence prompts local communities to engage in the collection of these prized flowers, a key source of income for many tribal families. With its dense forests and hilly terrains, Kandhamal district is home to a significant tribal population that depends on forest produce and agriculture for sustenance. At present, people across various blocks, particularly in Khajuripada, are busy gathering mahua flowers from dawn to dusk. Mahua flowers are a crucial non-timber forest product, providing a source of seasonal income. Every year, from March to April, mahua trees shed their flowers, drawing villagers— young and old—to collect them before livestock such as goats



and cattle consume them. The activity has almost turned into a competition, with entire families venturing into the forests at the break of dawn, carrying baskets, mats, and wooden tools to aid in the collection. Women, men, and even

children from both tribal and non-tribal communities enthusiastically participate in this traditional practice. The flowers are not only a source of income but also a staple in the local diet, further deepening the community's connection

to the seasonal harvest. After collection, the flowers are spread out to dry on large rocks, tin roofs, or open courtyards for about a week. Once dried and cleaned, traders purchase them at ₹30-40 per kilogram, while labourers

can gather about 3-4 kg per day each. However, locals say that the selling price is too low compared to the effort involved. Many believe the government should set a minimum price of ₹70-80 per kg to ensure fair compensation.

On average, a tribal family earns between ₹5,000-10,000 annually from mahua collection. Additionally, villagers believe that feeding mahua flowers to cattle, particularly cows, increases milk production. As a result, many choose to retain a portion of their collection for livestock instead of selling it all. Beyond its economic value, mahua is culturally significant in Kandhamal. The flowers are used to prepare local liquor, which plays an integral role in tribal rituals and community celebrations. The mahua tree also yields seeds known as "gara," which are processed to extract oil used for cooking in rural households. Despite its economic and cultural importance, mahua collectors face risks, including encounters with wild animals like bears, which are also attracted to the flowers' sweet aroma. Yet, year after year, this tradition continues, reflecting the deep-rooted dependence of Kandhamal's tribal communities on the forests that sustain them.

TWO HURT IN FIRE AT JAGATSINGHPUR BOOK DEPOT

AGENCIES
Bhubaneswar, March 23: Two persons were injured in a fire at a book depot in Jagatsinghpur district, police said. The fire at the book depot in Balikuda police station area was suspected to have been triggered by an explosion Saturday night, a police officer said. Books and notebooks stored inside the godown were gutted while two persons, who were in an adjoining room, suffered serious burn injuries, she said. After hearing the sound of the explosion, locals informed the police and the fire brigade. The firefighters doused the blaze and rescued the injured persons, who were first admitted to Jagatsinghpur hospital and later shifted to private medical establishments in Bhubaneswar, the police officer said. The cause of the fire and the explosion was yet to be ascertained, she added.

FOCUS INDO-US TRADE

TRUMP DUMPS NUTS



India has to rethink its moves to counter the trade aggression for keeping its market intact and check imports

industries, particularly in sectors that are facing increasing competition from cheaper or subsidised imports. Some nut supplies are coming from Australia, about 7 to 29%, as well following the recent trade deals.

The import surge is commensurate with rising demand and limited indigenous production. The indigenous production is about 4150 tonnes of almond alone during 2024-25 but the demand has increased manifold. The imports are estimated at 1.9 lakh tonnes as per US agriculture department.

The Georgia-based GTRI says that almond imports by India soared over 5.5 times since 2008. Pistachio imports went up 4,400 tonnes to 13,500 tonnes in 2021. Of total almonds imports of \$940.8mn, 92.3% comes from the US; of total \$141.5mn pistachio, 86.7% is from the US and a miniscule 8.8% is from Iran.

The political and diplomatic aggression of Trump is part of a well-oiled strategy. So, it is not restricted to electric vehicles of Elon Musk, batteries and other hi-tech products but even simple farm products are being targeted for large-scale entry to India. Various US departments are diligently working on raising US ex-

ports. It is just not the Trump regime that has ushered in aggressive strategy. For the last over a decade, different US agencies have worked out methodologies to increase different kinds of exports to developing and even European Union markets. This includes pressurisation for working out lower tariffs and other facilitation for US goods.

In September 2023, India lifted retaliatory tariffs on US almonds, apples, chickpeas, lentils, and walnuts, which were imposed in 2019. This tariff reduction has restored and expanded market opportunities for US agricultural producers and manufacturers, particularly for tree nuts like almonds and walnuts.

Trump has been calling India repeatedly 'tariff king'. In an interview a few days back he told a US website: "I have a very good relationship with India, I believe they are going to probably lower those tariffs substantially, but on April 2, we will be charging the same tariff as they charge us." India is going to be coerced further to allow America's goods to India at low, negligible tariffs.

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of the US Department of Agriculture (US-

DA) has primary mission to enhance export opportunities for US agriculture. It now estimates that US almond exports to India could soar in 2024-25. The US apple exports, which were most affected by the retaliatory tariffs, have the potential to climb from \$4.8 million in 2022 to \$50-\$80 million.

It's an all-out war. With scant US respect for multilateral agencies like the World Trade Organisation and United Nations, arm-twisting is easier, and it is not restricted to F-35 stealth fighters, which India has little need. The FAS type organisations' strong marketing campaigns have helped American almonds secure a significant market share in India with pop-up of US goods on e-market sites. American suppliers benefit from better logistics and a well-organised supply chain. Indian systems are fragile and fragmented.

The US has studied and has been carrying out campaigns subtly projecting the US products, including dry fruits, as superior health products. Despite the Asian products being superior with high oil contents, nutrients and lower prices, American products are being sold as better for their size, not taste. The US agencies have rebranded products to place Californian goods pop up on e-marketing sites luring health-conscious Indians.

India has to rethink its moves to counter the trade aggression for keeping its market intact and check imports. It is easier said but countering a powerful US, which deports Indian illegal immigrants in shackles and handcuffs, though not Pakistanis, requires skill, multiple studies and working through international agencies. India has to reorient its strategies, including diplomacy. INFA

While India is concerned about high-tech and high-volume trade with the United States under the new Trump administration, certain imports, such as dry fruits, which have surged by a remarkable 93 per cent of the global share, have largely gone unnoticed and caused little reaction.

India's concerns about trade and tariffs with the US have grown as rising imports from the US are impacting various sectors of the Indian economy. The trade relationship between the two countries has become increasingly complex, especially after the US imposed tariffs on products like steel and aluminium. India has expressed worries over the potential long-term impact of these tariffs, which could hinder the growth of its manufacturing sector and disrupt its trade balance.

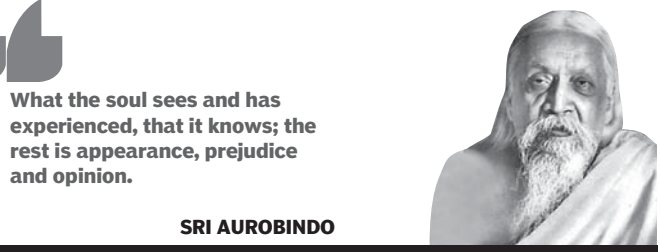
None, however, had expected that Afghanistani Kabulwala or the neighbouring Iran, the prime supplier of nuts, would be replaced by the US with its low oil-content and less nutrient almonds, walnuts or pistachios. The fad for larger sized nuts has caught the fancy of Indian health-conscious buyers aided by low Indian tariffs. India's import of nuts crosses over \$1 billion last year. Buyers with a swadeshi fad are unaware that they are consuming larger-looking lower quality products than what used to come from neighbouring countries.

India has been witnessing a significant increase in imports from the US, especially in sectors like agricultural products, technology, and pharmaceuticals. While these imports haven't caused widespread alarm yet, their growing volume has raised questions about the future of India's domestic



Shivaji Sarkar

INDIA IS GOING TO BE COERCED FURTHER TO ALLOW AMERICA'S GOODS TO INDIA AT LOW, NEGLIGIBLE TARIFFS



What the soul sees and has experienced, that it knows; the rest is appearance, prejudice and opinion.

SRI AUROBINDO

Is Varma Alone?

A small fire at a judge's official residence has opened a can of worms, threatening to expose the incidence of pervasive corruption plaguing the nation's judiciary, considered the third pillar of democracy. The recovery of a huge pile of cash, apparently unaccounted, from the official residence of Justice Yashwant Varma, the second senior-most judge of the Delhi High Court, is not only unprecedented, but also has serious ramifications for the country's entire judicial fraternity.

Adding to the controversy, the twists and turns that the case has taken ever since it came to fore reflect the opacity that surrounds our legal system. This has become a system where nothing seems transparent. Maybe in a desperate move to break free of the blame, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) had ordered, last Saturday evening, uploading of all videos, photos and the complete report submitted by the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court on the SC website related to the purported discovery of the cash at Justice Varma's residence. Delhi High Court Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhaya's report to the CJI includes information about official communications indicating that four to five semi-burnt sacks of currency notes were also discovered at the judge's residence. This decision of the CJI to post all details on the publicly accessible website, though unprecedented, is a very welcome move. It will help open up the judiciary for public scrutiny in future.

First, it was reported that a large sum of cash was discovered after a fire broke out at Judge Varma's residence in Delhi around 11:35 PM on 14 March, prompting the Delhi fire department to respond a call to extinguish the flames. The exact amount of the cash remains unclear, although some unverified social media reports suggested it could be as high as ₹15 crore. Surprisingly, the day after these claims emerged, Atul Garg, the Chief of Delhi Fire Services, stated that firefighters found no cash during their operation at Justice Varma's home. Justice Varma also has rejected the allegations surrounding the currency-discovery controversy, asserting that neither he nor any of his family members ever stored cash in the storeroom of his residence. But then where did they store it if not in the storeroom? In a response submitted to the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, Justice Varma said the claims of cash being found at his home are a "conspiracy to frame and malign him."

However, the inquiry report from the Delhi High Court, along with the video posted on the Supreme Court's website, has raised questions about the Delhi Fire Services chief's claim that firefighters did not discover any cash while extinguishing the blaze. This one little fire seems to have started a huge conflagration that is about to engulf one of the strongest establishments of India.

A video released by Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora showing burnt bundles of cash at Justice Varma's home, along with initial findings from Delhi High Court Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhaya calling for a "deeper probe," has led CJI Sanjiv Khanna to form a committee for an in-house inquiry into the allegations against Varma. The three-member inquiry panel comprises Justice Sheel Nagu, Chief Justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court, Justice GS Sandhawalia, Chief Justice of the Himachal Pradesh High Court, and Justice Anu Sivaraman, a judge of the Karnataka High Court.

The country has become accustomed to seeing tainted money unearthed from politicians' and bureaucrats' residences. Now the citizens of India have become the audience to this comparatively new drama unfolding about the judiciary, which has demolished all hope for fairness and upholding of the rule of law by this revered wing of the system of governance. The Indian judiciary is obviously not immune to deep level corruption.

The general impression created by this incident that justice can be bought with money is not only dangerous for the judicial system, but is frightening for the average Indian citizen. The more important aspect is that money alone may not be the only 'currency' for corruption in the judiciary. The long simmering issue of pro establishment judgements that please the political bosses of the time could be another method of high level corruption. Used as quid pro quo, controversial judicial pronouncements seen happening so very vigorously and regularly in the last decade, could also indicate to the fact that offer of lucrative constitutional posts post retirement are barter material for the judges at different levels.

No wonder, lawyers, including Supreme Court advocates, various political parties and legal experts are demanding stringent action against Justice Varma. In fact, lawyers association of Allahabad High Court has complained whether their Court is being used as a "trash bin" after reports emerged that the Supreme Court collegium has transferred Justice Varma to that High Court. Moreover, the fact that Justice Varma in the past delivered judgements on controversial matters, including the Unnao rape case, only propels Opposition politicians to put the whole matter in a different light.

The most delicate question now could be: Is Judge Yashwant Varma the sole corrupt judicial officer in India today?



SPECTRUM SUSTAINABILITY

A defining moment for energy security

Last week, heads of state, ministers of finance and energy, investors, civil-society groups, and energy-industry leaders convened in Barbados for the Sustainable Energy for All (SEforAll) Forum. The conference's theme – Sustainable Energy for Equity, Security, and Prosperity – captured an often-underappreciated reality: the clean-energy transition is vital not only to protect the planet, but also to enhance economic resilience and energy security in an uncertain global setting.

To be sure, the environmental imperative should not be underestimated, especially in small island developing states (SIDS) like Antigua and Barbuda, which are on the front lines of the climate crisis. In 2017, Hurricane Irma decimated my country in mere hours, with nearly every building on our islands being damaged by the storm's 220 mile-per-hour winds. Clean-up and reconstruction cost more than \$222 million, according to World Bank calculations, yet we still bear the scars, physical and economic, eight years later. And that is just one example: storms, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and fisheries displacement are costing us dearly, and in a rapidly warming world, we know

worse is to come. But, today, we also know that the energy transition – specifically, the transition to domestically produced renewables – is essential to support economic resilience and energy security as well. Reliance on imported fossil fuels like LNG exposes our countries to volatile price swings, supply disruptions, and budget strains. And, unlike highly flammable methane, with its adverse safety, health, and climate effects, the sun and wind are not subject to market speculation or rising geopolitical risk.

In the corridors of the SEforAll Forum, fossil-fuel executives read from their usual script, claiming that their products remain a vital "bridging" solution for the energy transition. But the time period that must be "bridged" will likely be far shorter than the 30-year contracts they are pressing SIDS and other emerging economies to sign. In fact, current trends suggest that most emerging and developing economies will have outgrown their need for gas within a decade.

One reason for this is artificial intelligence, which is helping to match variable renewable-energy supplies with fluctuations in demand, thereby facilitating the integration of renewables into electricity

grids. The plummeting cost of energy storage systems is also helping, as advanced battery technology reduces the need for back-up supplies of fossil fuels. The effect is so pronounced that some gas and coal power-plant projects have already been paused or canceled. New LNG projects are now considered risky investments, most of which will not recover their initial capital outlays.

Meanwhile, investors are flocking to clean energy, which attracted almost double the funding that fossil fuels did last year. This is good news: a rapid clean-energy transition will require large upfront investments – far more than business as usual. But the payoff will be enormous: a nearly 20% reduction in energy costs for emerging-economy consumers by 2050, compared to continued fossil-fuel dependency. It is with these considerations in mind that Antigua and Barbuda became the first non-Pacific country to endorse a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, an international transition pact to phase out oil, gas, and coal. We are also committed to achieving 100% clean power by 2030, and a fully electrified transport fleet by 2040.

But we can't do it alone. As climate disasters proliferate

and intensify, so do the costs of recovery. This leaves our government with little choice but to borrow at high interest rates, compounding our already burdensome national debt.

That is why Antigua and Barbuda and our fellow SIDS are calling upon all countries to pursue five key objectives. First, strengthen the energy transition and climate commitments, including by phasing out inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies. Second, mobilize transformative climate finance at scale, including through levies and debt-for-climate swaps. Third, bolster renewable-energy deployment by strengthening existing implementation platforms. Fourth, augment institutional capacity and facilitate knowledge-sharing in clean energy and energy efficiency, especially through South-South cooperation. Finally, enhance resilience – such as by promoting the adoption of electric-cooking technologies – and adaptation. This agenda is essential to safeguard our planet – the basis of our health, security, and prosperity. When the stakes are this high, we cannot afford alternatives.

The writer is Prime Minister of Antigua & Barbuda.

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Gaston Browne

STORMS, SEA-LEVEL RISE, OCEAN ACIDIFICATION, AND FISHERIES DISPLACEMENT ARE COSTING US DEARLY, AND IN A RAPIDLY WARMING WORLD, WE KNOW WORSE IS TO COME

WISDOM CORNER

If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people.

CONFUCIUS

When the flower blooms, the bees come uninvited.

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA

Do the difficult things while they are easy and do the great things while they are small. A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.

LAO TZU

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1882: Robert Koch announced in Berlin that he had isolated and grown the tubercle bacillus, which he believed to be the cause of all forms of tuberculosis.
- 1944: More than 75 Allied prisoners undertook a daring escape from a POW camp in Sagan, Germany, though most were eventually recaptured; it inspired the classic World War II movie The Great Escape (1963), starring Steve McQueen.
- 1945: With the debut of the Billboard magazine pop album chart, American pianist and singer Nat King Cole's King Cole Trio became the first record album to appear at No. 1.
- 1989: Oil tanker "Exxon Valdez" runs aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska. The mishap resulted in one of the most devastating environmental disasters in history, killing up to 250,000 seabirds and other wildlife.

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

OrissaPOST
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TB eradication

Sir, Tuberculosis (TB) continues to be a significant global health challenge, with 10.8 million new cases and 1.25 million deaths reported in 2023. Despite a global incidence decline of 8.3% since 2015, millions of cases remain undiagnosed, underscoring the need for early detection and intervention. TB primarily affects the lungs and spreads through the air, presenting symptoms such as persistent cough, chest pain, fever, fatigue, and weight loss. India has made notable progress in combating TB. The country achieved a 17.7% reduction in TB incidence from 2015 to 2023, surpassing the global average decline. In 2023, India reported 2.55 million TB cases, the highest under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme. TB-related deaths decreased from 28 per 100,000 population in 2015 to 23 per 100,000 in 2022. Additionally, undetected TB cases declined from 320,000 in 2022 to 230,000 in 2023, indicating improved case detection and treatment coverage. To further support patients, initiatives like the Ni-kshay Mitra encourage community participation by allowing individuals and organisations to adopt TB patients, providing additional nutritional and social support beyond standard care. India's steadfast commitment to combating tuberculosis has led to significant progress, yet sustained innovation and collaboration are essential to achieve the goal of a TB-free nation by 2025. Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Stampede prevention

Sir, Recent stampedes at different stations called for an urgent action and Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has announced a slew of measures in that direction. It is planned to allow only bona-fide confirmed ticket holders onto the platforms at 60 important stations and a pilot project is being undertaken at four major north Indian stations. Sealing of unauthorised entries, setting up of war rooms and multiple cameras at strategic locations, and appointment of a station director, with full independence to control of ticket sales, are a few other proposed steps. One problem with the Railways is the issuance of too many tickets, and the provision for station director may sort out things. However, questions regarding allowing relatives of elderly and disabled on the platforms remain. Working on practical implementation of the proposed changes is, however, critical for changes on the ground. Ganapathi Bhat, AKOLA

Chirag protests boycott of his party's 'Iftaar' by JUH

JUH chief Arshad Madani had Saturday announced on X "as a token of protest, Jamiat Ulema e Hind will not take part in Iftaar, Eid Milan and other such functions organised by self-proclaimed secular leaders like Nitish Kumar, Chandrababu Naidu and Chirag Paswan"



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Patna, March 23: Union minister Chirag Paswan Sunday voiced protest against Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind's (JUH) decision to boycott the 'Iftaar' party organised by the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) president. JUH chief Arshad Madani had Saturday announced on X "as a token of protest, Jamiat Ulema e Hind will not take part in Iftaar, Eid Milan and other such functions organised by self-proclaimed secular leaders like Nitish Kumar, Chandrababu Naidu and Chirag Paswan". Madani had accused them of keeping silent on "atrocities" against Muslims, besides alleging that "their duplicity has become evident with their equivocal stand on the Waqf Bill". Paswan, who arrived here to oversee preparations for the 'Iftaar' being organised by his party Monday, told reporters: "I have great respect for Madani sahib. I honour his decision. But, I would urge him to reflect a bit on whether our opponents like the RJD, self-proclaimed champions of Muslims, have been able to protect the interests of the minority community."

The Hajipur MP pointed out that "my late father and politi-

cal mentor Ram Vilas Paswan had once risked his entire political career to ensure that a Muslim became the chief minister of Bihar". The allusion was to the events following the Bihar assembly polls of February, 2005, which had thrown up a hung House. The late Paswan was then in the Congress-led UPA and his Lok Janshakti Party had won close to 30 seats. The NDA, which included Nitish Kumar's JD(U), began to aggressively woo Paswan, who declared that he would support "any formation that promised to make a Muslim the chief minister".

However, the assembly was soon dissolved by the then Governor Buta Singh who claimed to have recommended dissolution to prevent horse trading, though the move was subsequently declared as "unconstitutional" by the Supreme Court. Chirag Paswan also frowned upon "personal attacks" on Nitish Kumar, his partner in the NDA and the chief minister, whose "mental health" and the capacity to govern Bihar is being talked about in recent times.

The LJP(RV) president, however, expressed concern over the inability of Kumar, "who holds Home portfolio" to check incidents of crime, which were taking place "in remote villages as well as cities". Paswan also underscored "targeted attacks against Dalits, especially the Paswan community" and claimed these were "politically motivated, with assembly elections just a few months away".

'Guwahati set to host its 1st cricket Test, world cup match in '25'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 23: Assam's largest city Guwahati is set to be the first Test cricket venue in the northeast region when India take on South Africa here in November. BCCI general secretary Devajit Saikia said Sunday.

The city will also host its first-ever world cup match later this year during the ICC Women's ODI World Cup, he said. "No Test and world cup

matches have been played in Guwahati so far. But, as per the decision taken at the BC-CI apex council meeting Saturday, Guwahati will host both those matches this year," Saikia said.

He said the second of the two-match Test series between India and South Africa will be played at the Assam Cricket Association (ACA) Stadium here from November 22. It will put Guwahati on the Test cricket map, he said.



The ACA Stadium will also host five to six matches of the

ICC Women's ODI World Cup, which will be the first world

cup cricket matches in the northeast, Saikia said. "The women's world cup will be held from September 24 to November 2. The schedule is still being finalised. Guwahati has been selected as one of the venues for it," Saikia said.

A former ACA general secretary, Saikia also thanked ICC Chairman Jay Shah and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for their support in Guwahati emerging as a preferred cricket venue.

Patna, March 23: From military might of the Mauryan Empire to the heroic tales of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, a two-day seminar and exhibition hosted at the Danapur Cantonment near Patna has brought the spotlight on the glorious military heritage of the undivided Bihar region.

The event held March 21-22 at the Bihar Regiment Centre (BRC) coincides with the ongoing celebration of Bihar Diwas being marked in Patna Saturday.

Themed on 'Military Heritage and Culture of Bihar and Chhota Nagpur', it was jointly organised by the BRC and Delhi-based defence think-tank USI, under 'Project Udbhav', an initiative that seeks to revisit and celebrate India's rich heritage in strategic domain.

The opening ceremony was graced by Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, who paid homage to the bravehearts in his keynote address, and urged students and soldiers to learn from the heroic tales of the brave land of Bihar. Thematic sessions were held on both days complemented with an exhibition with contribution from the BRC and three other Patna-based agencies, which displayed images of archival documents related to the ancient Magadh Empire, the East India Company (EIC) and the military affairs during the British Raj. The region of Bihar and Chhota Nagpur (currently in Jharkhand), has for multiple centuries, consistently contributed to India's strategic thought, corpus of political and military treatises, and military manpower, the USI said, emphasising the concept behind the event.

Exhibition brings focus on military heritage of undivided Bihar region

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

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"To empower veterans economically, the government is also promoting entrepreneurship by encouraging them to establish their own businesses and build stable livelihoods," the governor said.

The governor emphasised that the event was a tribute to ex-servicemen's contributions and welfare, recognising their continued role in nation-building through their experience, discipline, and patriotism. He stressed the importance of healthcare for veterans, assuring that efforts are underway to strengthen and effectively implement the ex-servicemen contributory health scheme (ECHS) in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, a Raj Bhavan communication said.

Acknowledging the challenges of transitioning to civilian life, Parnaik reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing skill development, vocational training, and employment opportunities for ex-servicemen.

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CNCI pushes for recognition of Chakma language in Mizoram

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Aizawl, March 23: The Mizoram State Committee of Chakma National Council of India (CNCI) has resolved to push the demand for recognition of Chakma language in Mizoram, a statement issued by CNCI Sunday said.

During the two-day general conference held Saturday and Sunday at Kamalanagar or Chawngte in south Mizoram's Lawngtlai district, the CNCI expressed concern over the exclusion of the Chakma language from Mizoram's official recognised languages, the statement said. The council strongly condemned the misidentification of Chakmas as Bengalis in the annual reports of the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities submitted to the President of India each year despite Chakmas making up one-tenth of Mizoram's population, it said. "The CNCI resolved to demand for official recognition of the Chakma language by Mizoram government and resolved to take concrete steps towards achieving this objective," the statement said.

The CNCI also raised concerns about the ongoing nationwide protests demanding the repeal of the Bodhgaya Temple Act, 1949 and called for the Centre's intervention to address the concerns of the Buddhist community in the country, the statement said.

The conference resolved that the CNCI would extend its full cooperation to the ongoing nationwide effort vesting the management of the Mahabodhi temple to the Buddhist community, it said.

Manipur peace efforts making headway: Meghwal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Imphal, March 23: Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal Sunday said progress has been made in the process of restoring peace in Manipur and there was a need to move further ahead.

He was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a function here to mark the 12th anniversary of the establishment of the Manipur High Court. On alleged discovery of cash at the residence of Delhi High Court judge Yashwant Varma, the minister said the country's top court was probing the matter.

"The Supreme Court is probing the matter... let the report of the committee come... we will talk after that." Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna Saturday constituted a three-member committee to conduct an in-house inquiry into allegations against Justice Varma from



whose official residence a large stash of cash was allegedly discovered after a fire, and directed that no judicial work be assigned to him. On Manipur violence, the minister said the situation in the strife-torn state was improving.

"We have progressed in the process of restoring peace and will need to move further ahead. After President's rule was imposed in Manipur, the matter was discussed in both

Houses of Parliament and the need to restore peace was stressed. The Union government is committed to bringing back peace in the state very soon," he added.

Addressing the function, the Union minister said, "I pray for rapidness in the ongoing peace process in Manipur so that the state can progress and contribute to Viksit Bharat." Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Supreme Court judges were

also present at the event.

A delegation of the Supreme Court judges, led by Justice B R Gavi, is on a two-day visit to Manipur. They visited relief camps Saturday and interacted with internally displaced persons. The delegation also virtually inaugurated a legal services camp, a medical camp and a legal aid clinic from the Mini Secretariat at Lamka in Churachandpur district.

Justice Gavi urged people to work together to bring back peace to Manipur and hoped that the "ongoing difficult phase" in the northeastern state will be over soon with the assistance of the executive, legislature and judiciary. 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.

Arunachal Governor praises contribution of war veterans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Itanagar, March 23: Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen K T Parnaik (Retd) Sunday lauded the immense contributions of war veterans, calling them the embodiment of courage, sacrifice, and dedication to the nation.

Speaking at an ex-servicemen rally organised by the Spearhead Division and the 56 Infantry Division at Likabali Military Station in Lower Siang district, Parnaik expressed deep gratitude for their unwavering service in safeguarding India's borders and upholding national values.

The governor emphasised that the event was a tribute to ex-servicemen's contributions and welfare, recognising their continued role in nation-building through their experience,

discipline, and patriotism. He stressed the importance of healthcare for veterans, assuring that efforts are underway to strengthen and effectively implement the ex-servicemen contributory health scheme (ECHS) in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, a Raj Bhavan communication said.

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Mobile water treatment unit provides relief in Assam village

AFTER YEARS OF HARDSHIP, A MOBILE WATER TREATMENT UNIT HAS BECOME A LIFELINE, SUPPLYING SAFE DRINKING WATER TO THESE HOUSEHOLDS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Tukergram (Assam), March 23: Water-related woes are not new for the 32 households of Tukergram, a hamlet in Assam's Cachar district, as they endure contaminated floodwaters for five to seven months each year.

After years of hardship, a mobile water treatment unit has become a lifeline, supplying safe drinking water to these households. The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) and Public Health and Engineering Department (PHED) identified Tukergram as one of the worst flood-affected areas and the hamlet does not have a government-provided water pipeline, officials said.

The sanctioned pipeline through Kalinagar Gram Panchayat had to pass through a drain, making its execution difficult while the hamlet on the hillock also lacked road connectivity, electricity, and toilets. Nestled beside a picturesque lake that was once

part of the meandering Barak River, this hillock turns into an island during the flood-affected months and continues to remain marooned until the water level recedes.

During this period, families living in low-lying areas migrate to the highest part of the hamlet, enduring congested and unhygienic conditions, a local resident said. Fifty-eight-year-old Abdul Jabbar, one of the 152 residents of the village, said, "Families here rely on the lake for daily water needs, but during floods, the overflowing lake becomes contaminated leading to immense difficulties and health problems."

Rainfall and floods have become increasingly erratic and intense, prolonging the monsoon season and worsening its impact, he pointed out. During these months, residents collected rainwater and used alum to decontaminate the water or else 'we have to manage with water from the 'nala' (drains)', Jabbar said, adding that the problem was acute.



After consultations with the agencies concerned, it was decided that UNICEF India in collaboration with a local NGO, DDMA, PHED, and the Community Facilitation and Resource Centre (CFRC)—a nodal government body under DDMA, and the panchayat and the rural development department (P&RD) will address the issue as a top priority, an official said.

"It was decided to work with the community and make interventions that will not only

address the immediate water needs but also help build community resilience against future floods," Cachar DDMA Project Officer Shamim Laskar said. An emergency mobile water treatment unit was provided, which purifies the lake water through the simple process of pumping, filtration, and disinfection using chlorine, he said.

"The unit is easy to install and operate and this has become a game-changer for Tukergram, ensuring safe

drinking water, especially during floods," he said.

Implementing sustainable water and sanitation solutions in remote and flood-prone areas is not easy, the project officer said. The Community Facilitation and Resource Centre (CFRC) plays a crucial role in bridging the gap between communities and disaster response agencies, ensuring that relief reaches those who need it most, CFRC nodal officer Ashim Kumar Das said.

"During floods, we act as a bridge between communities and agencies like SDRF and DDMA, ensuring timely assistance with evacuation, clean water, and medical aid," Das said. The community has taken ownership of the water treatment unit and to make it more sustainable, a sub-water committee was formed with 14 members, including six women.

"The committee manages the unit's daily operations, schedules water collection, arranges fuel, and ensures maintenance. Each household contributes Rs

20 per week for daily collection of water," he said. There are plans to link the committee with a bank for fund management, he said.

The district administration is also exploring ways to bring Tukergram under the Piped Water Supply Scheme for household tap connections in the near future but till then, the mobile water treatment unit remains a crucial resource, ensuring access to potable water during floods, another official said.

There used to be worms in the water, causing stomach ailments, skin infections, and other health issues, especially in children but now, with clean drinking water, these problems have been addressed, said a trained operator of the unit Sajida Begum Talukdar. Beyond Tukergram, efforts to improve access to safe drinking water and sanitation have been scaled up across multiple flood-affected regions, UNICEF's Chief of Field Office Madhulika Jonathan said.



Cycling not only enhances one's health but also builds character, boosts confidence and shapes the future of our nation

MANSUKH MANDAVIYA | UNION YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS MINISTER

ROAD CRASH IN J&K LEAVES FOUR DEAD

Three tourists from Maharashtra and their local driver were killed and 17 people injured when a bus and a taxi collided on the Srinagar-Sonamarg road in Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir Sunday, officials said



of the day quote

On the martyrdom day of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, and Rajguru, we remember their fearless fight for freedom and equality



PINARAYI VIJAYAN | KERALA CM

Drug addiction destroys the abilities of a person, breaks families and weakens society. Every day children are losing their lives due to drug abuse



SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA | HP GOVERNOR

Our defeat in Delhi happened due to tactics but our strength is our dedicated workers. They thought we would be finished but we will make a comeback across the country with double strength



ARVIND KERJWAL | AAP NATIONAL CONVENER

Waqf Bill assault on Constitution: Cong

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: The Congress Sunday described the Waqf (Amendment) Bill as an "assault" on the Constitution and alleged that the proposed legislation was part of the BJP's "continuing attempts to damage" the centuries-old bonds of social harmony.

The Opposition party alleged that the BJP was trying to "demonise minority communities" by spreading propaganda and creating prejudices.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is "deeply flawed" and is aimed at diluting Constitutional provisions that guarantee equal rights and protection to all citizens, regardless of religion.

"The Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is part of the BJP's strategy and continuing attempts to damage the centuries-old bonds of social harmony in our uniquely multi-religious society," he said in a statement.

It is part of the BJP's strategy and continuing attempts to "defame traditions and institutions of minority communities to keep our society in a state of permanent polarisation for electoral gains", the Congress leader alleged.

Ramesh alleged that all the institutions created by previous laws to administer Waqfs were actively sought to be reduced in stature, composition and authority to deliberately deprive the community the right to administer its own religious traditions and affairs.

"Deliberate ambiguity has been introduced for determining who can donate their land for waqf purposes thus altering the very definition of waqf itself," he said.

The waqf-by-user concept developed by the nation's judicia-



The Opposition party alleged that the BJP was trying to "demonise minority communities" by spreading propaganda and creating prejudices

ry on the basis of long, continued and uninterrupted customary usage is being abolished, Ramesh claimed. "Provisions in the existing law are being removed without any reason just to weaken the administration of the waqf. Enhanced defences are now being introduced in the law to protect those who have encroached on waqf lands," he claimed.

"It bears recall that a 428-page report was literally bulldozed through the JPC without it ever having gone through a detailed clause-by-clause discussion. It thus violates all Parliamentary practices," Ramesh said. "Most fundamentally, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2024 is an

assault on the Constitution of India itself," the Congress leader asserted. His remarks came after the Parliament's joint committee submitted its report on the Waqf (Amendment) Bill. Though not listed yet, there is speculation that the proposed legislation could be brought for passage in Parliament during the ongoing Budget Session.

The 31-member panel on the Bill, after multiple sittings and hearings, suggested several amendments to the proposed legislation even as the opposition members disagreed with the report and submitted dissent notes.

The 655-page report was submitted to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla January 30. The joint committee adopted the report that contained changes suggested by members of the ruling BJP by a 15-11 majority vote. The move prompted the opposition to dub the exercise an attempt to destroy Waqf boards.

The Bill was referred to the joint committee on August 8 last year, following its introduction in the Lok Sabha by Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju.

SKM calls upon farmers to hold protests Mar 28

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 23: Hitting out at Punjab Police's crackdown on the protesting farmers, national coordination committee of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) has called upon farmers across India to hold demonstrations across the country March 28.

"The National Coordination Committee of SKM calls upon the farmers across India to hold protest demonstrations at districts across India March 28 against the Police repression on farmers' protest in Punjab," the farmer's union said in statement Sunday said.

The SKM also urged all the farmer organisations and platforms, including Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM) and SKM (Non Political), to join issue based unity and come forward "to unite against repression".

"On the direction of the Bhagwant Singh Mann led state government, the Punjab Police had arrested and put in jail 350 farmer leaders and activists, including Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Sarwan Singh Pandher. The police had bulldozed the tents and stages of agitating farmers at Khanauri and Shambu borders and forcefully removed tractor trailers, trolleys, and other appliances," the statement said.

Meanwhile, senior farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallwal, who along with several farmer leaders was detained Wednesday, was Sunday shifted from Jalandhar to Patiala. Dallewal, who is on an indefinite fast since November 26 last year, was taken to the Punjab Institute of Medical Sciences in Jalandhar after several farmers were detained by Punjab Police Wednesday. Later, he was taken to PWD Rest House in Jalandhar. Punjab Police had detained Pandher, Dallewal and several farmer leaders in Mohali Wednesday as they were returning after a meeting with a central delegation led by Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Chandigarh.

Situation completely peaceful in Nagpur, curfew lifted: Fadnavis



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, March 23: Curfew has been lifted in Nagpur as the situation in the city is completely peaceful, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Sunday.

The CM was speaking to the media in the Pimpri Chinchwad area of Pune where he attended an event organised by the non-profit Paani Foundation. "The situation in Nagpur is completely peaceful. There is no tension anywhere. People of all religions are living together peacefully. Hence, the curfew has been lifted," said Fadnavis, who is a legislator from the city.

Officials said earlier in the day that curfew had been lifted from the remaining four areas of Nagpur, six days after violence rocked the city. Following the violence March 17, curfew was imposed in Kotwali, Ganeshpeth, Tehsil, Lakadganj, Pachpaoli, Shanti Nagar, Sakkardara, Nandanvan, Imambada, Yashodhara Nagar and Kapil Nagar police station areas.

Mobs went on a rampage in central Nagpur Monday night amid rumours that a 'chadar' with holy inscriptions was

burnt during protests led by VHP and Bajrang Dal demanding the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb located in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar district.

Curfew was lifted from localities within the jurisdictions of Nandanvan and Kapil Nagar police stations March 20, and from Pachpaoli, Shanti Nagar, Lakadganj, Sakkardara and Imambada March 22.

Nagpur Police Commissioner Ravinder Singal on Sunday ordered the lifting of curfew in the remaining Kotwali, Tehsil, Ganeshpeth and Yashodhara Nagar police station areas from 3 pm. Patrolling will continue in sensitive areas along with the deployment of local police, an official said.

Large-scale stone pelting and arson were reported in several parts of Nagpur March 17 after baseless rumours were spread mischievously claiming that a 'chadar' with holy inscriptions was burned during the VHP protests, according to the authorities. Thirty-three police personnel, including three Deputy Commissioner of Police-rank officers, were injured in the violence.

The police have arrested more than 100 persons in connection with the violence

SHORT TAKES

Tunnel collapse: Search ops on

Nagarkurnool (Telangana): The search operation to locate seven persons trapped inside the partially collapsed SLBC tunnel here was underway at a rapid pace Sunday, officials said. The process of dewatering and removal of soil was going on continuously at the 'D1, D2' spots identified for possible human presence, they added. The broken parts of the huge Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) which were obstructing excavation at the 'D1, D2' spots were being removed, an official statement said. The muck inside the tunnel was being removed using water jet and soil was being shifted out using excavators and a conveyor belt, it said.

Goa Assembly session to start from today

Panaji: The budget session of the Goa legislative assembly will be held from March 24 (Monday) to March 26 (Wednesday), said officials Sunday. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who also holds the finance portfolio, will present the state's budget for 2025-26 on the last day of the session, they said. The session will begin at 11.30 am Monday during which Sawant is scheduled to introduce the Goa Private Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2025, said officials.

3 siblings killed in road accident

Shivpuri: Three persons were killed Sunday after their motorcycle was hit by a mini loading autorickshaw in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri district, a police official said. The incident took place on Mahuar bridge in the afternoon, Karera police station in charge Vinod Chhawai said. "The autorickshaw was on the wrong side of the road and hit the motorcycle, killing Ankit Rai (28), Satyam Rai on the spot. Their sister Vaishnavi (18) was rushed to a nearby hospital and then to a facility in Gwalior but she succumbed to injuries on the way," he said.

3 killed, 25 hurt as bus overturns

Jabalpur (MP): Three persons were killed and more than 25 others injured when a Nagpur-bound private bus overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district early Sunday, police said. The accident took place at around 4 am in Ramanpur Ghati area under Bargi police station limits, an official said. Three persons were killed and more than 25 others injured in the incident. The bus was on way from Ayodhya (in Uttar Pradesh) and going to Nagpur (Maharashtra), a police official said.

MEERUT MURDER

Woman, lover experience withdrawal symptoms in jail



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Meerut (UP), March 23: In judicial custody for allegedly murdering former Merchant Navy officer Saurabh Rajput, his wife and her lover are having a hard time adjusting to life in jail here, with prison officials claiming that the duo were experiencing drug withdrawal symptoms.

Muskan Rastogi and her lover Sahil Shukla have been lodged in Chaudhary Charan Singh district jail since March 19 after a court sent the duo

to judicial custody for 14 days. The duo wanted to be lodged in same barrack but they were told that as per rules, it was not possible, the officials said.

Muskan has also asked for a government lawyer as her family is upset with her, they added. Jail sources said the duo have been showing signs of extreme distress.

"Muskan and Sahil are not able to sleep properly. They are also refusing to eat and drink," a source said.

While some speculate that this might be due to remorse, jail officials attribute it to drug withdrawal.

Senior Jail Superintendent Viresh Raj Sharma said, "Both Sahil and Muskan have been taking drugs for a long time. Due to this, they are having problems of restlessness and are not even able to sleep at night."



A farmer at a sunflower field on the outskirts of Jagdalpur, in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh

PTI PHOTO

Red wine not safer: Study links all alcohol to cancer risk

After analysing data from 42 studies, researchers found no significant difference in overall cancer risk between red and white wine — and no type of wine was shown to be "safe" when it comes to cancer prevention

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Houston, March 23: A new meta-analysis published in Nutrients has shattered the popular belief that red wine is a healthier alcoholic option.

After analysing data from 42 studies, researchers found no significant difference in overall cancer risk between red and white wine — and no type of wine was shown to be "safe" when it comes to cancer

prevention. "Red wine's reputation for being healthier due to antioxidants like resveratrol doesn't hold up," said lead author Dr. Eunyoung Cho of Brown University. "We found no strong evidence that red wine lowers cancer risk."

Interestingly, white wine was associated with higher cancer risk in women and a 22 per cent increased risk of skin cancer in some studies — though researchers noted that



lifestyle factors like sun exposure could play a role. When focusing on more reliable cohort studies, the link between

white wine and increased cancer risk was stronger, but no significant risk increase was seen with red wine.

Still, each daily glass of red wine was linked to a 5 per cent increase in cancer risk, though this wasn't statistically significant in deeper analyses. Dr. Brian Black, a family medicine physician not involved in the study, said, "This challenges the idea that red wine is a 'safe' alcohol. The real takeaway is that alcohol in any form carries risk."

A spokesperson for the Cancer Prevention Alliance summed it up: "While these findings debunk some common myths, the message remains clear — limiting alcohol is one of the simplest ways to reduce cancer risk."

Boy, girl found hanging from tree in Deer Park

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: A 21-year-old man and an 18-year-old woman — both cousins involved in a romantic relationship — allegedly committed suicide by hanging from a tree at Deer Park in south Delhi's Hauz Khas area early Sunday morning.

Ruling out any foul play, a police officer said the couple committed suicide after their families objected to the relationship. The man worked in a pizza shop in Lodhi Colony, while the woman was a baby-sitter, he said.

"Their fathers were brothers. However, the boy and girl developed feelings for each other. Their families had asked them to end the relationship just two-three days ago," a senior police officer said. He added that unable to live without each other, the couple decided to end their lives. Police have initiated inquest proceedings in the case. They had earlier said that the duo were supposedly aged 17. According to the police, they received a PCR call at 6:31 am from a security guard at the Deer Park, who informed them about the bodies. The man was dressed in a black T-shirt and blue jeans, while the woman was wearing a green dress, they said. Two broken phones were recovered near the spot.

"The forensic team found a SIM card in one of the phones. We used this SIM card in another phone, which helped us identify the bodies and reach out to the families of the couple," the senior police officer said.

The official said the families of the deceased, in their statements, confirmed that the man and the woman were romantically involved, and given the nature of their relation, they were asked to end it.

IIM Jammu Ranked at 22 in IIRF Rankings 2025

IIM-JAMMU GETS 22ND POSITION IN IIRF RANKINGS

Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Jammu has secured the 22nd position in the prestigious Indian Institutional Ranking Framework Rankings-2025, an official has said.



There is an in-house procedure to deal with the matter. Now, in the absence of facts, I don't think, as a responsible citizen of this country, I should be commenting on this

PUSHKAR SINGH DHAMA | U'KHAND CM

CASH-DISCOVERY ROW LEGAL EXPERTS PRAISE CJT'S DECISION

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: Legal experts Sunday lauded Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna's decision to put crucial documents relating to a controversy surrounding alleged discovery of cash from Delhi High Court judge Yashwant Varma's residence in the public domain and constituting an in-house committee to further inquire into the matter.

satisfaction over the setting up of the in-house inquiry panel and said people should wait for its outcome.

Saluting the wisdom of the CJ and other members of the Supreme Court collegium for releasing the inquiry report of Delhi High Court Chief Justice D K Upadhyaya, senior advocate Adish C Aggarwala said, "Let the in-house committee make an independent inquiry and submit the report to the chief justice of India for taking appropriate decisions."

While senior advocate Sanjay Hegde said the CJ must be commended for enforcing openness and putting things out in the public domain, senior lawyer Indira Jaising expressed

Hegde, who described a video of the purported currency-discovery incident as "deeply distressing", said irrespective of



the question of innocence or guilt of the judge concerned, the very fact that so much money is ostensibly being seen burnt in proximity to his house raises many questions.



Jaising said her only demand was for complete transparency in the functioning of the collegium and added that the citizens of India have a right to know what is going on.

Jaising said when police were informed about the fire, it was their duty to register an FIR so that they could check if there was an arson.

Aggarwala requested the Centre to accept the Supreme Court collegium's proposal to transfer Justice Varma to the Allahabad High Court. He said this will help in conducting an independent inquiry as the witnesses will give statements free from any fear. He further said this will also provide an opportunity to Justice Varma to start his judicial work at the Allahabad High Court.

Former Supreme Court judge Markandey Katju said

he knows the last three generations of Justice Varma and believes that the allegations against him are not true.

When the matter of alleged cash discovery came to light on March 21, it drew strong reactions from legal experts, who questioned the collegium's decision on Justice Varma's transfer and demanded his resignation. In an unprecedented move, the top court, late Saturday evening, uploaded on its website the inquiry report of Justice Upadhyaya - complete with photos and videos - regarding the alleged discovery of a substantial amount of cash from Justice Varma's residence.

Sambhal violence: Mosque chief held

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhal, March 23: Shahi Jama Masjid management committee president Zafar Ali was arrested Sunday after being questioned in connection with the November 24 violence during a protest against a court-ordered survey of the Mughal-era mosque.

of birth, residence, language, etc), 230 (giving or fabricating false evidence with intent to procure conviction of capital offence) and 231 (giving or fabricating false evidence with intent to procure conviction of offence punishable with imprisonment for life or imprisonment). He has also been booked under provisions of the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

THE UTTAR PRADESH GOVERNMENT SET UP THE PANEL TO INVESTIGATE THE VIOLENCE IN WHICH FOUR PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND SEVERAL INJURED DURING PROTESTS OVER THE SURVEY

THE MUGHAL-ERA MOSQUE HAS BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF A MAJOR ROW AFTER A PETITION CLAIMED THAT IT WAS THE SITE OF AN ANCIENT HINDU TEMPLE

Superintendent of Police Krishan Kumar Bishnoi told reporters, "Today, Jama Masjid's Zafar Ali has been arrested and sent to jail. He was also detained and questioned late last night before being released." "He was called again for questioning today. He was arrested after questioning," he added.

The district and the police administration are on high alert following Ali's arrest. Bishnoi, Circle Officer (Sambhal) Anuj Chaudhary and Subdivisional Magistrate Vandana Mishra led a foot march with a police contingent.

A case has been registered against Ali under several sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, including 191(2) and 191(3) (rioting), 190 (every member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence committed in prosecution of common object), 221 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others), 132 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of duty), 196 (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place

Police personnel have been deployed in several areas, including the Shahi Jama Masjid, and surveillance is also being conducted through drones to maintain peace.

Ali was earlier taken into custody by the local police's special investigation team (SIT) to record his statement in connection with the case.

His brother, however, alleged that Ali was arrested to prevent him from submitting his testimony before a three-member judicial commission Monday.

PAPER LEAK Assam cancels Class XI exams

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Guwahati, March 23: All Class 11 examinations of the Assam state board from March 24 to 29, comprising 36 subjects, have been cancelled following reports of several paper leaks at different places, Education Minister Ranaj Pegu said.

Demanding a proper investigation, leading student bodies such as NSUI, SFI, SMSS and AASU slammed the BJP-led Assam government and demanded Pegu's resignation and suspension of state board chief R C Jain.

Earlier, the Higher Secondary first year Mathematics paper, scheduled March 21, of the Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB) was leaked, forcing the authorities to cancel the examinations and lodge a police complaint. The Higher Secondary first year or Class 11 examinations began March 6 and were scheduled to continue till March 29.

"Due to reports of question paper leak and breach of protocol, the remaining subjects of HS First Year Examination 2025 (scheduled from March 24-29) stand cancelled," Pegu said in a post on X.

Sharing the official order by ASSEB, he said further action regarding the new schedule of the examinations will be decided in a Board meeting on Monday.

In another post, the minister said the Mathematics paper was leaked after 18 schools, including three government institutes, across the state broke the security seal a day before the scheduled examination.

"ASSEB has suspended the affiliation of 15 private schools across 10 districts for breaking the seal of Class 11 Mathematics question papers before the scheduled time, leading to a leak. The state government will also take action against three other schools for violating the rules in a similar manner," he said in a statement.

Meghalaya govt adopts all TB patients in state

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Shillong, March 23: In an unprecedented initiative, the Meghalaya government has "adopted" about 4,500 tuberculosis patients in the state and has become a "universal Ni-kshay Mitra" for them as part of the 100-day Intensified TB-Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan.



The Centre launched the 'Ni-kshay Mitra' programme in September 2022, urging individuals, private organisations and civil society groups to "adopt" patients and provide them additional nutrition and diagnostic support. Now, Meghalaya has gone a step further and become the universal Ni-kshay Mitra for all tuberculosis patients in the state. Under its unique Comprehensive TB Care Initiative launched in December last

year, the northeastern state has taken extra measures not just to improve treatment success rates but also to reduce morbidity and financial burden on the patients and their families.

In addition to the ₹1,000 monthly nutritional support that each patient is provided under the Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana by the Union government, Meghalaya possibly is the only state that provides additional support worth ₹2,000 per month to each patient in the form of a nutritional kit.

The kit comprises 10 kgs of

rice, one tray of eggs, three kgs of moong daal, one litre of refined oil as well as seasonal fruits and vegetables to ensure a patient's faster recovery.

The aim is not just to provide nutritious food to the patient but also to take care of their family members so that their immunity is boosted and the future outbreak of infection into active TB is prevented, said Ramkumar S, the mission director of the National Health Mission (NHM). The state government also provides free transportation for TB patients and one attendant from their homes to the health facility and back, he said. At the health facilities, patients are provided free-of-cost diagnostics with all additional laboratory tests and investigations completely taken care of by the state.

High alert as IED threats spike in Ch'garh, J'khand

A recent analysis of IED incidents shows a "drastic" spike in numbers and hence the forces have been issued a "high alert" to guard against these attacks and their new technology in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand as the TCOC period is nearing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi/Raipur, March 23: An alert has been sounded in the anti-Naxal operations theatre of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand following a "spike" in IED blasts and recoveries, including that of a device rigged with beer bottles and a small antenna for remote control explosion, officials said.



they are low on arms and ammunition and hence IEDs are being used in more numbers to kill or maim troops," a senior officer in the security establishment told PTI.

The uptick in improvised explosive device (IED) recovery and blasts has been noticed as multiple security forces move into core Naxal areas to meet the Union government's dead-end of wiping out Left Wing Extremism (LWE) from the country by March 2026, the officials said.

The Tactical Counter Offensives Campaign (TCOC) is undertaken by the Maoists in summer months to launch attacks against security forces as forests go dry and trees shed leaves allowing a long range of

port said. "This is directly proportional to the establishment of the new forward operating bases (FOBs) in core Naxal areas," a paramilitary force officer said. The anti-Naxal operations grid is particularly "concerned" after the Central Reserve Police Force last week (CRPF) recovered a 5 kg pressure cooker IED from the Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh.

This RCIED (remote controlled IED) was fitted with two empty beer bottles, to inflict grievous glass shard injuries on troops, along with a wire connected small antenna kept under a nearby tree and could be detonated from a distance, officials said. The IED was defused by the CRPF counter-IED team that detected it near the Palnar FOB, they said. The first such RCIED was recovered by the CRPF from under a bridge in Bijapur district in January. It was a 50 kg RCIED hid-

den under the earth. There are chances that usage of such smart IEDs may increase, officials said. RCIEDs are considered deadly as compared to a pressure triggered (stepping on it) or command (by joining two wires) IED as it can be detonated from a distance by the Naxals.

According to official data, there were a 78 major IED blasts and recoveries in Chhattisgarh leading to killing of eight security personnel in 2024. These figures of major IED incidents have crossed 100 by mid-march in the central Indian state underlining the increased threat as troops work against the deadline of March 2026, officials said.

More than 70 FOBs have been opened by the Maoists in the two states over the last over an year, the maximum being erected by the CRPF as it remains the lead force for anti-Naxal operations.

Gangster detained under PIT-NDPS Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Chandigarh, March 23: Notorious gangster-cum-drug lord Jaggu Bhagwanpuria, who is also an accused in the killing of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, was detained under the stringent anti-narcotics law Sunday and shifted to a jail in Assam from Punjab, the NCB said.

The gangster has been detained under the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PIT-NDPS) Act, the central agency said. Bhagwanpuria, lodged in a prison in Punjab's Bathinda, was transported to the Central Jail in Silchar, Assam, by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in cooperation with the Punjab Police.

The NCB officials took custody of the gangster, who was in the custody of the Punjab Police in connection with the Moosewala murder case, and took him on a connecting flight from Chandigarh to Silchar via Delhi and Kolkata. Jagdeep Singh alias Jaggu Bhagwanpuria is a native of Punjab's Gurdaspur district and is being probed in 128 criminal cases, including high-profile murder cases, cases related to extortion, Arms Act and a dozen complaints filed under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act since 2012, according to the NCB.

"He is involved in 128 cases, including high-profile murder cases, extortion, Arms Act and 12 cases under the NDPS Act, since 2012. His criminal network facilitated the smuggling of heroin, opium, psychotropic substances and illegal arms," the NCB said in a statement. Bhagwanpuria has repeatedly used mobile phones to orchestrate criminal activities from within Punjab's high-security jails "as evidenced by multiple cases", the statement added.

The NCB said that Bhagwanpuria was detained and moved out of Punjab as he had "established linkages" with international operatives in Canada, the US and Pakistan.

The PIT-NDPS Act of 1988 provides for the "detention of persons concerned in any manner with illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for one or two year(s) with a view to preventing them from engaging in such harmful and prejudicial activities".

international



Talks with the US are impossible unless Washington changes its pressure policy
ABBAS ARAQCHI | FOREIGN MINISTER, IRAN

POPE DISCHARGED

Pope Francis makes his first public appearance in five weeks after being discharged Sunday from the hospital where he survived a severe case of pneumonia that twice threatened his life and raised the prospect of a papal resignation or funeral. The 88-year-old pontiff plans to offer a Sunday blessing from the 10th-floor papal suite at Rome's Gemelli hospital



of the day quote

History tells us that China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. Our two sides need to choose dialogue over confrontation, win-win cooperation over zero-sum competition
LI QIANG | PREMIER, CHINA

Pakistan was achieved after many sacrifices and we would not hesitate from any sacrifice to keep it safe. We will continue to build Pakistan despite internal and external conspiracies
ASIF ALI ZARDARI | PRESIDENT, PAKISTAN

Donor partners are now exploring other opportunities to continue to run the WE4F programme to ensure a responsible completion
JULIA LINDHOLM | SPOKESWOMAN, SWEDISH GOVERNMENT'S INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

SHORT TAKES

Pak, IMF to cut tariffs

Islamabad: Pakistan and the IMF have made further adjustments to the economic liberalisation plan and agreed to cut weighted average applied tariffs to around 6 per cent — a reduction of 43 per cent over five years in the protection level available to local industries, according to a media report. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had long been raising concerns over the protection available to local industries, but Pakistani authorities were reluctant to open these areas. The country has the third-highest trade-weighted average tariffs in South Asia at 10.6 per cent. After the implementation of the full liberalisation plan, it will have the lowest weighted average tariffs in the region.

Snap polls in Canada

Ottawa: New Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney Sunday called a snap election for April 28, saying he needed a strong mandate to deal with the threat that US President Donald Trump's tariffs pose to the economy. Although the next election was not due until October 20, Carney is hoping to capitalize on a remarkable recovery by his Liberal party in the polls since January, when Trump began threatening Canada and former prime minister Justin Trudeau announced his resignation. "We are facing the most significant crisis of our lifetimes because of President Trump's unjustified trade actions and his threats to our sovereignty," Carney said.

Gaza death toll mounts 50K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Deir Al-Balah, March 23: More than 50,000 Palestinians have now been killed in the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, the territory's Health Ministry said Sunday, as new Israeli airstrikes killed at least 26 Palestinians overnight, including a Hamas political leader and several women and children.

Israel's military also sent ground troops into part of the southern city of Rafah as thousands of Palestinians fled after new evacuation orders. Israel ended the latest ceasefire last week with a surprise wave of strikes that killed hundreds, and it has launched ground incursions in northern Gaza. It says it is targeting militants.

Israel's Cabinet late Saturday approved a proposal to set up a new directorate for advancing the "voluntary departure" of Palestinians in line with US President Donald Trump's proposal to depopulate Gaza and rebuild it for others. Palestinians say they do not want to leave their homeland, and rights groups say the plan could amount to expulsion in violation of international law.

'DISPLACEMENT UNDER FIRE'

The military ordered people to leave Rafah's already heavily destroyed Tel al-Sultan neighbourhood on foot along a single route to Muwasi, a sprawling area of squalid tent camps. The war has forced most of Gaza's population of over 2 million to flee within the territory, often multiple times. "It's displacement under fire," said Mustafa Gaber, a



Israel strikes southern Gaza, orders new evacuation amid shaky truce
Airstrike kills Hamas political leader in southern Gaza, Hamas says

journalist who left with his family. He said tank and drone fire echoed nearby. "There are wounded people among us. The situation is very difficult," he said. "The shells are falling among us and the bullets are (flying) above us," said Amal Nassar, also displaced from Rafah. "The elderly have been thrown into the streets. An old woman was telling her son, 'Go and leave me to die.' Where will we go?" The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency service said it lost contact with a team of medics responding to the strikes. Spokeswoman Nebal Farsakh said some were wounded. Israel blames civilian deaths on Hamas because it operates in densely populated areas.

STRIKES KILL HAMAS LEADER

Hamas said Salah Bardawil, a well-known member of its political bureau, was killed in a strike in Muwasi that also killed his wife. Hospitals in southern Gaza said they received a further 24 bodies from strikes overnight, including several women and children. Gaza's Health Ministry said 50,021 Palestinians have been killed in the war and more than 113,000 have been wounded. That includes 673 people killed since Israel's bombardment on Tuesday shattered the ceasefire. Dr Munir al-Boursh, the ministry's general director, said the dead include 15,613 children, with 872 of them under 1 year old. The ministry does not dis-

tinguish between civilians and combatants in its count but says women and children make up over half the dead. Israel says it has killed around 20,000 fighters, without providing evidence.

CEASEFIRE IN TATTERS

The ceasefire that took hold in January paused more than a year of fighting ignited by Hamas' October 7, 2023 attack into Israel, in which militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostage. Most captives have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. In the latest ceasefire's first phase, 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others were released in exchange for near-

POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

Bangladesh Army rejects student-led NCP claims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka, March 23: The Bangladesh Army Sunday rejected allegations made by a newly formed student-led party that the military was hatching a plan to rehabilitate deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League, calling them "hilarious and an immature array of stories."

The National Citizen Party (NCP) staged protest rallies at the premier Dhaka University campus Saturday, vowing to thwart at any cost a "military-backed plot" to rehabilitate the party.

The military headquarters, in a statement issued to Sweden-based Bangladesh-centric news outlet Netro News, said, "It was nothing other than a political stunt." The Army called the claims "hilarious and an immature array of stories."

The statement, however, said Army chief General Waker Uz Zaman met with two NCP leaders Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam March 11 at his Dhaka Cantonment residence as they had long sought a "courtesy meeting" with him.

It said the Army chief's office had asked them to come to the Army headquarters but the pair instead went to his official residence Sena Bhaban.

The Army statement came as tensions started gripping Bangladesh after the NCP, which was floated last month with widely assumed blessings of Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus, accused the military of political interference.

CHILLING CRIMES

Indian-origin woman charged with slitting 11-yr-old son's throat

New York: An Indian-origin woman has been charged with allegedly murdering her 11-year-old son after a three-day vacation to Disneyland. Saritha Ramaraju, 48, has been charged with one felony count of murder for slitting her son's throat, killing the boy after they went on a vacation to Disneyland during a custody visit. She has also been charged with one felony enhancement of personal use of a weapon, a knife. She faces a maximum sentence of 26 years to life if convicted on all charges, a statement from the Office of the District Attorney, Orange County, California said Friday. Ramaraju, who moved out of California after divorcing the boy's father in 2018, was staying with her son at a motel in Santa Ana for a custody visit. During the visit, she bought three-day passes to Disneyland for herself and her son. On March 19, the day Ramaraju was scheduled to check out of the motel and return the boy to his father, she called 911 at 9.12 am to report that she had killed her son and taken pills to kill herself. Santa Ana police arrived at the motel and found the young boy dead on the bed in a room among Disneyland souvenirs. It appeared the boy had been dead for several hours before his mother called 911, the statement said. The boy was scheduled to be returned to his father that day.



PIO man, daughter killed in US shooting

New York: A 56-year-old Indian-origin man and his 24-year-old daughter were shot dead at a convenience store in the US state of Virginia and police have arrested one person in connection with the shooting, according to media reports. Pradipkumar Patel and his daughter were working at the store on Lankford Highway in Accomack County when the shooting incident happened. Accomack County is located on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The Accomack County Sheriff's office said deputies were called to the scene shortly after 5:30 am March 20 on reports of a shooting victim, Shore Daily News reported. When they arrived, deputies discovered an unresponsive man suffering from apparent gunshot wounds, it said. While searching the building, deputies found a woman suffering from apparent gunshot wounds as well. Accomack County Sheriffs announced late Thursday that they arrested a man in connection with the shooting. George Frazier Devon Wharton, 44, of Onancock is currently held in Accomack Jail without bond, according to Sheriff W Todd Wessells. He was charged with first-degree murder, attempted first-degree murder, possession of a firearm by a felon and two counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony. The incident sent shockwaves among the Indian community members in the United States after the news spread through Facebook, the report said.



Amid protests, Turkey arrests Istanbul Mayor pending trial

Imamoglu says he will not bow down, vows to defeat Erdogan

REUTERS

Istanbul, March 23: A Turkish court Sunday jailed President Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, pending trial on graft charges, in a move likely to stoke the country's biggest protests against the government in more than a decade.

The decision to send Imamoglu to jail comes after the main opposition party, European leaders and tens of thousands of protesters criticised the actions against him as politicised and undemocratic.

Imamoglu has denied the charges, calling them "unimaginable accusations and slanders". "I am standing tall, I will never bow down," Imamoglu said on X, calling on supporters not to lose hope. "We will rip away this coup, this dark stain on our democracy all together."

The government denies that investigations are politically



motivated and says courts are independent. It has warned against protests, especially given a nationwide ban on street gatherings that was extended Saturday for four more days.

As the courtroom developments unfolded, members of Imamoglu's Republican People's Party (CHP), the main opposition against Erdogan's ruling alliance, were preparing to anoint Imamoglu as its candidate for the next presidential election.

He is the only nominee and hundreds of people had flocked to polling stations for the election to show support after the court ruling, after protests and skirmishes with police continued through the night in major cities.

China deploys 'DeepSeek' in non-combat functions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, March 23: China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has started using the recently released Chinese AI tool 'DeepSeek' for non-combat support functions, especially in military hospitals, to assist the doctors in devising treatment plans besides other civilian areas, media reports said.

DeepSeek's open-source large language models (LLMs) are being used in PLA hospitals, People's Armed Police (PAP), and national defence mobilisation organs, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported Sunday.

Earlier this month, the general hospital of the PLA Central Theatre Command announced that it had authorised "embedded deployment" of DeepSeek's R1-70B LLM, saying it could provide treatment plan suggestions to support doctors, according to the Post. The hospital also emphasised patient privacy and data secu-



urity, noting that all data was stored and processed on local servers. Similar deployments have been seen in other PLA hospitals nationwide, including the elite PLA General Hospital in Beijing, also known as "301 Hospital", where senior Chinese officials and military officers receive treatment and highly sensitive personal data is believed to be stored. Earlier, the PLA, which is

investing heavily in modernisation, cautioned its armed forces against banking heavily on artificial intelligence, saying that AI should be a tool to guide but not a replacement for human decision-making on the battlefield because it lacks self-awareness capability. "As AI evolves, it must remain a tool guided by human judgment, ensuring accountability, creativity, and strategic adaptability remain at the fore-

S'pore-Indian writer inducted into Women's Hall of Fame

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Singapore, March 23: Award-winning Indian-origin writer and playwright Kamaladevi Aravindan was among six women who were inducted into the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame recently, making up a total of 198 women who have been honoured since 2014.

Initiated by the Singapore Council of Women's Organizations (SCWO), which marks its 45th anniversary this year, the Women's Hall of Fame celebrates progress in gender equality and recognises inductees' contributions to Singapore's history, society, and progress.

Aravindan, 75, writes in both Tamil and Malayalam, and some of her works have been translated into English and published in India, Canada, and Malaysia, Channel News Asia reported Sunday.



She has published more than 160 short stories and essays, 18 stage plays, 300 radio dramas, and five books. She also conducts creative writing workshops organised by the National Library Board and the Association of Singapore Tamil Writers.

"Balancing the roles of a mother and wife was never easy. I devoted my days to caring for my children and would write through the quiet hours of the night. Despite the challenges, my love for writing nev-

er wavered," she was quoted as saying by the channel. She said that reading the works of Tamil writer-journalist and advocate of women's rights Subramania Bharati, also known as Bharathiyar, sparked her interest in writing. "I observed the struggles women faced as they navigated their many roles, yet I also saw their resilience. No Singaporean woman is ever truly defeated. Writing became my own way of capturing that strength and perseverance," she said.



We want to double down on gaming and its addressable area because we believe now it is time for the gaming industry to become much more sizable and impactful...

SEAN HYUNIL SOHN | KRAFTON INDIA CEO

INDIA'S GOLI SODA SEES STRONG DEMAND IN US, EUROPE, GULF

India's traditional beverage Goli Soda is witnessing strong consumer response in key international markets, including the US, UK, Europe, and the Gulf, driven by strategic expansion and innovative reinvention.



Quote of the day

So, yes, India has played a critical role in the growth story of California almonds, and the numbers speak for themselves...



EMILY FLEISCHMANN | VICE PRESIDENT, ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA

The housing market is witnessing some correction after three years of record supply because of which absorption/sales is also on a declining trend



SAMIR JASUJA | FOUNDER & CEO, PROPEQUITY

Whether it is in the vertical of healthcare or education sector or even skill development, there are multiple tools available which are quite common and available and being enjoyed by the urban population...



SOORAJ VASUDEVAM | CALCULUS GROUP FOUNDER AND CEO

Cars set to get costlier from April

Market leaders announce price hikes due to rising input costs and operational expenses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



New Delhi, March 23: Cars are set to get costlier from April, with various automakers like market leaders Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra, and Hyundai, announcing price hikes...

Similar to, Tata Motors intends to increase the prices of its passenger vehicle range, including electric vehicles, from April 2025, for the second time this year. Mahindra & Mahindra said it will hike prices of its SUVs and commercial vehicles by up to 3 per cent from April...

have two price hike cycles in India, one at the beginning of the calendar year and another at the start of the financial year. "The reason for the extent of hike varies, could be related to currency fluctuations where we need more rupees to import the same product, commodity or component," he stated. Over the last six months, the US Dollar has appreciated by almost 3 per cent against the rupee, which affects high import-dependent categories...

"At the same time, OEMs are aware of high price sensitivity in the entry-level segments. Hence, are likely to be cautious in executing these hikes given the segment may see a revival, especially after the recent budget, which left more money in the hands of the consumer," he noted. Iera Corporate Ratings Vice President and Sector Head Rohan Kanwar Gupta said the price hikes are generally taken at the start of the calendar/fiscal year to help offset factors like increases in operational costs on account of inflationary pressures and commodity prices, among others. "The recent price hikes announced by various car makers are for the same reason," he added. While the price hikes have the potential to moderate the demand sentiments to an extent, it must be noted that there are already healthy discounts on offer across a variety of models in the passenger vehicle segment, with the industry focused on bringing down inventory levels, Gupta stated. Accordingly, the impact of these price hikes on demand is expected to be modest, he noted.

Your team is your biggest strength, says Sahoo

Born in a small village in Puri district, Manoj Kumar Sahoo, Director of Dion Group, has transformed himself into a key player in Odisha's real estate and automobile industries. After finishing studies, he decided to join his family business running since 1980. He tried his luck in various business verticals like automobile, construction and real-estate and was highly successful.



Can you share a glimpse of your early life and what led you into real estate business? I was born in a village called Gada Amaraprasad in Nimapada block of Puri district. Growing up in a lower-middle-class family, I never imagined I would one day be in the world of business. My journey was shaped by my family's values, especially my father's resilience and determination. My father, a science graduate, had the courage to leave a stable teaching job to venture into business. His struggles and sacrifices were testament to the power of resilience. I saw him mortgage my mother's jewellery to ensure we had a good education. My exposure to different business backgrounds during my university years fuelled my desire to build something bigger. My initial dream was to start a bottling plant under the brand name "DION Spirit".

As a major player in the industry, how do you see the demand for housing projects in Odisha? According to recent data, nearly 80 thousand houses are required in Odisha. The demand for housing in Odisha, particularly in the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar, is growing rapidly. With modern urban infrastructure, this region is becoming the preferred destination for Odisha looking to own a home. The increase in per capita income, the 8th Pay Commission's announcement, and the government's industrialisation and river-front development push are all driving the real estate sector forward. Do you see any impact of price rises on the real estate business? Are there any upcoming projects? The Cuttack-Bhubaneswar area currently faces a demand-supply gap of nearly 1,40,000 houses, as per government data. This shortfall highlights the rising need for quality housing. The establishment of the Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) has significantly boosted buyer confidence, with more people now preferring to invest in ORERA-registered projects. With a positive economic environment and regulatory support, the real estate market in Odisha is set for further growth. We are actively working on multiple projects to cater to the evolving demands of homebuyers. A plan is underway for an integrated township in Trishulia, Cuttack district, featuring 1,000 residential buildings. The development will include a 200-bed

hospital with modern facilities, malls, multiplexes, schools, and star-rated hotels. Additionally, projects planned along the banks of Kuakhai and Kathajodi rivers will accelerate the state government's riverfront development initiative. You also have a strong presence in the automobile industry. What factors are driving sales growth? We launched Dion Automotive in 2019 as an authorised dealer of Tata Motors' passenger vehicle and electric mobility units. Today, we have six branches across Odisha in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Balugaon, Phulbani, and Berhampur. So far, we have sold over 7,000 vehicles and have served more than 20,000 customers. One key driver of our growth is the increasing demand for electric vehicles (EVs). As the government pushes for clean energy and pollution control, EV adoption is expected to rise. We are committed to promoting electric mobility in Odisha in a big way. How has your journey been so far? What advice do you have for new entrepreneurs? The journey has been filled with challenges, learning, and achievements. My advice to young entrepreneurs is simple—hard work, dedication, and belief in yourself are keys to success. In any business, your team is your biggest strength. A strong bond with your team ensures seamless operations, which ultimately benefits your customers. Remember, customers are your assets, not liabilities. Prioritise quality, innovation, and customer satisfaction, and success will follow.

SHORT TAKES

PSBs' dividend payout rises 33%

New Delhi: Dividend payout by public sector banks (PSBs) have risen by 33 per cent to ₹27,830 crore in FY24, indicating significant improvement in financial health of these lenders. PSBs declared a dividend of ₹27,830 crore to shareholders in 2023-24 as against ₹20,964 crore in the previous fiscal, registering an increase of 32.7 per cent, according to the government data. Of ₹27,830 crore total dividend, nearly 65 per cent or ₹18,013 crore was paid to the government towards their shareholding in FY24. During 2022-23, the government received ₹13,804 crore as dividend from the public sector banks including State Bank of India (SBI). It is to be noted that 12 public sector banks recorded the highest ever aggregate net profit of ₹1.41 lakh crore in 2023-24 against the net profit of ₹1.05 lakh crore in 2022-23, and earned ₹1.29 lakh crore in the nine months of the current financial year.

ONGC plans to import ethane

New Delhi: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) plans to import ethane starting in mid-2028 to compensate for the altered composition of liquefied natural gas (LNG) sourced from Qatar, according to a tender floated by the state-owned firm. India imports 7.5 million tonnes per annum of LNG from Qatar. Under the deal, QatarEnergy supplies 5 million tonnes a year of LNG that contains methane (used to produce electricity, make fertiliser, converted into CNG or used as cooking fuel) as well as ethane and propane -- feedstock to make LPG and petrochemicals -- on a firm basis and the rest on best endeavour basis. This contract is coming to an end in 2028 and the revised contract signed last year envisages QatarEnergy supplying 'lean' gas (one that is stripped of ethane and propane). ONGC spent about ₹1,500 crore in setting up a C2 (ethane) and C3 (propane) extraction plant at Dahej in Gujarat. The C2/C3 so extracted was used as a feedstock in its petrochemical subsidiary, ONGC Petro additions Ltd (OPAL).

India clamps anti-dumping duty on Chinese products

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: India has imposed anti-dumping duty on five Chinese goods, including vacuum flasks and aluminium foil, during the month so far to guard domestic players from cheap imports from the neighbouring country. These duties were imposed as these products -- Soft Ferrite Cores, certain thickness of vacuum insulated flask, aluminium foil, Trichloro Isocyanuric Acid, and Poly Vinyl Chloride Paste Resin -- were exported to India from China at below normal prices. In separate notifications, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, Department of Revenue, said that the duty imposed "shall be levied for a period of five years" on imports of Soft Ferrite Cores, vacuum insulated flask, and Trichloro Isocyanuric Acid.

The anti-dumping duty of up to USD 873 per tonne was imposed provisionally on aluminium foil for six months. The government has imposed the duty in the range of USD 276 per tonne to USD 986 per tonne on imports of the acid (a water

treatment chemical) from China and Japan. On imports of Soft Ferrite Cores (used in electric vehicles, chargers, and telecom devices), up to 35 per cent duty was imposed on CIF (cost, insurance freight) value. Similarly on vacuum insulated flask, USD 1,732 per tonne anti-dumping duty was levied. The levy, which ranges from USD USD 89 per tonne to USD 707 per tonne, on Poly Vinyl Chloride Paste Resin was slapped on the imports from China, Korea RP, Malaysia, Norway, Taiwan and Thailand for five years. These duties are imposed after recommendations for the same were made by the commerce ministry's investigation arm DGTR (directorate general of trade remedies). Anti-dumping probes are conducted by countries to determine whether domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in cheap imports. As a countermeasure, they impose these duties under the multilateral regime of Geneva-based World Trade Organization (WTO).

India set to double its startup count by 2030

Vadodara: The number of Indian startups is expected to double from 1.2 lakh to 2.4 lakh by 2030, creating 50 million new jobs, Minister of State (Independent Charge), Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Jayant Chaudhary, said Sunday. These opportunities will include direct white-collar roles, gig economy jobs, and indirect employment across industries. "To support this expansion, the government has announced a ₹60,000 crore scheme to upgrade Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), ensuring that young professionals gain the necessary skills to meet industry demands," the Minister, the chief guest of the 3rd Annual Technical Festival "EPITOME 2025" of Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya, Vadodara, said in his address on the occasion, through video conference.

Mcap of nine most-valued firms surges ₹3 lakh cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most-valued firms surged ₹3,06,243.74 crore last week, with ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel emerging as the biggest gainers, in tandem with a bullish trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark gauge surged 3,076.6 points, or 4.16 per cent, and the NSE Nifty jumped 953.2 points, or 4.25 per cent. The market capitalisation (mcap) of ICICI Bank jumped ₹64,426.27 crore to ₹9,47,628.46 crore, the most among the top-10 firms. Bharti Airtel's valuation zoomed ₹53,286.17 crore to ₹9,84,354.44 crore. HDFC Bank added ₹49,105.12 crore, taking its market valuation to ₹13,54,275.11 crore. The mcap of Reliance Industries Ltd surged ₹39,311.54 crore to ₹17,27,339.74 crore and that of Bajaj Finance rallied ₹30,953.71 crore to ₹5,52,846.18 crore. The valuation of Tata Consultancy

Services (TCS) soared ₹24,259.28 crore to ₹12,95,058.25 crore. The mcap of State Bank of India climbed ₹22,534.67 crore to ₹6,72,023.89 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever advanced ₹16,823.08 crore to ₹5,28,058.89 crore. Infosys added ₹5,543.9 crore to take its market valuation to ₹6,61,364.38 crore.

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FPI outflows ebb amid global tailwinds, optimism over Ukraine war

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 23: The Indian equity market has witnessed a moderation in FPIs' selling pressure with the outflows narrowing to ₹1,794 crore (USD 194 million) last week, buoyed by easing global concerns and growing optimism around a potential de-escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. However, despite this positive shift, it still marks the 15th consecutive week of outflows. Going forward, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) are expected to remain cautious, awaiting greater clarity on the US Federal Reserve's interest rate trajectory, geopolitical developments, and India's

domestic economic outlook, according to Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director of Manager Research at Morningstar Investment. According to the data with the depositories, FPIs have offloaded equity shares worth ₹1,794 crore (USD 194 million) for the week ended March 21. This was in comparison to USD 604 million outflow observed in the holiday-shortened preceding week. Last week, FPIs turned net buyers on two occasions, with a significant purchase of ₹3,181 crore March 21 and ₹710 crore March 19. "The recent reversal in FPIs selling has turned the market sentiments for the better, facilitating a rally in the market for



the week ended March 21. It can be argued that positive domestic fundamentals like pickup in growth and decline in inflation coupled with weakness in the dollar have contributed to the change in FPIs strategy," VK

Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Investment Services, said. Investor sentiment has shown signs of improvement, buoyed by easing global concerns and growing optimism

around a potential de-escalation in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Srivastava said. Positive domestic developments such as India's better-than-expected trade deficit and China's stimulus-driven consumption boost have further supported the sentiments. Additionally, the recent market correction has presented attractive entry points for investors, he added. Srivastava also pointed out that that softening of the US dollar index along with rising expectations of a rate cut by the US Federal Reserve has supported foreign fund flows back into emerging markets like India. Dovish commentary from the Fed -- hinting at the possibility of two rate cuts this year -- has

encouraged FPIs to selectively re-enter Indian equities. However, despite this renewed interest, FPIs have still withdrawn ₹31,719 crore from the market so far in March, following outflows of ₹34,574 crore in February and ₹78,027 crore in January. As a result, total FPI outflows for 2025 have now reached ₹1.44 lakh crore, according to data from the depositories. On the flip side, the trend of FPI investment in debt has continued, with total debt investments of ₹10,955 crore in March through March 21, Vijayakumar said. This indicates a shift in FPI strategy, favouring debt instruments over equities amidst continued market volatility.

