

## Prez urges tribals to get educated

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** President Droupadi Murmu Monday called upon tribal men and women to take benefits of various welfare schemes for them, emphasizing that this would be possible if they are educated.

The President, who is on a two-day visit to the state, said this while addressing the foundation day ceremony of Bharatiya Biswabasu Sabar Samaj, an association of Sabar tribes in the state.

Noting that the government is implementing various schemes for empowerment of tribal people and preserving and promoting their art and culture, Murmu said, "Government schemes would be successful only with people's cooperation and participation. If you (tribals) are not aware of the schemes, you cannot get the benefits. And you can be aware of the schemes if you are educated. Therefore, I urge you to get educated and aware." **PT**



**TAKING TO STREETS:** Police personnel use pepper spray on a demonstrator wearing dervish clothes, during a protest on the day Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu was jailed as part of a corruption investigation at Istanbul in Turkey Monday

PHOTO: R. EUTERS

## Kamra free speech storm

*More than a month after You-Tuber Ranveer Allahbadia's provocative remarks on 'India's Got Talent' show sparked widespread reactions, comedian Kunal Kamra has now stirred controversy with his 'traitor' remark aimed at Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde in a recent stand-up comedy. Performed at Habitat Studio, where Allahbadia's video was also recorded, Kamra's statements initially invited the wrath of Shiv Sena supporters, who vandalised the studio. What followed was a 'bulldozer action' by Mumbai civic body Monday morning. The episode has kicked up discussions about the limits to the rights to freedom of speech and expression, with the BJP arguing that personal liberty shouldn't mean unchecked conduct. The Congress and other Opposition parties, meanwhile, said Kamra's act was an expression of creative talent*

against Shinde, officials said. The police also registered a case against 40 Shiv Sena workers for vandalising the Habitat studio in Khar area, where Kamra's show with the 'gaddar' (traitor) jibe at Shinde was filmed, and a hotel where the studio is located.

On Monday, the studio was demolished by Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for alleged building violations.

The temporary shed and other structures comprising the studio, which was created in the basement of the Unicorn hotel, has been razed, a civic official said.

Shiv Sena MLA Murji Patel said the party workers will not allow Kamra to move on the streets if he doesn't apologise to Shinde in two days.

Party's (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray slammed the Shinde-led Sena workers for the vandalism. "In a recent podcast, PM Modi said that criticism is an essential part of democracy. However, the behaviour of BJP's ruling alliance partner is contradictory to what Modi said," Aaditya said.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has sought Kamra's apology for 'insulting' Shinde, even as police arrested 12 workers of the Shinde-led Shiv Sena for ransacking the venue.

AAP's Mumbai president Preeti Sharma Menon said she supports Kamra.

## SC orders Justice Varma's repatriation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi/Prayagraj, March 24:** The Supreme Court Collegium Monday recommended the repatriation of Delhi High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma, who is facing a probe into the alleged discovery of huge stash of cash from his official residence in Delhi after a fire incident, to his parent Allahabad High Court.

Justice Varma's proposed transfer could come into effect after the Centre accepts the recommendation, which came on a day when the Delhi HC in a notice withdrew judicial work from Justice Varma "with immediate effect".

**Bar association calls stir PT**

## Fake DSP, constable held in Bhubaneswar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Odisha Police has arrested two persons for impersonating police officers and seized 386 counterfeit ₹500 notes from them, a senior official said Monday.

The accused, identified as Manas Ranjan Senapati, 26, and Ashis Swain, 23, were caught during a routine night patrol by Saheed Nagar police in Bhubaneswar Sunday.

Twin city police commissioner S Dev Datta Singh said Senapati falsely claimed to be a probationary Odisha Police Service (OPS) officer of DSP rank, while Swain posed as a probationary constable.

"We are investigating the two angles—cheating and their link with a fake currency racket," said Singh.

## ONLY 100-120 MAOISTS ACTIVE IN STATE: MAJHI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Monday claimed that only 100-120 Maoists were currently active in the state.

In a written statement in the Assembly, Majhi said, "As per available information, at present about 100 to 120 Maoists are active in the state. The target is set to make India Naxal-free by March 2026."

In another written reply in the House, the CM said that while 15 of the 30 districts of the state were Left-Wing Ex-

tremism (LWE) affected in 2018-19, the number has now come down to 10.

The 10 districts are: Kalahandi, Bolangir, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Kandhamal, Rayagada, Bargarh, Boudh, Malkangiri and Koraput.

To counter Maoist activities in the state, 72 companies of central armed forces, 45 SOG teams, about 600 DVF jawans, 65 platoons of India Reserve Battalion, 30 platoons of Special Security Battalions and more than 350 Odisha Special Striking Force teams have been deployed in the Naxal-affected areas, he said.

## MPs get 24% pay hike

**New Delhi:** The Centre Monday notified a 24 per cent hike in the salaries of members of Parliament (MPs) with effect from April 1, 2023 on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index.

The notification, issued by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, also increased the daily allowances for sitting members and pension and additional pension for every year of service in excess of five years for former members. An MP will now get ₹1.24 lakh per month as salary as against ₹1 lakh per month they received earlier. The daily allowance too has been increased from ₹2,000 to ₹2,500, the notification said. The pension for former parliamentarians has been increased from ₹25,000 per month to ₹31,000 per month.

PNN & AGENCIES

**Mumbai, March 24:** A stand-up comedy by Kunal Kamra aimed at Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde Sunday night turned out to be a major political controversy, with the ruling and Opposition parties engaging in war of words over right to freedom of speech and expression, and the very pattern of such shows.

Mumbai police has registered an FIR against Kamra for making 'defamatory' remarks

## IRREGULAR by MANJUL



**Our decision was correct. See, this is the real Shiv Sena**

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# US, Russia in Black Sea ceasefire talks

REUTERS

**Riyadh, March 24:** US and Russian officials held talks in Saudi Arabia Monday aimed at sealing a Black Sea maritime ceasefire deal before a wider ceasefire agreement in Ukraine as Moscow and Kyiv used drones to pound each other.

The talks, which followed US negotiations with Ukraine in Saudi Arabia Sunday, came after Russia launched its third consecutive overnight air at-

tack on Kyiv, wounding one person and damaging houses in the region around the Ukrainian capital.

Russia, for its part, said it had downed 227 Ukrainian drones in the last 24 hours, as firefighters in its southern Krasnodar region battled for a fifth day to put out a blaze at an oil depot struck in a Ukrainian drone attack last week.

US President Donald Trump has intensified his drive to end the three-year-old conflict af-

ter he last week spoke to both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The White House says the aim of the Saudi talks is to reach a maritime ceasefire in the Black Sea, allowing the free flow of shipping, though the area has not been the location of intense military operations in recent months and it was not clear if the talks would swiftly result in a new agreement or if they were designed to give the

sides cover to discuss a wider agenda. "This is primarily about the safety of navigation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, noting that a 2022 agreement on Black Sea shipping had failed to deliver what it had promised to Moscow.

The focus on the Black Sea is a much narrower one than a broad 30-day ceasefire agreement that the US proposed in Saudi Arabia earlier this month, an indication that Russia may still be some way from

agreeing to any significant pause in fighting.

Ukraine has inflicted significant damage on Russia's Black Sea Fleet since 2022, forcing Moscow to move some vessels out of its base in Crimea.

Despite Russian attacks on its ports, Ukraine has been able to export grain, iron ore and other commodities via the Black Sea from its three main seaports in its Odesa region at levels similar to those before the war.

## China denies Philippines former president Duterte sought asylum

**Beijing:** China Monday said it had not received any application for asylum from Philippines' former president Rodrigo Duterte, regarded as a close ally of Beijing, who was arrested after his visit to Hong Kong. Duterte was arrested March 11 at Manila's main airport and deported to The Hague for trial by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over the allegations of serious human rights violations, including sanctioning the killings of drug dealers as part of his war against drugs. The Chinese government had never received any so-called asylum application from Duterte or his family.

## Venezuela receives hundreds of deported migrants from US

**Caracas:** A group of 199 Venezuelan migrants deported from the United States arrived Monday after the two countries reached an agreement to restart flights, Venezuelan Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said. A diplomatic spat last week inflamed already tense relations as the United States accused Venezuela of refusing to accept deportations flights, while Caracas accused Washington of blocking them. As that unfolded, a plane-load of deported Venezuelans had arrived from Mexico.

### UNREST OVER ISTANBUL MAYOR'S ARREST

## Turkey detains more than 1,000 in protests



REUTERS

**Ankara, March 24:** Turkish authorities have detained 1,133 people across Turkey since the start of protests five days ago against the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said Monday.

The detention last Wednesday of Imamoglu, President Tayyip Erdogan's main political rival, has triggered the biggest street protests in Turkey in more than a decade. A court jailed him Sunday, pending trial, on corruption charges that he denies.

Despite bans on street gatherings in many cities, the mostly peaceful anti-government demonstrations continued for a fifth consecutive night Sunday, with hundreds of thousands taking part. Yerlikaya said 123 police officers had been injured during the protests so far, adding that the government would not allow "the terrorising of the streets".

Those detained in-

- Turkey rocked by street protests over jailing of Istanbul mayor
- Mayor Imamoglu is President Erdogan's main political rival
- Interior minister says 123 police officers hurt in protests
- Detained people include nine journalists

clude nine journalists who covered overnight protests in several cities, the Journalists' Union of Turkey said Monday.

It was not immediately clear why the journalists were detained. An Agence France Presse (AFP) staff photographer is among the detained journalists, the union said in a post on X.

Imamoglu's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) has been calling for protests against the court decision to arrest the mayor, which they label as politicised and undemocratic.

Imamoglu has denied the charges he faces as "unimaginable accusations and slanders" and has also called for nationwide protests.

## Mix of science, tradition helps restore relics in China's Forbidden City

About 150 workers on the team fuse scientific analysis and traditional techniques to clean, patch up and otherwise revive the more than 1.8 million relics in the museum's collection

ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Beijing, March 24:** It's highly technical work in what looks more like a lab than a museum: A fragment of a glazed roof tile from Beijing's Forbidden City is analysed in a state-of-the-art X-ray diffraction machine that produces images, which are then projected onto computer screens.

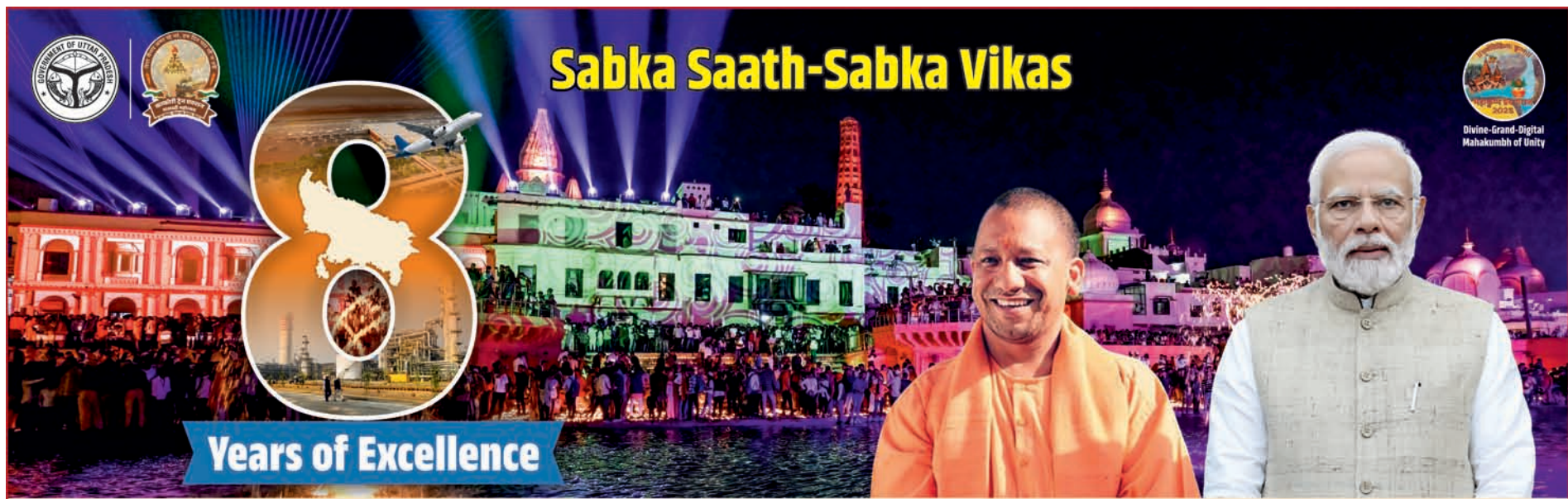
The fragment being examined has a dark area on its surface that restorers want to understand. Their objective is to better preserve the artifacts at the sprawling imperial palace, the former home of China's emperors and its seat of power for hundreds of years.

"We want to learn what the black material is," said Kang Baoqiang, one of the restorers at the complex, today a museum

that attracts tourists from all over the world. "Whether it's atmospheric sediment or the result of substantial change from within."

About 150 workers on the team fuse scientific analysis and traditional techniques to clean, patch up and otherwise revive the more than 1.8 million relics in the museum's collection. They include scroll paintings, calligraphy, bronzes, ceramics — and, somewhat unexpectedly, ornate antique clocks that were gifted to emperors by early European visitors.

Down the hall from the X-ray room, two other restorers patch up holes on a panel of patterned green silk with the Chinese character for "longevity" sewn into it, carefully adding color in a process called "in-painting."



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Uttar Pradesh No. 1

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- 9.57 Crore individuals with Jan Dhan bank accounts
- Gharauni certificates to 1 Crore families

### Nurturing Farmers, Cultivating Prosperity

- Inaugural Cabinet's First Decision: ₹36,359 Crore crop loan waiver, 94 Lakh farmers benefitted
- Foodgrain Production: Increased from 557.46 Lakh MT in 2016-17 to 668.39 Lakh MT (20% rise) in 2023-24
- Irrigation Capacity: Increased from 82.58 Lakh hectares in 2017 to 131 Lakh hectares, 976 projects completed
- Record Sugarcane Payment: ₹2.80 Lakh Crore paid since 2017, which is ₹66,000 Crore more than the total payments made in the last 22 years
- Sugar Mills: 3 new sugar mills, 6 mills revamped and expansion of 38 sugar mills
- Grain Procurement: Middlemen removed, ₹43,424 Crore disbursed for wheat procurement and ₹88,746 Crore for paddy procurement
- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana : ₹80,000 Crore+ transferred to 2.86 Crore farmers
- 73,924 solar pumps installed under PM KUSUM Yojana

### Empowering Women, Elevating Nation

- 20% reservation for women in police force with 1.38 Lakh+ women secured Govt. jobs
- 1 Crore+ women employed through 10 Lakh+ self-help groups
- Women Workforce: Increased from 14.2% in 2017 to 35.1%
- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana: Free LPG connections to 1.86 Crore families, along with free LPG cylinder refills during Holi and Diwali
- Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana : 22.11 Lakh girls benefitted
- Nirashrit Mahila Pension Yojana : 33.55 Lakh women benefitted
- Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana : 4.22 Lakh couples tied the knot, financial assistance increased from ₹51,000 to ₹1 Lakh
- Increase in honorarium for Anganwadi workers and helpers, 3.73 Lakh women benefitted
- B.C. Sakhi: 39,000+ women facilitated transactions worth ₹31,626 Crore, earned ₹85.81 Crore dividends

### Creating Employment, Inspiring Youth

- Per capita income increased from ₹46,000 in 2017 to ₹1,24,000 in 2024
- Unemployment rate: 18% youth unemployed in 2016, now reduced to 3% in 2024
- Fair and transparent recruitment process: 8.5 Lakh+ government jobs, 3.75 Lakh+ contract jobs
- 2 Crore+ jobs in private sector and MSMEs, 2.54 Lakh+ jobs through ODOP scheme
- Employment to 2.27 Lakh+ youth under Mukhyamantri Yuva Swarozgar Yojana
- Aim to train 10 Lakh new entrepreneurs under Mukhyamantri Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan

### Driving Progress through Inclusive Growth

- 3,213 Annapurna Bhawans constructed, while work underway on 1,630 bhawans
- ₹708.49 Crore scholarships to 32,49,854 Scheduled Caste (Pre-Matric) students
- ₹9,662.25 Crore scholarships to 89,31,203 Scheduled Caste (Post-Matric) students
- ₹1,28,627.48 Crore scholarships to 62,79,519 Backward Class (Pre-Matric) students
- ₹7,62,524.03 Crore scholarships to 1,31,05,263 Backward Class (Post-Matric) students
- ₹221.95 Crore scholarships to 8,58,750 General Category (Pre-Matric) students
- ₹5,499.86 Crore scholarships to 48,13,347 General Category (Post-Matric) students

### Building a Healthier Future

- Ayushman Bharat : Free treatment up to ₹5 lakh for 9 crore people
- 80 medical colleges operational, MBBS seats increased by 11,300
- AIIMS in Gorakhpur and Raebareilly, and Atal Medical University in Lucknow
- Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath AYUSH University in Gorakhpur
- 22,681 Arogya Mandirs



### Uttar Pradesh on the Fast Track to Development

- 6 expressways operational, 11 under construction, Uttar Pradesh will account for 55% of the country's expressway network upon completion of Ganga Expressway
- Expressway length increased by 491 kilometers till 2017 to 1,225 kilometers by 2024
- 32,000 kilometers+ new roads constructed, 25,000 kilometers of roads widened/strengthened
- Number of Airports increased from four till 2017 to 21 Airports till 2024, including 5 international airports
- India's largest Jewar Airport nearly complete, set to become the nation's biggest air cargo hub
- Inland waterway operational from Haldia to Varanasi, expansion work ongoing from Prayagraj-Ayodhya

### Zero Tolerance towards Crime

- Prior to 2017: Mafia and criminals unchecked, Post 2017: Rule of law, fear-free environment
- As per NCRB data, 84.41% reduction in dacoity, 77.43% reduction in robbery, 41.01% reduction in murder, 66.40% reduction in rioting, 54.72% reduction in abductions for ransom, 17.08% reduction in dowry deaths and 26.15% rape cases reduced
- 79,984 criminals booked under the Gangster Act, action taken against 930 offenders charged under NSA
- Seizure of nearly ₹3,000 crores worth property from mafia's illegal occupations, facilitating housing for the poor
- 222 notorious criminals killed in encounters, and 28,000+ wanted criminals sent to jail
- Police Commissionerate system implemented in 7 metropolitan cities, 18 Anti-Terrorism Squad units established
- 6 Special Security Force units formed, 3 Women PAC battalions set up
- Cyber police stations established in all districts, 11 Lakh+ CCTV cameras installed
- Response time of 112 Police Control reduced from 25.42 minutes in 2017 to just 7.24 minutes in 2024

### Spiritual & Cultural Development

- 66.30 Crore devotees took the holy dip at Mahakumbh 2025
- Mahakumbh 2025 led to ₹3.50 Lakh Crore+ boost to Uttar Pradesh's economy
- Growth in tourism with the development of 6 spiritual corridors
- Divine and grand construction of Prabhu Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya
- Development of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor in Varanasi
- Grand and divine Deepotsav in Ayodhya, Dev Deepawali in Kashi

### Ensuring Basic Amenities, Enhancing Lives

- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana : Free ration to 15 Crore individuals
- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana : 56 Lakh+ houses constructed
- PM SVANidhi Yojana : ₹3000 Crore+ loan to 1,80,000+ street vendors
- Har Ghar Jal Yojana : Access to potable tap water provided to 2.36 Crore+ families
- MGNREGA : Leads in providing 100 days of employment by generating 200 Crore mandays

### Nurturing Young Minds

- Construction of Atal Residential Schools in 18 divisional headquarters
- CM Model Composite Schools in 57 districts
- State Universities operational in Aligarh, Azamgarh, Saharanpur, Mirzapur, Balrampur, and Moradabad
- Dr. Rajendra Prasad National Law University in Prayagraj
- Sainik School, Forestry College, and NCC Training Academy in Gorakhpur
- Veterinary Science Colleges in Gorakhpur and Chandauli

# Get educated & take benefits: Prez to tribals

AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar/Nayagarh, March 24:** President Droupadi Murmu Monday called upon tribal men and women to take benefits of various welfare schemes meant for them, emphasising that this would be possible if they are educated.



hav before taking the form of Lord Jagannath.

Beginning her speech by chanting "Jai Jagannath, Jai Nilamadhav and Biswabasu Zindabad", the President said a nature-friendly lifestyle is a characteristic of Indian culture, and it is also an integral part of tribal life.

"Tribal brothers and sisters worship forests and trees as gods. According to tribal beliefs, the souls of their ancestors re-

side in the forest. This belief is a great mantra of forest protection," she said. Noting that the government is implementing various schemes for empowerment of tribal people and preserving and promoting their art and culture, the President urged them to be aware of the welfare schemes and take benefit of them.

"The government schemes would be successful only with people's cooperation and participation. If you (tribals) are not aware of the schemes, you cannot get the benefits. And you can be aware of the schemes if educated. Therefore, I urge you to be educated and aware," Murmu said to the community to which she belonged. Spellbound by the natural beauty of Kantilo

area in Nayagarh district with hills and rivers, she said it has the potential to become a popular tourist destination.

She expressed confidence that the development of infrastructure in the area will attract tourists and pilgrims. It will also boost the economy of the area, Murmu said urging all to contribute to development of the place and area. "Everyone should come forward to shape the possibilities of Nayagarh in various fields like agriculture, handicrafts, tourism and others," Murmu said and thanked Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, who while addressing the gathering earlier said his government would take all steps for the development of Kantilo.

# Act on Shah Commission report, Swain tells govt

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Claiming that the mining syndicate has accumulated enormous wealth, and now exerting control over Odisha's political spectrum, senior BJD MLA Ranendra Pratap Swain urged Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi-led state government to act on the Justice MB Shah Commission recommendations.

"The Chief Minister had pledged to act on the Justice Shah Commission report on illegal mining by stating, 'Jails ready for those who looted minerals'. However, no concrete action has been taken," Swain alleged.



He also demanded the government to immediately stop mineral auctions till the PESA Act is fully implemented in order to stop the unchecked exploitation of mineral resources in Odisha.

Side by side, Swain said the mines should be transferred to OMC for state-controlled resource management while the government should implement the Supreme Court judgement to impose cess and taxes on all mineral and mineral-bearing land.

"The state should revise the long-term mineral linkage policy to reflect fair market prices for minerals extracted in the state and introduce a new Bill in the Assembly in place of ORISED (Odisha Rural Infrastructure and Socio-Economic Development) Act, 2004," he said.

To drive home his claims, Swain said despite contributing nearly 50 per cent to India's national mineral wealth, Odisha continues to struggle with extreme poverty, large-scale migration and unemployment. "State's debt burden has surged to Rs 1.40 lakh crore, while min-

ing operators are handed undue profits exceeding Rs 2 lakh crore. The unchecked exploitation of mineral resources has caused severe environmental degradation, drying up rivers, destroying ecosystems, and pushing millions into distress," the BJD MLA said in demand discussion on Steel and Mines department, calling for urgent action from the government 'to protect its resources and people'.

He said Odisha earns approximately Rs 175 per tonne from bauxite, while global prices are Rs 7,000 per tonne. "Imposing a 50 per cent cess on the global price could yield Rs 3,500 per tonne, which is 20 times more than current earn. Odisha loses Rs 5,400 crore per year due to this undervaluation," Swain said.

While the state produces 240 million tonne coal annually, it consumes only 20 million tonne. "Excess coal production leads to environmental de-

struction, river depletion, and increased heatwaves," he said, adding, "Odisha sells coal at Rs 900-3,500 per tonne, while imported coal of the same grade is priced at Rs 13,000 per tonne."

Such undervalued pricing has benefitted private companies at the cost of the state, he pointed out. While citing the example of three more mineral products, Swain said, "There are many more, and if sold at proper market prices, they will together generate lakhs of crores in additional revenue for the state."

Advocating strongly for the introduction of a new Bill by doing away with the ORISED Act, 2004 and its Rules 2005, which has so far been used by the government to deny implementation of Supreme Court's judgements of July 25 and August 14, 2024, Swain said the state is losing Rs 2 lakh crore every year for government's inaction.

The BJD legislator said the state government is auctioning mineral blocks during a recession in the metal market which will lead to severe revenue losses. "Instead of auctions, the state should allocate these blocks to Odisha Mining Corporation (OMC) to ensure better revenue generation and control over resources," he said.

# Semiconductor production likely by Dec

PNN & AGENCIES

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** The local industry is expected to produce semiconductors by the end of December this year, Electronics and IT Minister Mukesh Mahaling told the Assembly Monday.

Responding to a query, Mahaling said the government has provided 20,000 sq-foot land to RIR Power Electronics to set up a unit at EMC Park, Infovalley, in Bhubaneswar.

It is expected that the facility will start producing semiconductor products by the end of December this year, the minister said. Several MoUs were also signed with Singapore-based firms for development of the semiconductor ecosystem in Odisha, he added.

Mahaling further informed that about 300 IT companies have set up their units in Odisha between 1997 and 2024.

The state government has made a budgetary provision of

## 120 govt officials dismissed in 5 yrs

The state government has dismissed 120 employees and given compulsory retirement to 39 others over the past five years for corruption, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi told the Assembly Monday.

In a written reply to a query from BJD legislator Dhruba Charan Sahoo, the CM said, "In all, 120 government employees have been dismissed, while another 39 officials were forced to take compulsory retirement for indulging in corruption and acquiring disproportionate assets between 2020 and 2024."

The state government has seized assets worth Rs 59.47 crore from these public servants, Majhi, who also holds the Home portfolio, said.

Giving a year-wise breakdown, Majhi said 31 government officials were dismissed in 2023, 30 in 2024, 27 in 2020 and 16 each in 2021 and 2022.

He said 23 officials were given premature retirement in 2021, 13 in 2022 and one each in 2020, 2023 and 2024.

Rs 100 crore for development of eight new Software Technology Parks of India (STPIs) while data centres will be set up in Keonjhar and Koraput districts.

Besides, the state govern-

ment has initiated plans to set up a Cable Landing Station (CLS) in Puri. A detailed project report (DPR) is being prepared for the project, he said.

A CLS, also known as a sub-

## 47 DROWNING CASES

Forty seven persons died due to drowning in sea at different beaches of the state in the last five years, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi informed the Assembly Monday.



Majhi said this in a written reply to a question of BJP legislator Om Prakash Mishra.

For the safety of tourists, regular patrolling is being conducted on various sea beaches of the state, he said.

Deep and vulnerable places along the coast have been identified and awareness is being created to appeal to people not to take bath at such beaches, Majhi said.


Besides, Fire Services personnel and home guards along with necessary equipment have been deployed for quick rescue of people while drowning, he added.

marine cable landing station, is a coastal facility where under-sea fibre optic cables carrying international telecommunications and internet traffic connect land-based networks.





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
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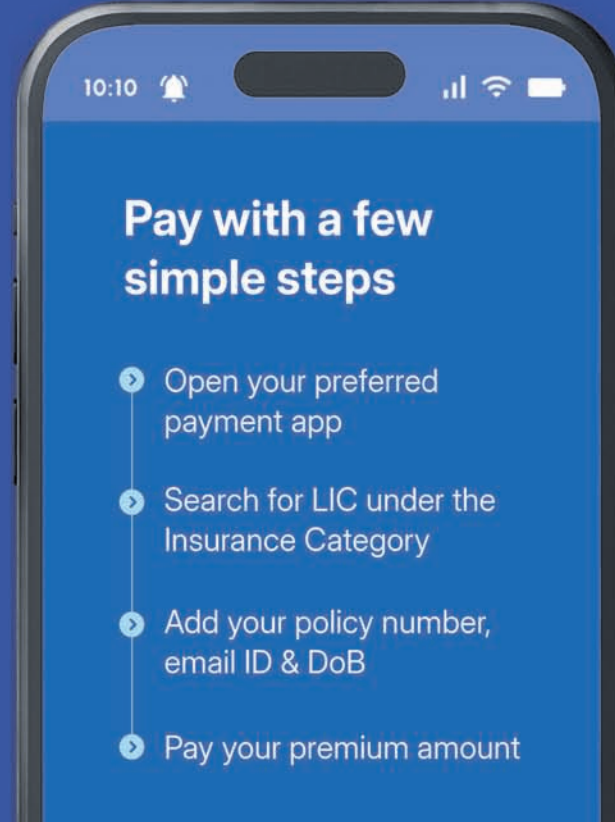
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# Govt signs MoUs to boost farming, empower women

The initiative focuses on enhancing farming infrastructure, increasing market access, and promoting sustainable rural growth



between the Directorate of Horticulture, DA&FE, Mission Shakti, and Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) for Strengthening Livelihoods of women self-help group (WSHG) members through promotion of Agricultural Production Clusters (APCs).

This initiative aims to promote agricultural production clusters in tribal and backward regions, enabling WSHG members to adopt better farming practices, access modern infrastructure, and engage in market-driven production, ensuring sustainable income growth.

The MoUs were signed in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister and Agriculture Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo, Deputy Chief Minister and Mission Shakti Minister Pravat Parida, and Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra. Senior officials, including Agriculture principal secretary Arabinda Kumar Padhee, also attended the event.

This integrated approach aims to create a robust livelihood infrastructure for farmers, ensuring higher productivity and improved earnings for rural women farmers, Padhee stated.

ENHANCES POST-HARVEST MANAGEMENT TO REDUCE WASTAGE AND IMPROVE EFFICIENCY  
SUPPORTS SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS WITH BETTER PRICING AND MARKET LINKAGES  
THE APC INITIATIVE, WITH A ₹6,205.8 LAKH BUDGET, TO SUPPORT 695 PRODUCER GROUPS AND 27 PRODUCER COMPANIES

Dhenkanal. The initiative seeks to streamline post-harvest services by ensuring efficient handling of agricultural produce, reducing wastage, and creating direct market linkages.

Under this partnership, fruits and vegetables will be procured from local farmers, farmer cooperatives, and Producer Organisations at fair prices, benefiting small and marginal farmers in the region.

The second MoU was signed between the Directorate of Horticulture, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment (DA&FE), Dhenkanal Fruits and Vegetables Marketing Company Ltd (DFVMCL), and M/S Cold Chain Solutions.

POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** The state government took a major step towards strengthening the agricultural sector and empowering women farmers by signing two crucial Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) at Lok Seva Bhawan here Monday.

The agreements aim to enhance post-harvest management, improve market access, and uplift rural women through sustainable agricultural practices.

The first MoU was signed between the Directorate of Horticulture, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment (DA&FE), Dhenkanal Fruits and Vegetables Marketing Company Ltd (DFVMCL), and M/S Cold Chain Solutions.

This agreement focuses on the operation, maintenance & management of the Integrated Pack House at Govindpur,



CREATING AWARENESS: Students from DRIEMS Institute of Health Sciences and Hospital, along with School of Nursing, take out an awareness rally at Tangi in Cuttack, Monday to mark World TB Day

# Talk on Mahatab's legacy, Odisha's renaissance

RESHMI YADAV, OP

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** The National Archives of India, Eastern Branch, Bhubaneswar, hosted its 12th Monthly Talk Programme Monday, focusing on Odisha's Cultural Renaissance and the contributions of former chief minister Dr Harekrushna Mahatab. The event was held on behalf of the Director General of Archives, New Delhi.

Eminent writer, researcher, and former Utkal University professor Bijaya Kumar Satpathy delivered the keynote lecture, highlighting Maha-



tab's pivotal role in shaping Odisha's cultural and literary landscape before and after independence.

"Dr Mahatab was a visionary leader, the architect of modern Odisha, and a catalyst for the state's cultural resurgence. Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, his influence on Odia literature, politics, and governance

remains unparalleled," Satpathy noted.

The session was chaired by assistant director of Archives, Satya Narayan Mishra, who emphasised Mahatab's multifaceted legacy. "Known as Utkal Keshari, he was not only a freedom fighter and politician but also a literary figure, journalist, and administrator

of great vision," Mishra said, adding that Mahatab's impact is globally recognised.

Encouraging further research into Mahatab's life, Mishra underscored the National Archives' role in preserving historical facts. "Many aspects of his life remain unexplored, and deeper research could yield invaluable insights," he added.

The event saw active participation from researchers, historians, intellectuals, faculty members, and students, who engaged in discussions on the importance of archival resources in historical studies.

## No power tariff hike for '25-26

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha Electricity Regulatory Commission (OERC) on Monday announced that there will be no increase in power tariffs for the 2025-26 fiscal, marking the fourth consecutive year without a hike. OERC Secretary and Director (Regulatory Affairs) Priyabrata Patnaik stated that the retail supply tariff for 2025-26 will remain unchanged from 2024-25. Additionally, the commission has decided to waive the ₹60 monthly charge for smart meters for consumers with a connected load of up to 2 kilowatts, benefiting over 80 lakh consumers across the state.

## CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an Affidavit Sl. No.-04/1 sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Kesinga, Dist.-Kalahandi on Dt.18.03.2025, Judhistir Majhi, At/PO-Kantesir, PS-Kesinga, Dist.-Kalahandi (Odisha) declare that I have changed my minor son's name from Ayushman Majhi to Lalatendu Majhi. Henceforth he will be known as Lalatendu Majhi for all purpose.

By virtue of an affidavit before Notary Public, Cuttack on 27th January, 2025 I, Smt. Jyotshna Mayee Mishra, Daughter of Late Ananta Chandra Mishra and Wife of Kamalakanta Acharya, House No. P/2 Rajabagicha Labour Colony, P.O.-Telengabazar, PS-Badambadi, Cuttack that now onwards I shall be known as Jyotshnamayee Mishra for all future purposes.

## WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY CELEBRATION

# 'Consumer awareness key to preventing fraud'

The event emphasised the need for stronger consumer protection, stricter enforcement against fraud, and greater awareness to help consumers make informed choices



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** Raising awareness among consumers is crucial to preventing fraudulent practices, said Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare Minister Krushna Chandra Patra Monday. "We are all consumers, and at times, we become victims of fraud. If consumers are well-informed, the chances of falling prey to

deception can be significantly reduced. To enhance awareness, we will set up consumer protection camps in every district," he stated.

He was speaking at the state-level celebration of World Consumer Rights Day 2025, organised by the Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare depart-

ment. The event, themed "A Just Transition to Sustainable Lifestyle," focused on strengthening consumer protection mechanisms and promoting responsible consumption.

Patra assured that the government is committed to addressing consumer grievances through strict enforcement and

swift action. The event was attended by Khurda District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission President Krushna Chandra Rath, Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) Bhubaneswar Branch Head AK Purohit, and other dignitaries. On the occasion, the department released its February News Letter and felicitated winners of English and Odia debate competitions held for school students.

Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh highlighted the evolving market landscape, stressing the importance of consumer awareness. "As markets evolve, consumers must stay informed about their rights and responsibilities to make informed choices," he said.

The event reinforced Odisha's commitment to safeguarding consumer rights and ensuring a fair marketplace.

# 'Blocking vehicles carrying relief materials inhuman'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** A day after his cavalcade was pelted with stones during a visit to the hailstorm-hit Mayurbhanj district, Disaster Management Minister Suresh Pujari Monday termed this act as "inhuman" and blamed the opposition parties for it. Pujari said this after briefing the Assembly about the situation in Mayurbhanj district where the hailstorm and rain caused massive damage to houses and crops last week in 13 blocks.

"From the helipad till the worst affected villages under Bisoil block, I came across several road blockades obviously done at the instigation of the opposition party. They not only obstructed my road but also did not allow vehicles carrying relief materials. This is inhu-

man," Pujari told reporters at a press conference held on the Assembly premises.

The minister faced the ire of the local people in Mayurbhanj district Sunday and stones were hurled at his cavalcade, accusing him of visiting the area late.

The calamity struck on the night of March 20, while the minister went there March 23. One constable was injured in the stone pelting, a police officer said.

However, the minister said, officials and local MLAs were in the field and he could not reach the affected village March 22 (Saturday) due to rain.

Coming down heavily on the opposition BJD and the Congress over their behaviour in the Assembly, the minister said, "Odisha has witnessed several natural calamities and people cutting across party



THE STORM DAMAGED 3,538 HOUSES AND 442 HECTARES OF FARMLAND ACROSS 13 BLOCKS IN MAYURBHANJ

THE STATE GOVERNMENT SANCTIONED FUNDS FOR RELIEF AND RESTORATION, ADDRESSING DAMAGE ACROSS 51 VILLAGES, AFFECTING 8,547 PEOPLE

lines join hands to help the affected people. But in Mayrbhanj, they (the opposition) engineered road blockades to prevent relief vehicles move to the affected areas. This is not acceptable."

Pujari, however, said that he was not disturbed over the road blockade. "Rather, I got the opportunity to meet more people and address their issues. It would have been better if they

could support the administration in the relief and rehabilitation works," he said.

While briefing the House, Pujari said that the state government has sanctioned Rs 20.38 crore towards compensation on the basis of the provisional assessment report received from the district.

"An assistance package of Rs 20.38 crore has been provided for undertaking restoration

work in the affected areas on a war footing," Pujari said.

He said that the nor'wester coupled with hailstorms caused major destruction across the Mayurbhanj district. The calamity has ravaged 51 villages spanning 13 blocks, affecting 8,547 residents.

The minister said the destruction of approximately 3,538 houses and extensive damage to around 442 hectares of crucial agricultural and horticultural terrain had been reported in the provisional assessment report.

Pujari said massive damage was caused in some of areas, including Bangiriposi and Bisoil blocks of Mayurbhanj.

He along with Housing and Urban Development Minister KC Mahapatra visited the affected areas in Mayurbhanj district Sunday to take stock of the situation.

# CSIR-IMMT, Saskatchewan varsity partner on minerals



POST NEWS NETWORK

**Bhubaneswar, March 24:** A high-level delegation from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada, visited the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research - Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) to explore collaboration in critical minerals research.

Led by dean of the College of Engineering, Michael Patrick Bradley, the delegation included senior faculty members and an international partnerships specialist. Harish Vaidyanathan, representing the Government of Saskatchewan, also accompanied the team.

During their visit, the delegation toured CSIR-IMMT's advanced research facilities and took part in a tree plantation drive. CSIR-IMMT director Ramanuj Narayan held in-depth discussions with the visitors, outlining key areas for collaboration under a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The visit was coordinated by chief scientist and head of the Hydro, Bio, and Electrometallurgy department, Kalli Sanjay, along with Mineral Processing department head PC Beuria.

Saskatchewan, home to 27 of the world's 34 critical minerals, is a leader in global mining investments.

WEATHER table with columns for Max Temp, Min Temp, Humidity, Rainfall, and Forecast.

MARKET WATCH table with columns for INDEX, VARIATION, and various market indices like SENSEX, NIFTY, DOLLAR, EURO, GOLD, SILVER.

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Man gets life term for killing sexagenarian

Berhampur: Ganjam District and Sessions Judge Rupashree Chaudhary Monday convicted a man for killing 67-year-old Ranka Sethi and sentenced him to life imprisonment. Sethi was murdered December 11, 2023, in the second lane of Gandhinagar area under the jurisdiction of Town police station. The incident stemmed from a petty altercation, which enraged the accused identified as Harihar Sahu of Nimakhandi Bada Sahi, who fatally stabbed Ranka with a knife in the early hours of the day. Acting on a complaint, Town police registered a case. The then Sub-Inspector and investigating officer Silu Dhala conducted the probe, arrested the accused, and forwarded him to court. During the trial, eyewitness testimonies and the chargesheet submitted by the police played a crucial role in the conviction, Public Prosecutor Trilochan Parida said.

Incomplete STPI centre stalls local job growth in Rourkela



POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, March 24: The lack of local employment opportunities in Rourkela continues to force skilled graduates of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) and several private engineering and vocational colleges here to seek jobs outside Odisha.

A proposed incubation centre at the Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) Rourkela campus was expected to boost local employment; but its construction remains unfinished. Planned in 2023 at an estimated cost of ₹20 crore, the 40,000 sq ft facility was designed to attract domestic and international companies and thereby, generate jobs in the region. However, prolonged delays in its completion have hindered progress, rais-

ing concerns among industry experts and job seekers alike.

Currently, seven small IT firms operate from STPI Rourkela in Sector 5, but the city's infrastructure has failed to attract major multinational corporations such as Infosys, Deloitte, TCS, Accenture, Cognizant, and Wipro. These companies have cited inadequate infrastructure and lack of large-scale enterprise support as key reasons for not investing in the region.

STPI Bhubaneswar Director Surya Kumar Pattnayak said the incubation centre, once made operational, could significantly improve employment prospects by supporting start-ups, fostering innovation, and attracting investors. However, he acknowledged that key steps, such as marketing the facility

and formally inviting businesses to set up operations, remain unaddressed. Without proactive efforts to promote the centre, its impact on the local job market may be limited.

Experts believe that establishing state-backed enterprise hubs and skill development centres could help retain talent. These initiatives could provide mentorship, networking opportunities, high-speed internet, and uninterrupted electricity—critical resources for start-ups and emerging businesses. Without such infrastructure, thousands of graduates from Rourkela and western Odisha continue to migrate to cities such as Hyderabad, Bangalore, Delhi, and Kolkata, or even abroad in search of better job prospects.

The completion of the STPI incubation centre's construction is now targeted for the second half of the year, though the repeated delays have cast doubt on whether it will fulfil its intended role in strengthening the region's employment landscape. Local industry leaders have urged authorities to expedite construction and ensure the facility becomes a driving force for job creation in Rourkela.

Probe on as 2 girls die after consuming 'sattu'



POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, March 24: A day after two young girls died from suspected food poisoning after eating special 'sattu' supplied by the local Anganwadi centre, the district administration launched a probe into the incident Monday.

The special 'sattu' supplied by the local Anganwadi Centre is a preparation meant to be distributed among underweight babies, officials said Monday.

The tragic incident happened Sunday at Ramgiri village under R Udayagiri block. The two deceased girls were identified as Tulasi Badamundi, 6, and Gunabati Badamundi, 3, in the village. Both the deceased were aunt and niece in relationship. The head of the family Arjun, 47, and his elder daughter, 13, were also admitted to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur reportedly after consuming the 'sattu'.

However, the District Social Welfare Officer Manorama Devi rejected the allegation of the deaths due to consuming 'sattu' supplied by the Anganwadi centre. On the other hand, a team led by Sub-Collector Anup Panda has been formed by the district administration to conduct a probe and ascertain the veracity of the claims. The team accompanied by child development, food security and police officials reached the spot Monday and launched a probe

into the incident.

While the 'sattu' is supplied every month to households having children, suspicions have aroused why only one family encountered the problem, and others did not. Panda said that the truth can be ascertained only after the probe gets completed.

Meanwhile, Arjun's son Siddhant said the 'sattu' they had received from the Anganwadi centre was served to them after it was prepared by his aunt. Ramgiri's naib sarpanch Raju Majhi said that the leftover sattu had been dumped in a pit. It was collected and handed over to the police, he said.

The bag of 'sattu' was recovered from the house of the deceased and sent for tests, officials said. An ASHA worker, who brought the deceased to the hospital, said they complained of stomach pain and vomited.

District Collector Bijay Kumar Dash stated that the probe is centred on the post-mortem report, viscera report and the sattu samples. The truth will be ascertained only after completion of the probe, he added.

Anganwadi workers have been asked not to distribute the 'sattu' till the test results arrive, officials said.

Describing the incident as "highly shocking and unfortunate", opposition BJD demanded resignation of the state's Women and Child Development (WCD) minister, owning moral responsibility.

Man duped of ₹11 lakh by cybercriminals

POST NEWS NETWORK

Berhampur, March 24: Cybercriminals defrauded a man of ₹11 lakh in Berhampur on the pretext of securing a job for him at a US-based company, police said.

The victim, a 44-year-old resident of Raghupatinagar under Bada Bazar police limits in the Silk City, was deceived by two cyber fraudsters who claimed the money was needed for US visa, flight tickets, and taxes.

According to police, the victim received a message on his phone a few days ago, advertising opportunities for high-paying jobs in the US. The message urged him to call a provided phone number or click on a link for further details.



After calling the number, he spoke with a man who identified himself as Bishnu Prasad Thakur, a human resources officer at Kinetic Energy Company in the US. Thakur informed him that large sums of money were required for visa processing, flight bookings, and tax payments. He was also instructed to contact another company official.

The victim remained in touch with the two fraudsters and subsequently transferred ₹10.97 lakh to various bank accounts. His suspicion grew when the fraudsters repeatedly pressured him for more money. After verifying their claims through other sources, he realised he had been scammed and filed a complaint at the police station. The investigation is ongoing.

Man dies shortly after dad's death

Keonjhar: A 51-year-old man died shortly after hearing about his father's death at Anandeshwar Sahi in Ward No-5 under Anandapur police station limits in Keonjhar district Monday. The deceased father-son duo was identified as Jatia Sahu, 85, a retired soldier of Indian Army and his son Rajesh Kumar Sahu, 51. The double tragedy has cast a shadow of grief over Anandapur area. Sources said that Jatia Sahu had been ill for a few months and passed away Monday afternoon. On being informed about his father's death, Rajesh collapsed. Family members immediately took him to Anandapur Sub-Divisional Hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead.

4 POACHERS ARRESTED

POST NEWS NETWORK

Baripada, March 24: A gunfight erupted between poachers and Forest officials during a joint raid in the southern division of the Similipal Tiger Reserve in Mayurbhanj district. The confrontation escalated as the poachers opened fire at the Forest officials. The Forest personnel narrowly escaped harm, arrested four suspects and presented them in court Monday.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Gansa Singh, 22, Barju Singh, 19, Muna Singh Bankhira, 26, and Kartik Singh Bankhira, 25 - all residents of Ashwakuti Hudisahi village under Sharata police jurisdiction. The Forest department has also seized four country-made guns, ammunition, and hunting equipment from them. Additionally, another case under the Arms Act will be registered against the accused, with Kaptipada police being informed of the developments.

Notably, several poachers had entered the Manbhanga forest beat inside Similipal's core zone under the pretext



of a picnic. During routine patrolling, Forest officials attempted to intercept them, leading to a confrontation as the poachers tried to flee. Some of them opened fire on the officials using two country-made firearms. However, the Forest personnel managed to subdue and capture one of the accused, who later revealed details about the others involved.

Following this, a joint team comprising members of the Special Tiger Protection Force, Podadiha range personnel, and Baripada forest division officials conducted an operation late Sunday night. They successfully apprehended three poachers, although two managed to escape.

Toddler drowns in water-filled bucket

POST NEWS NETWORK

Patana, March 24: An 18-month-old baby boy drowned in a water-filled bucket at Silida village under Turumunga police limits in Keonjhar district Monday. The deceased child was identified as Abhijit Behera, son of Jiten Behera from Behera Sahi in the village.

Family members and villagers rushed him to the Patana CHC where the doctors pronounced him dead. The medical officer advised them to file a report at the local police station. However, the family members and villagers refused to allow a post-mortem and forcibly took the body back to the village. The medical officer lodged a complaint following which Turumunga IIC and police officials reached the spot and launched an investigation.

87 cattle rescued; 7 smugglers arrested

Bhubaneswar: Police arrested seven people for their alleged involvement in cattle smuggling and seized 87 animals from their possession in two north Odisha districts, officials said. A statement issued by the DIG (Eastern Range) said a special drive against illegal cattle transportation was conducted Sunday evening. "The drive, carried out in accordance with laws governing cattle transportation, yielded impressive results," it said. "The police teams seized 87 cattle being smuggled in six vehicles and seven cases have been registered in this connection. While 12 cattle were seized in Balasore district, 75 others were recovered in Mayurbhanj," the statement said. The recovery and arrests come close on the heels of a clash that had broken out in Balasore district between activists of an outfit and alleged cow smugglers March 19. On March 11, at least two suspected cattle smugglers were injured in an encounter with police in Sambalpur.

Decomposed body of 17-year-old girl found; kin fear rape, murder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambalpur, March 24: The decomposed body of a 17-year-old girl, who was missing since March 20, was found in a forest in Sambalpur district, with her family alleging she was raped and murdered.

One person has been arrested on the charge of murdering the girl.

The body of the girl, who had eloped with a male friend along with ₹20,000 in cash from her house in Bargarh district, was found in a jungle in Hiraakud area in adjoining Sambalpur.

The girl's family had lodged a missing complaint with Bargarh Town police after failing to trace her.

During the investigation, police tracked her mobile phone to the forest, located around 1km from Burla, a police officer said.

Upon reaching the spot, police found her body with multiple injuries, suggesting a brutal attack, the officer said.

The victim had severe cut injuries on her head, face, neck, and hands, while her face was partially mutilated. The body was already in an advanced stage of decomposition, indicating that she was likely killed on the day she went missing, the officer said.

The officer said it was not yet ascertained whether she was raped and police were waiting for the post-mortem examination. The girl's family members, however, alleged she was murdered after being raped. ASP Indurekha Paschima Kabat said that police have arrested a 21-year-old youth on the charge of murdering the girl.

On the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim's family, an investigation was launched and with the help of CCTV footage, it was found that she was taken away from her home on a motorcycle. Subsequently, her body was found Sunday. The prime accused has been arrested and produced before a court after medical examination Monday, the officer added.

The body of the girl, who had eloped with a male friend along with ₹20,000 in cash from her house in Bargarh district, was found in a jungle in Hiraakud area in adjoining Sambalpur

EAST COAST RAILWAY Tender Notice No. 66/ET/SBP/ENGG/2024-25, Date: 18.03.2025

(1) e-Tender No. 47-eT-DENE-SBP-24 Name of the work: REPLACEMENT OF 05 NOS. OF STEEL GIRDER BRIDGES (BRIDGE NO. 124 UP, 176 DN, 242 UP, 257 UP & 325 UP) OF SPAN 12.20 METER BY PSC SLAB IN LAKHOLI-TITLAGARH SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

(2) e-Tender No. 56-eT-DENE-SBP-24 Name of the work: EXECUTION OF (1) SLEEPERS RENEWAL AT LEVEL CROSSINGS - 42 LEVEL CROSSINGS, (2) TTR (TURNOUT) - 140 SETS, (3) TTR (CMSC) - 49 & (4) TTR (CS) - 5 SETS, TTR (TWS) - 10 SETS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER (EAST) OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

(3) e-Tender No. 60-eT-DENE-SBP-24 Name of the work: PROTECTION TO SIDE SLOPES IN CUTTINGS BY WIREROPE NETTING, EASING OF SLOPE, RETAINING WALL, ETC. TO PROTECT DEEP CUTTINGS ON VULNERABLE LOCATIONS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL ENGINEER/RAIRAKHOL OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

(4) e-Tender No. 61-eT-DENE-SBP-24 Name of the work: REPLACEMENT OF STEEL GIRDER BRIDGES OF SPAN 12.20 METER BY PSC SLAB IN JHARSUGUDA-JJUMURA SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

(5) e-Tender No. 62-eT-DENE-SBP-24 Name of the work: REPLACEMENT OF STEEL GIRDER BRIDGES OF SPAN 12.20 METER BY PSC SLAB IN JHARSUGUDA-JJUMURA SECTION OF SAMBALPUR DIVISION.

OFFICE OF THE NOTIFIED AREA COUNCIL, TARBHA Letter No. 448/NAC Date: 21.03.2025 "e" Procurement Notice TENDER REFERENCE NO.: TRV-NAC-01/2024-25

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA No. A-1238: DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES Office of the Additional Chief Engineer Mechanical Circle, Brahmapur

पंजाब नैशनल बैंक Punjab National Bank Circle Sastra Centre, Sambalpur : Circle Office, Balaji Midtown, 1st Floor, Deheripali, P.O.: Budharaja, Sambalpur-768004 [Rule-8(1)] POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)

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Let us offer our work to the Divine; this the sure means of progressing.

THE MOTHER

# Elusive Peace

The second phase ceasefire between Israel and Hamas agreed by both sides under the supervision of a few Arab countries and the US is in serious jeopardy following countless recent airstrikes across the Gaza Strip by Israel's IDF in cooperation with Shin Bet in which over 400 people were killed. The recent attack was launched at night, when people were asleep. The US had given its go-ahead, as the White House in a statement later said it had full knowledge of the attacks before they were launched. The irony is when the ceasefire had been announced, Trump went out of his way to claim credit for it, though the agreement was reached by the Joe Biden administration. Trump did use his influence to make it clear to Netanyahu that he would not brook any opposition from the latter to the cease-fire plan. However, soon after aids started arriving at the Gaza Strip, Trump unveiled his plan to turn the enclave into a huge real estate hub by completely displacing the Palestinians living there. As key Arab countries joined the Palestinians to oppose the idea of resettling them outside Gaza, the US started hardening its stand. Its approval of the fresh strikes by Israel cast serious doubt on its peace initiatives.

However, this is not the first violation of the ceasefire agreement, which aimed to release Israeli captives in return for an end to the war on Gaza. Reports suggest how Israel has violated the fragile truce before unilaterally resuming the conflict altogether. Since the ceasefire in Gaza went into force on 19 January and until the latest surprise attack, Israel, in sporadic strikes and attacks on the enclave has killed 155 Palestinians.

Hamas, the terror organization supported by a majority of civilian Gaza residents, had called the attack an "escalation" and a "deliberate sabotage of any opportunity to complete the ceasefire agreement's implementation". Gaza's ceasefire deal was divided into three phases, with the first phase having ended over two weeks ago. Israel and Hamas have so far been unable to agree on a way forward into the second phase, with the Israeli PM being accused of refusing to fully withdraw Israeli troops from Gaza, a key part of the second phase when steps are to be taken to make the ceasefire permanent and secure the release of the remaining 59 Israeli captives, with less than half believed to still be alive. Israel, along with US envoy and mediation leader Steve Witkoff, proposed an extension of the first phase. Witkoff had threatened over the weekend that Hamas would "pay a severe price" if it did not release all captives immediately.

Reports have indicated that Israel has actively shunned talks to permanently end the war. The US is reported not to be bothered if the war restarts. Israel insists on having more captives released in the first phase which makes complete sense to anyone following the war. The ceasefire agreement states that the first phase would be extended if talks for the second phase begin but does not state anything about captive releases.

After Hamas refused the extension of the first phase of the ceasefire, Israel blocked all humanitarian aid from entering the Gaza Strip on 2 March. The blockade was heavily condemned by mediating states Egypt and Qatar, as well as the United Nations, as one of the ceasefire's key objectives was to increase much-needed flow of aid for the two million Palestinians living in the enclave. The UN and the mediating countries however have not been observed as active players in the efforts to release the remaining hostages.

On 9 March, Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen ordered the halt of electricity supplies to Gaza, which affected the entire enclave, but particularly a desalination plant producing drinking water for part of the enclave. Hamas condemned the move, describing it as part of Israel's "starvation policy". The world is unable to understand why the Hamas, which attacked a music concert and took innocent Israeli hostages, was incapable to understand these essential needs of the Gazans. Israel was already reportedly sending fewer aid trucks than what was agreed upon in the ceasefire and had at times blocked the entry of temporary shelter, tents and heavy machinery needed to clear rubble.

With the war seemingly back in full force, Israel is now facing unfair criticism over its decision to resume its deadly operations, with the families of Israeli captives saying the government has abandoned them. This has become a live or die situation for the Israelis and a ceasefire is, understandably, unacceptable at this moment. The UN and other nations, especially the citizens of Gaza now have to put pressure on Hamas to become reasonable and eschew the path of terror.

## WISDOM CORNER

Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.

THOMAS A EDISON

Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Not only does God play dice, but... he sometimes throws them where they cannot be seen.

STEPHEN HAWKING

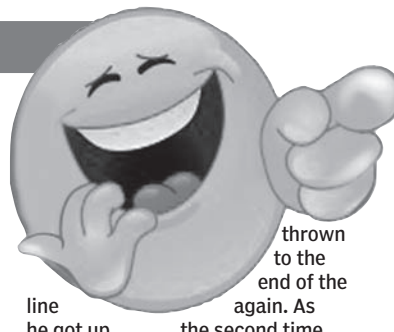
## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1655: Dutch mathematician and astronomer Christiaan Huygens discovered Titan, the largest moon of Saturn.
- 1947: British singer, composer, and pianist Sir Elton John, who was known for both his popular music and his stylistic showmanship, was born.
- 1965: American actress Sarah Jessica Parker, who was perhaps best known for her role on the television series Sex and the City (1998-2004), was born.
- 1975: King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was shot to death by his nephew.

## LOL

### THE CROWDED STORE

It was the day of the big sale. Rumors of the sale (and some advertising in the local paper) were the main reason for the long line that formed by 8:30, the store's opening time, in front of the store. A small man pushed his way to the front of the line, only to be pushed back, amid loud and colorful curses. On the man's second attempt, he was punched square in the jaw, and knocked around a bit, and then



line he got up the second time, he said to the person at the end of the line... "That does it! If they hit me one more time, I won't open the store!"

## FOCUS FOREIGN FUNDING

# TRANSACTIONAL DIPLOMACY



In my home country, Ghana, the transactional aid model has resulted in abandoned Chinese-built dams and failed Indian-backed gold and sugar refineries

US President Donald Trump's decision to gut USAID - effectively dismantling 42% of the global humanitarian-aid system and jeopardizing millions of lives - has reignited the debate over the effectiveness of foreign assistance. With many developing countries trapped in a seemingly inescapable cycle of aid dependency, it is increasingly clear that the dominant model is ill-suited to today's economic and geopolitical realities. But many of the alternatives being pondered in the Age of Trump offer no real solution, either.



Bright Simons

UNTIL THE LATE 1970S, MOST IMF LOANS WENT TO WHAT ARE NOW CONSIDERED ADVANCED ECONOMIES, WITH NEARLY 72% OF IMF LENDING DIRECTED TO THESE COUNTRIES IN THE 1960S ALONE

Foreign funding has long been a key driver of global development, shaping economic trajectories in ways that are often overlooked. The United States itself relied on foreign financing during its War of Independence, and China's industrial boom was partly driven by Japanese soft loans. Japan, too, sought World Bank financing to build the power plants that fueled its rapid growth. Even the United Kingdom turned to the International Monetary Fund 11 times between 1956 and 1977 - more frequently than today's most aid-dependent African economies. And in the late 1940s, Spain turned to Argentine handouts after being excluded from the Marshall Plan. Even the mobile payment platform M-Pesa, long a symbol of African self-reliance on innovation, got its start with the support of an aid grant.

Until the late 1970s, most IMF loans went to what are now considered advanced economies, with nearly 72% of IMF lending directed to these countries in the 1960s alone. But over time, the most dynamic and enterprising economies managed to break free from aid dependency, and development assistance dwindled, eventually becoming a negligible fraction of global financial flows.

Today, the foreign direct investment passing through the Netherlands alone each year is roughly 15 times the global aid

budget. With a few exceptions, like the Asian Tigers in the late 1990s or Greece and Portugal in the 2010s, the past few decades have shown that aid dependency is not inevitable.

But accelerating economic development requires a sustained global effort. Regrettably, wealthy countries' commitment to the traditional aid paradigm - as outlined in the Addis Ababa Agenda and championed by the European Union - has always been tenuous at best. This is evident in their failure to meet their 1970 pledge to allocate 0.7% of their gross national income to development assistance. Within just three years of setting that target, OECD countries' average contribution had already fallen to 0.27% of GNI. In 2023, it was 0.37%. Meanwhile, as emerging economic powers like China and the United Arab Emirates assume a larger role in shaping the rules of the international system, a more transactional approach to aid - explicitly tying development assistance to business interests and geopolitical objectives - is gaining traction.

This signals a reversion from today's aid paradigm to the era when aid was primarily driven by explicit self-interest. At gatherings like the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, policymakers call for a new multipolar age in which developing countries in Africa and elsewhere would be able to assert their sovereignty, engage with "de-

velopment partners" on their own anti-colonial terms, and no longer serve as a "graveyard" for Western aid projects.

Western policymakers seem oblivious to these developments. While they mourn the humanitarian fallout from USAID's demise, such as the escalating famine in Sudan, Russia and other powers are busy cutting strategic deals. For example, even as 60% of Uganda's HIV budget hangs in the balance, its government is forging new energy and infrastructure partnerships with the UAE. But few expect rising economic powers like China and the UAE to assume traditionally Western roles like distributing antiretrovirals and menstrual pads or defending press freedom and judicial independence. Although they may occasionally make such gestures for optics, they have no intention of reshaping recipient countries' institutions or pushing for systemic reforms.

Trump's transactional mindset aligns seamlessly with this paradigm shift. But while proponents of the portmanteau model present it as a pragmatic approach to development, their claim that it creates a faster escape route from aid dependency veers into utopianism. China's assistance of this type has done little to accelerate Zimbabwe's economic development; if anything, it has deepened the country's reliance on aid.

To be sure, the Western paradigm has failed to live up

to its promises. But its likely replacements offer little cause for optimism. Lacking the vast development-consulting industry that has grown around the Western model, emerging powers remain unwilling to engage in the institutional oversight needed to create localized alternatives. There are no drawn-out deliberations or endless hand-wringing, as is often the case with Western aid. When the going gets tough, countries like China simply walk away.

In my home country, Ghana, the transactional aid model has resulted in abandoned Chinese-built dams and failed Indian-backed gold and sugar refineries. While activists like me have long criticized the European aid model for being co-opted by a cabal of local and Western insiders, the new wave of projects financed by emerging powers has been even more damaging.

But regardless of the aid model, the fundamental challenge facing low-income countries remains unchanged: unlike Asian and European countries that successfully moved beyond aid dependency, countries like Ghana continue to grapple with a political elite seemingly incapable of effective policy leadership. Consequently, other domestic actors, such as the vibrant civil-society watchdogs in Ghana and Kenya, must rise to the occasion and monitor development spending to ensure better coordination, prioritization, and efficiency.

Activists celebrating the potential emergence of a post-imperial, agency-driven, multipolar aid system would do well to remember that economic progress will remain out of reach as long as civic disempowerment persists. Until we confront this fundamental challenge head-on, no aid paradigm will be able to put developing countries on the path to economic independence.

The writer is a Visiting Senior Fellow at ODI Global.

PROJECT SYNDICATE

## SPECTRUM HIGHER EDUCATION

# Need for a multi-faceted approach



Bhaskar Nath Biswal

CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENTS AND MAINTAINING CONSISTENT QUALITY ACROSS ALL INSTITUTIONS STILL PERSIST

India's higher education system is making significant strides on the global stage, as evidenced by the 2025 QS World University Rankings. The number of ranked institutions has risen from 69 to 79, with nine Indian institutions securing positions within the top 50 across various subject areas. This progress underscores India's growing engagement and visibility within the international academic community.

The Department of Higher Education, Government of India, has been proactive in expanding access to higher education by setting progressive gross enrollment ratio (GER) targets. The initial goals were to achieve a GER of 15% by 2011-12, 21% by 2016-17, and 30% by 2020. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2021-22, the GER for the 18-23 age group reached 28.4%, up from 27.3% in 2020-21 and 23.7% in 2014-15. Although the 2020 target was nearly met, the Nation-

al Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has set a more ambitious goal of 50% GER by 2035.

India's higher education landscape is marked by its remarkable diversity, featuring a wide array of institutions that cater to various fields of study. This includes traditional universities, colleges, and specialized institutes like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), which are known for their rigorous academic standards and industry alignment.

With a network of over 45,000 colleges, encompassing 57 Central Universities, 138 Deemed to be Universities, 504 Private Universities, and 497 State Universities, the country caters to a vast student population of 4.33 crore.

To further enhance access and promote quality within the higher education sector, the government has introduced various initiatives, such as the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) and a range

of scholarship schemes. Additionally, quality assurance mechanisms, like those established by the National Board of Accreditation (NBA) and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), play a crucial role in evaluating and ensuring educational standards across institutions. However, challenges in achieving standardized assessments and maintaining consistent quality across all institutions still persist.

So, there is much more to be done. Quality disparities within India's higher education system are evident, as some institutions enjoy global recognition while many others grapple with inadequate infrastructure, faculty shortages, and outdated curricula. Additionally, regional disparities contribute to the problem, with significant differences in access and quality between urban and rural institutions, as well as among various states. Efforts to promote inclusive education are underway,

aiming to enhance access for marginalized communities, including women, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes; however, notable gaps still persist in achieving equity across the system.

The India Graduate Skills Index 2025, released by Mercer Mettl, reveals a concerning drop in graduate employability. In 2024, only 42.6% of graduates were deemed employable, a decrease from 44.3% in 2023. This necessitates a substantial acceleration of efforts, requiring a significantly increased rate of growth compared to the past decade. Reaching this ambitious target will demand a multi-faceted approach, including strategic investments in expanding institutional capacity, attracting and retaining qualified faculty, and implementing targeted interventions to address disparities in access across socioeconomic groups and regions.

The writer is a retired principal of Nabarangpur College, Odisha.

## 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



## Poetic justice

Sir, Going by the contradictory and confusing reports that are coming in about Justice Yashwant Verma's 'house on fire,' coupled with the sluggish pace that our judicial system is synonymous with, it will be years before the case reaches its logical end. It is very common for people in our nation to be at the receiving end of the judicial ecosystem, with all its moles and warts, not the least of which is the near absence of infrastructure in various courts that makes litigants sweat it out, literally. Even if Justice Verma is spared that pain, the inordinate delays, which are inbuilt into the judicial process, will exact their toll. To use a cliché—the process is the punishment. Only in this particular case, involving a responsible custodian of the law, it will be a case of poetic justice.

Avinash Godbole, DEWAS (MP)

## Needless cultural war

Sir, The Nagpur violence that erupted in the aftermath of some Hindu outfits demanding the removal of Aurangzeb's tomb in Maharashtra's Sambhaji Nagar is totally uncalled for. Stories of Muslim rulers of the past are getting distorted and discarded, which is nothing but an attempt to push the Hindutva agenda—a movement seeking to establish Hinduism and Hindu culture as dominant in India. No surprise, some Hindu right-wing groups have earlier demanded that the Qutub Minar's name be changed to 'Vishnu Stambh' (Vishnu Pillar). At this rate, one may not be surprised if even the Taj Mahal is soon designated as a Hindu temple and renamed after a Hindu god. Whether it is portraying all Muslim rulers as evil, anti-Hindu looters or trying to steal history by renaming iconic places and monuments, or simply rewriting the past, the current Hindutva movement is waging a needless cultural war on India's Islamic past at a time when many important issues like rising prices and growing unemployment warrant attention. Can anyone imagine India, or even the world, without the Taj Mahal? Let us not forget that the Mughals had a more than 300-year presence on the subcontinent and exerted a significant influence on Indian art, architecture, language, and cuisine.

Ranganathan Sivakumar, CHENNAI

# MP Assembly debate on junk food consumption

Need to enforce guidelines strictly, says govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, March 24:** The Madhya Pradesh government Monday told the Assembly that there is need to enforce food safety and standards guidelines strictly after two of its MLAs raised the issue of rising junk food consumption by children.

The issue was raised during Question Hour by Jabalpur North BJP MLA Abhilash Pandey who sought to know if the state government had run a special drive in the last six months to check adulteration in fast food. Consumption of fast food in the state was on the rise and this was fuelling diseases, the MLA told the House.

In response, Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla, who also holds the health portfolio, said, "There is need to enforce the (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India or FSSAI) guidelines forcibly. The issue is serious."

Shukla informed the House that ₹9 crore has been recovered from those involved in food adulteration, adding the government was preparing a



roadmap to ensure people's health.

Pandey said such fast food had Ajinomoto (a brand name for monosodium glutamate), flavoured ingredients and preservatives. He sought to know whether there were guidelines to check such ingredients.

Incidentally, Pandey also drew attention of the House to Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressing concern over obesity in his February 23 'Mann Ki Baat' episode. The PM had asked people to cut down on cooking oil consumption. Modi

had also said the more concerning aspect has been the rise in obesity cases among children.

**₹9 crore has been recovered from those involved in food adulteration, adding the government was preparing a roadmap to ensure people's health**

Speaking on the issue, MP Assembly Affairs Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said he had recently called a meeting of doctors after incidents of children dying of heart attacks in Indore.

Doctors pointed at junk food consumption as one of the reasons, Vijayvargiya, an MLA from Indore, told the Assembly.

He said ingredients were being added in such way to food so as to make children addicted to it.

## Efforts on to fill vacancies of docs by October: MP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bhopal, March 24:** The Madhya Pradesh government Monday informed the state Assembly that efforts were underway to fill vacancies for doctors across the state by October and ramp up healthcare services.

The government was responding to concerns raised by BJP MLA Riti Pathak about the shortage of doctors in Sidhi district.

Pathak stated that the Sidhi district hospital had just 12 expert doctors instead of 37, and the posts of 6 medical officers were lying vacant.

She further questioned the government about measures taken to improve health service in the district, home to a large chunk of tribal population.

The legislator pointed out that Rewa, the home district of Deputy Chief Minister and State Health Minister Rajendra Shukla, had good healthcare facilities, while the neighbouring Sidhi district lagged.

Senior MLA Ajay Singh, who represents Churhat constituency in Sidhi, echoed Pathak's sentiments.

During the Question Hour, Congress MLA Pratap Grewal grilled the government about medical services.

He questioned the government about what it was doing about the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) report of 2024 that pointed out the dismal state of health care in Madhya Pradesh.

# After land subsidence in Howrah, residents left without water, power

A significant land subsidence took place in Belgachia area of Howrah city in the morning of March 21, damaging critical infrastructure, including a 1-km-long water pipeline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Howrah (WB), March 24:** Authorities Sunday said restoration work was being carried out on a war-footing even as residents were left without water or electricity as critical infrastructure was damaged due to a land subsidence in Howrah city of West Bengal.

A significant land subsidence took place in Belgachia area of Howrah city in the morning of March 21, damaging critical infrastructure, including a 1-km-long water pipeline.

The rupture led to an acute water shortage in several wards of Howrah Municipal Corporation, affecting thousands of residents, sources said.

Locals claimed that dozens of houses have been damaged or partially damaged due to the subsidence.

To mitigate the water crisis, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and nearby civic



**The administration has relocated 350 residents from 18 severely damaged houses to a local school for temporary shelter**

bodies have deployed water tankers and were distributing water pouches among the affected people.

Residents, however, complained that there were long queues and inadequate supply.

Power supply has also been affected as several electricity poles have either collapsed or are at risk of falling due to the subsidence. The administration has relocated 350 residents from 18 severely damaged houses to a local school for temporary shelter, officials said.

Public announcements urging other residents to evacuate

have had limited success, as many were uncertain on where to go. A disaster response team has been kept on standby for assistance in case of further subsidence.

Experts have identified the accumulation of methane gas from decomposing waste at the Belgachia dump as the primary cause of the land subsidence.

They recommended controlled venting of the gas to prevent further weakening of the soil.

State minister and Central Howrah MLA Arup Roy visited the site to assess the damage and reassure residents.

He acknowledged the severity of the situation and stated that the government was actively working on solutions.

"Affected families are being relocated, and experts are being consulted to address the issue. Efforts are underway to restore essential services as soon as possible," Roy said.

# MP farmers hit hard by drop in tomato prices



Farmers' organisations have demanded that the state government immediately take appropriate steps to protect the interests of cultivators

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Indore, March 24:** Tomato cultivators in Madhya Pradesh are facing losses as the wholesale price of the kitchen staple has dropped to ₹2 per kg due to the bumper arrival of the new crop in the markets.

Farmers' organisations have demanded that the state government immediately take appropriate steps to protect the interests of cultivators.

Indore's Devi Ahilyabai Holkar fruit and vegetable market is one of the largest wholesale markets in the state.

Talking to PTI Monday, Dheeraj Raikwar, a farmer who arrived at the market from Khandwa district, about 130 km away, said, "The wholesale price of tomatoes has fallen to ₹2 per kg. At this price, we won't be able to recover even the harvest cost."

He claimed that some farmers were forced to throw away the unsold consignment of tomatoes in the market.

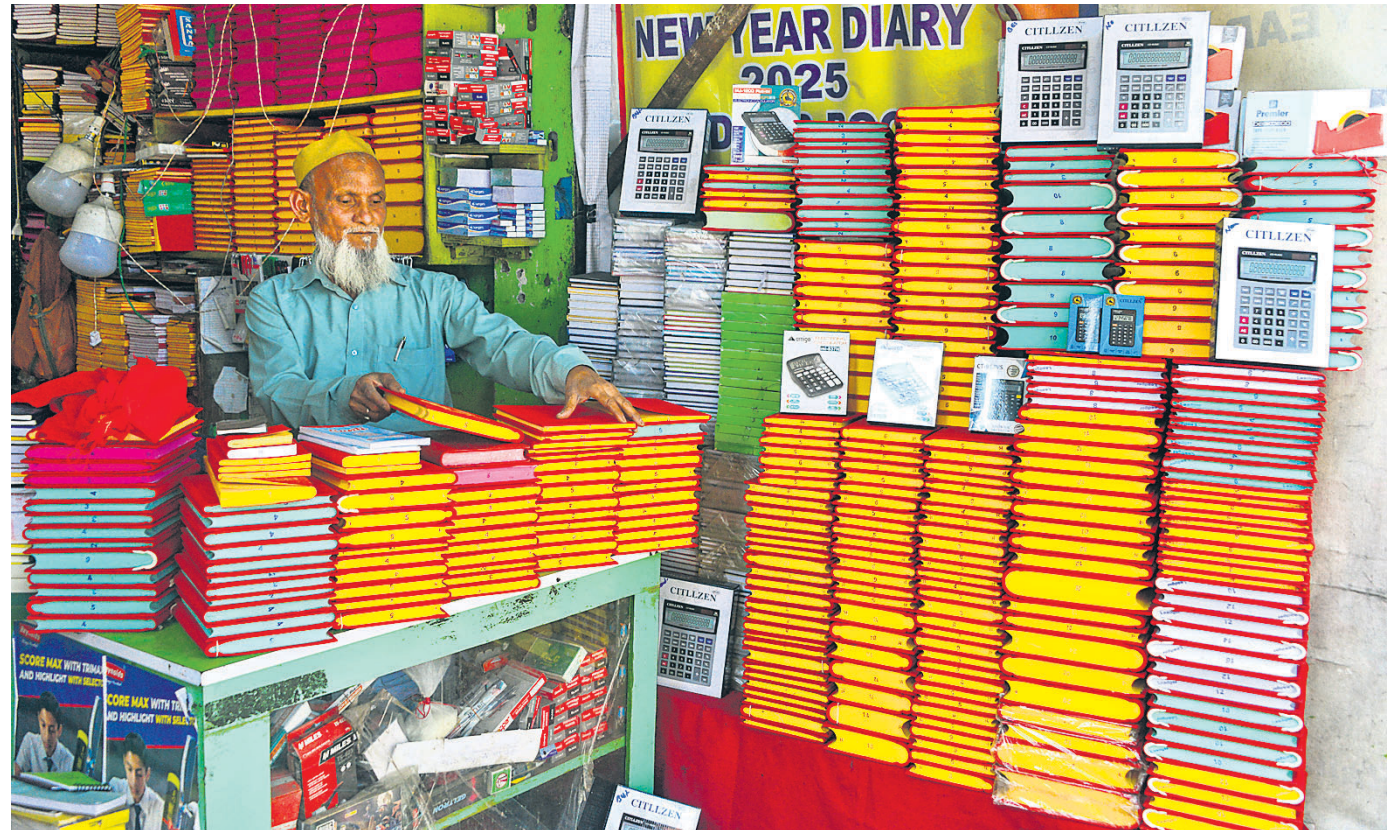
"As tomatoes fetched a good price last year, farmers decided to go for large-scale cultivation. This time, due to bumper production, there is a huge inflow of tomatoes in the market, causing the prices to drop," Raikwar said.

Dinesh Muvel, a farmer from the neighbouring Dhar district, said he had taken a loan of ₹2 lakh to cultivate tomatoes on two acres, and he has now incurred losses due to the fallen prices.

Ram Swaroop Mantri, convener of the Sanyukta Kisan Morcha in the Malwa-Nimar region of western Madhya Pradesh, demanded the state government buy tomatoes from farmers at a reasonable price to prevent losses.

"The morcha has been demanding a minimum support price for vegetables, but the government has not paid any heed," he said.

Bharatiya Kisan-Mazdoor Sena president Bablu Jadhav said there is a lack of cold storage and processing facilities for perishable crops like tomatoes in remote areas of the state, due to which farmers are forced to sell their crops at throwaway prices.



A seller arranges ledger books at his shop, in Siliguri, West Bengal, March 24. Traders purchase ledger books to record their financial activity for the new tax year which starts on April 1

## Darjeeling zoo launches project to preserve DNA samples of wildlife

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Kolkata, March 24:** Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park in West Bengal's Darjeeling has become India's first zoo to preserve DNA samples of wildlife found exclusively in snowy regions, officials said.

Chief Wildlife Warden Debal Roy told PTI Monday that 60 DNA samples from indigenous animals have already been collected for profiling.

"Tissues from animals, including red pandas, snow leopards and other indigenous spe-



cies—killed in road accidents or in captivity—have been collected to preserve their DNA," Roy said. "We started working on the project in 2023, and it is

IN A FIRST

**60 DNA samples from indigenous animals have already been collected for profiling**

an ongoing process," he added. The cryogenic conservation initiative, in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, aims to ensure that if these species face extinction, their

preserved genetic material can aid in research and future conservation efforts.

Another senior zoo official said the zoo will carry on research on the rich biodiversity of the Himalayan region.

A zoo official added, "A dedicated laboratory has been set up inside the zoo, where DNA samples are stored in steel containers filled with liquid nitrogen at freezing temperatures."

Spread across 67.8 acres at an altitude of 2,150 metres (7,050 feet), the zoo is India's highest-altitude zoological park.

# Cheetah mother, cubs pelted with stones in MP village

Videos on social media purported to show the cheetahs near an under-construction railway bridge while several villagers, armed with sticks, stand at a distance

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Sheepur/New Delhi, March 24:** A female cheetah and her four cubs were pelted with stones Monday as they tried to hunt a calf on the outskirts

of a village in Madhya Pradesh, raising concerns over the implementation of Project Cheetah among conservationists and wildlife activists.

According to official sources, the incident occurred around 9 am near a village in Sheepur district, where cheetahs from Africa were introduced under the project to establish a meta population in India.

"Today, around 9 am, Jwala and her four cubs tried to hunt a cattle calf on the outskirts of Behardha village near farmlands. Seeing this, some villagers gathered and created a commotion to save the calf. One or two people also threw stones," an official source said.



The monitoring team present tried to prevent any further incident. Due to the disturbance, the cheetahs retreated into the forest where they are being

railway bridge while several villagers, armed with sticks, stand at a distance.

In one video, a cheetah attempts to hunt a calf but the villagers and the forest team drive it away.

The cheetahs were also spotted in farms in the Telipura village. The forest team advised the villagers to let the animals pass.

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Project Cheetah Director Utam Kumar Sharma urged people not to panic and allow the animals to move freely.

"Instead of surrounding the cheetahs or standing with sticks, villagers should watch them and allow them to pass. If

a big cat kills cattle, the owner will be compensated," he said.

Bhopal-based wildlife activist Ajay Dubey called the incident a "complete failure" of the authorities implementing the project.

"While the state government and its wildlife department claim to have SOPs (standard operating procedures) and monitoring teams in place, this video is a reality check," he said.

"The authorities created 'Cheetah Mitras' to assure people that these animals do not harm humans and that compensation is available for livestock losses. This incident shows they have failed to create awareness," Dubey added.

The sleuths of the intelligence agencies, both central and state, have increased their surveillance at the villages close to the international border in Murshidabad. Similar surveillance has beefed up at the bordering villages in the adjacent Malda district also.

The Border Security Force (BSF) outposts in these two districts have also been alerted accordingly.

The house owners in these bordering villages have been advised not to rent rooms to unknown outsiders without properly checking their identity credentials. At the same time, the house owners have also been advised to update the local police stations about their new tenants.



The coalition government has no concern for farmers who lost their standing crops due to gale and unseasonal rains  
YS JAGAN MOHAN REDDY | ANDHRA EX-CM

## RUCKUS IN ASSAM ASSEMBLY

The Assam Assembly Monday witnessed uproarious scenes with the ruling BJP alleging that Deputy Speaker Numal Momin was attacked by Congress MLA Nurul Huda just outside the House, leading to adjournment



## SEBI to set up panel to review conflict of interest of top officials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Mumbai, March 24:** SEBI Monday took steps towards upping people's "trust" in the capital market regulator, with its board deciding to form a panel of external experts to review rules on managing and better-disclosing conflicts of interests for its senior leadership, including the Chairperson.

The decision to review provisions for its members to disclose conflict of interest comes months after former head Madhabi Puri Buch was accused of holding back on investigations against Adani group because of conflict of interest.

Career bureaucrat turned regulator Tuhin Kanta Pandey wants people to feel that things are "fine now", and the leadership has "nothing to hide", Pandey pointed to the core aspect of trust.

Buch, who demitted office at the end of February, had come under attack last year from now-shuttered Hindenburg Research which alleged that she and her husband held "hidden" holdings in Bermuda and Mauritius entities also drawn upon by the older brother of Adani group founder Gautam Adani, which possibly held the agency back from investigating fraud charges against the powerful conglomerate.

## Simultaneous poll panel to consult Attorney Gen, ex-Delhi HC chief justice

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** Attorney General R Venkatraman and Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal Chairman Justice D N Patel, a former Delhi High Court chief justice, will express their views Tuesday on the simultaneous election bills before a parliamentary committee, the panel's chairman P P Chaudhary said.

Chaudhary told PTI the committee is seeking views from a host of legal experts so that its members can seek clarifications and added their "valuable inputs" will help it in framing its recommendations.

Sources said the Lok Sabha is likely to extend the tenure of the committee, which was asked to submit its report on the first day of last week of Parliament ongoing session scheduled to end April 4, in a day or two as the panel will need more time to finish its work. The panel is currently in the process of consulting legal experts and Venkatraman and Patel will appear before it as part of its exercise to seek views from experts of law and Constitution before it moves on to hearing other stakeholders.

Former Supreme Court chief justices U U Lalit and Ranjan Gogoi, noted jurist Harish Salve and former Delhi High Court chief justice A P Shah are among those who have so far appeared before the panel and answered to the questions from its members on a full range of issues concerning the proposed law.

# Stand up comics and their brush with controversies

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** Comedian Kunal Kamra's latest video has kicked up a storm in the Maharashtra political circle, just over a month after YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia's comments about parents and sex on comic Samay Raina's show "India's Got Latent" became a major controversy.

Here's recapping some of the controversies:

**Kunal Kamra:** The list of Kamra's run-ins with authorities is long. Last year, Kamra made headlines for his jokes on Bollywood superstar Salman Khan when he took aim on the 1999 black buck hunting case and 2002 hit-and-run case. Ola CEO Bhavish Aggarwal often finds a mention in the comics stand-up sets, including the recent one.

In 2020, at least eight people sued Kamra, who has been



critical of the BJP, the judiciary and the larger government machinery in his shows. He also faced contempt of court case for his comments criticising the Supreme Court.

Kamra faced a ban on flying after he heckled TV anchor Arnab Goswami on an IndiGo flight. After civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted suggesting other air-

lines to follow suit, Air India, SpiceJet and GoAir took a similar action.

**Ranveer Allahbadia-Samay Raina:** Last month, Allahbadia courted trouble for his comments on parents and sex on Raina's popular web show "India's Got Latent". Allahbadia's remarks opened a can of worms with many calling out for a ban on his pod-

cast and politicians, including Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and opposition leaders of the state, criticising him for exploiting freedom of speech.

**AIB:** In February 2015, the controversial roast event, AIB Knockout, by the comedy group, sparked a huge uproar, resulting in multiple FIRs against the group and the show's participants, including filmmaker Karan Johar and actors Ranveer Singh, Arjun Kapoor, Deepika Padukone, and Alia Bhatt. The show was accused of being "vulgar, obscene, and pornographic".

Tanmay Bhat, one of the founding members of AIB, was again at the centre of a controversy in May 2016 when political parties, including the Shiv Sena, BJP and MNS, demanded action against him and the group for a mock conversation between Lata Mangeshkar and

Sachin Tendulkar.

**Vir Das:** Celebrated comedian Vir Das faced a police complaint in 2021 after his show, "I Come from Two Indias" at the John F Kennedy Centre in Washington DC. Das uploaded a six-minute clip from the monologue on YouTube that was critical of India in its fight against Covid-19, crime against women, and crackdown against comedians.

**Munawar Faruqi:** Stand-up comedian and "Bigg Boss 17" winner Munawar Faruqi was jailed for a month in Indore in January 2021 following accusations of making inappropriate jokes about Hindu deities and Home Minister Amit Shah during a stand-up show. Although he denied making the comments, the controversy sparked significant backlash, resulting in several show cancellations and a debate about freedom of speech in comedy.

## JUSTICE VARMA'S TRANSFER

# HC bar body to go on strike

As the cash discovery row once again brought into focus the Collegium system and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, which was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, it drew sharp reactions from the Opposition leaders who demanded a fair probe into the matter

AGENCIES

**Lucknow/Prayagraj (UP), March 24:** The Allahabad High Court Bar Association Monday announced that it will go on an indefinite strike from March 25 to protest the proposed repatriation of Delhi High Court Justice Yashwant Varma to his parent court.

The announcement came after the Supreme Court Collegium confirmed its decision to recommend the transfer of Justice Varma, who is facing an inquiry over alleged discovery of a large sum of cash from his official residence in Delhi. "Lawyers of the High Court Bar Association, Allahabad will go on an indefinite strike from Tuesday... (over) Justice Yashwant Varma's (proposed) transfer to the Allahabad High Court," bar association president Anil Tiwari told PTI.

"We are also sending a request to bar associations in Lucknow in this regard," he said. After passing a resolution to this effect during the lunch hours of the court, the lawyers abstained from judicial work for the remaining day. Addressing reporters after an emergency meeting of the association in the evening, Tiwari said, "The association will fight this issue till the end. The Supreme Court has judicial powers but we have public support."

He said, "22 organisations have given us a letter of support against the transfer of Justice Yashwant Varma. Today, the Supreme Court

has confirmed the decision of transfer in the meeting of the collegium. This (emergency) meeting was held in view of the Supreme Court administration's decision of transfer." Tiwari said the lawyers of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association will only resume work after the Supreme Court withdraws its decision. "Today this battle is being fought by lawyers in India and till the next resolution, the advocates will not work and we are ready to face any kind of consequences. Even if we have to sacrifice our lives to save the judiciary, we are ready to do so... If we have to go to jail, we are ready for that too," he said.

He further said that lawyers will take to the streets Tuesday. "The entire democracy is being put at stake to save a judge. We appeal to the government to intervene in this matter," he added.

The bar association also demanded scrutiny of judgments delivered by Justice Varma. The cash was found at Justice Varma's Lutyens' Delhi residence following a fire March 14. The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and the Delhi High Court subsequently issued a series of directives, including the withdrawal of judicial work from Justice Varma Monday.

As the cash discovery row once again brought into focus the Collegium system and the National Judicial Appoint-



ments Commission (NJAC) Act, which was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional, it drew sharp reactions from the Opposition leaders who demanded a fair probe into the matter. Some MPs suggested that steps be taken to impeach Justice Varma.

The current Collegium system, which came into existence in 1993, has often come under fire for lacking transparency by politicians and some eminent jurists, who contend that the practice of judges appointing judges without any say of the Executive has led to complaints of nepotism and favouritism.

AAP's Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the alleged cash discovery is a big issue and that people's trust in the judiciary has been damaged. P Sandosh Kumar of the CPI said Justice Varma should be impeached.

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Thakkar, meanwhile, held a meeting with Leader of the House J P Nadda and Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge on judicial accountability in the wake of allegations of the cash recovery and said they decided to await the outcome of the CJI-appointed in-house inquiry panel before taking up the issue further.

# Shivakumar's remarks on Muslim reservation spark political uproar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**Bangalore, March 24:** The purported remarks of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on the issue of reservation for Muslims rocked Parliament Monday, with the BJP mounting a fierce attack on the Congress alleging that it wanted to change the Constitution to give religion based quota to appease the minority community.

The Congress and its leader Shivakumar refuted the remarks attributed to him and accused the BJP of raising a "fake issue" and indulging in disinformation to stall Parliament. The BJP tried to corner the Congress in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha over Shivakumar's statement, made during an interaction with a TV channel, where he purportedly suggested that a "good day" may come when the Constitution may be changed to accommodate quota for Muslims.

Countering the BJP, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge asserted that no one can change the Constitution provided by B R Ambedkar, as the two parties sparred over the controversy leading to disruption of proceedings in both the Houses. While the pre-lunch period in Lok Sabha was washed out after Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju raised the issue, the entire day's proceedings were disrupted in Rajya Sabha where BJP chief J P Nadda led the offensive, while also targeting the Congress for giving 4 per cent reservation to Muslims in public contracts in Karnataka. Outside Parliament, the BJP said the remarks on the Muslim quota have brought to light the Congress' "hidden agenda" of changing the Constitution to provide reservation to the minority community for their votes. Shiva-



kumar's remarks and the Karnataka government's "illegal and unconstitutional" move to provide 4 per cent reservation to Muslims in public contracts in the state are the Congress' efforts to take away the rights of the members of the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the Other Backward Classes (OBC), senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

The Congress hit back saying the BJP was spreading "disinformation" about reservation to Muslims in Karnataka. Shivakumar claimed that he had been misquoted and asserted that he "never said that we will change the Constitution".

The Congress also gave notices for breach of privilege against Nadda and Rijiju for "misleading" Parliament. "I am a sensible senior politician... I have been in the Assembly for the past 36 years. I have basic common sense. I have never said that (regarding changing the Constitution)," Shivakumar told reporters in Bengaluru.

"I casually said that there will be so many changes after various judgments. Whatever reservation has been given is as per the quota for the backward classes. I have never said that we will change the Constitution and all that," he said.

In a post on X, Shivakumar denied the remarks and accused the BJP leaders and ministers, both in Karnataka and at the Centre, of resorting to "brazen and blatant" lies to malign the Congress and him "by falsely attributing statements" to him.

## SUICIDES IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

# SC forms task force to address students' mental health

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

**New Delhi, March 24:** The Supreme Court Monday took note of the recurring cases of student suicides in higher educational institutions and formed a National Task Force (NTF) to address the mental health concerns of students and prevent such incidents.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan directed Delhi Police to register an FIR on the complaints of the family members of two students who died by suicide while studying at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, in 2023. Noting a "disturbing pattern" of student suicides were being reported from various educational institutes, the apex

court said these tragedies underscored the urgent need for a more robust, comprehensive and responsive mechanism to address various factors which compel students to resort to taking their own lives.

"The recurring instances of student suicides in higher educational institutions, including private educational institutions, inadequacy and ineffectiveness of the existing legal and institutional framework in addressing mental health concerns of students on campuses and to prevent the students from taking the extreme step of committing suicides," the order said.

While the order said former apex court judge Justice



S Ravindra Bhat would be the chairperson of the NTF, secretaries of a state's higher education departments, social justice and empowerment and legal affairs aside from the ministry of women and child devel-

opment would be its ex-officio members.

The bench said the NTF would prepare a comprehensive report that includes, identification of the predominant causes that lead to suicides by students, analysis of existing regulations and recommendations for strengthening protections. In the process of preparing its report, the court said, the NTF would have the authority to conduct surprise inspections of any higher educational institution.

While the NTF would furnish an interim report within four months, a final report would preferably be filed within eight months, it said. The apex court's verdict came on an appeal filed by the parents of two

The bench said data provided by the Union Minister of State for Education to the Rajya Sabha in 2023, 98 students died by suicide in higher educational institutes since 2018, out of which 39 were from IITs, 25 from NITs, 25 from central universities, four from IIMs, three from IISERs and two from IIITs

Dealing with the appeal, the bench referred to the scope of Section 174 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which deals with police to enquire and report on suicide, etc

deceased students against a January 2024 order of the Delhi High Court which refused to

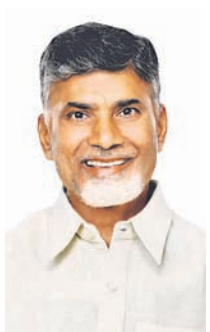
direct the police to register an FIR in connection with the suicide by the two students.

While Ayush Ashna was found dead July 8, 2023 in his hostel room, Anil Kumar was found dead September 1, 2023 in his hostel room at IIT Delhi. It was alleged that both the students, who belonged to the scheduled castes, were murdered and they had earlier confided in their parents being subjected to caste discrimination.

The bench noted it was not in dispute that the police for some reason or the other declined to register an FIR on the complaints on the ground that no one could be said to have abetted the commission of suicide.



# national



Great news for coffee enthusiasts in the Parliament! You can now enjoy a freshly brewed cup of Araku Coffee right on the premises... This is a moment of pride for all of us, especially our tribal farmers, whose dedication and hard work have brewed Araku Coffee to the highest levels of national acclaim

## 2 ARAMBAI TENGGOL MEMBERS ARRESTED

Two members of Meitei radical outfit Arambai Tenggol were arrested in connection with the clash with UNLF (Pambei) militants in Manipur, police said Monday. Around 15-20 members of Arambai Tenggol on Saturday afternoon barged into the residence of UNLF militant Irengbam Nandakumar Singh in Kongpal Chingangbam Leikai and attacked insurgents of the Imphal Valley-based outfit, they said



### of the day quote

The BJP government's eight-year rule in UP has not fully met the expectations of the people. Terming the law and order situation poor

We have not imposed any additional taxes on the public, yet we have delivered significant economic results

Charitable activities are linked to all religions and Muslims carry out these through Waqf. When a particular religion is targeted, there will be tension

# House of Nagpur riots 'mastermind' demolished

Just hours after the demolition began in the morning, the Nagpur Bench of the Bombay High Court intervened, issuing a stay on the demolitions and criticising the administration for its "high-handedness"

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Nagpur, March 24: The two-storey residence of Fahim Khan, an alleged mastermind behind the communal violence in Nagpur March 17, was flattened Monday by local civic authorities which claimed that the house was constructed illegally.



resenting Khan, stated that the court had ordered a response from governmental and civic authorities, with the next hearing scheduled for April 15. The bench indicated that if determined that the demolition was conducted unlawfully, the authorities might be liable for damages, Ingole claimed.

violations, including the lack of an approved building plan -- a necessary requirement for construction. The Nagpur Municipal Corporation began the demolition at approximately 10:30 AM, employing three JCB machines to dismantle Khan's house in Sanjay Bagh Colony, Yashodhara Nagar, while cordoning off the area for safety.

# US trade official to visit India for bilateral talks



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: Brendan Lynch, the assistant US trade representative for South and Central Asia, will pay a five-day visit to India beginning Tuesday, days before US President Donald Trump's tit-for-tat tariff kicks in.

of US government officials, will be in India from March 25-29 for meetings with Indian interlocutors as part of ongoing bilateral trade discussions," said a US official. "This visit reflects the United States' continued commitment to advancing a productive and balanced trade relationship with India. "We value our ongoing engagement with the Government of India on trade and investment matters and look forward to continuing these discussions in a constructive, equitable and forward-looking manner," the official said.

The senior US trade official is expected to hold talks with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal besides meeting a number of senior Indian officials. It is learnt that Indian officials are also hoping to discuss with Lynch the possibility of a waiver for India from the reciprocal tariff temporarily. It will come into effect April 2.

## POST OF THE DAY

Very good. Let the entire world watch what has become of our democracy. Despite Supreme court's warning that demolition can't happen without due diligence, BMC rushed in to dance at master's tune and FURTHER demolished the studio

@Nher\_who

### SHORT TAKES

#### Chandrasekhar new Kerala BJP chief

Thiruvananthapuram: Former Union Minister and technocrat-turned-politician Rajeev Chandrasekhar assumed office as the BJP's state president Monday, declaring his mission to bring the NDA government to power in Kerala, a state largely dominated by the CPI(M)-led LDF and the Congress-led UDF.

#### 8 CPI (M) workers sentenced to life

Kannur (Kerala): A court in Kerala Monday sentenced eight CPI(M) workers to life imprisonment for the murder of a BJP worker in the district nearly two decades ago. While eight people were handed life terms and fined Rs 50,000 each, another convict was sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs 25,000.

#### Journalist booked

Mumbai/Pune: Maharashtra police Monday said they have arrested Nagpur journalist Prashant Koratkar, booked for making derogatory remarks about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his son Chhatrapati Sambhaji, from Telangana.

### SNIPPETS

#### CBI arrests NHAH GM, three others

New Delhi: The CBI has arrested a general manager of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAH) and three others, including a general manager of a private company, in connection with alleged bribery of Rs 15 lakh, officials said Monday.

#### Security forces intensify anti-terror ops in Kathua

Jammu: A cache of incriminating material, including several loaded magazines of M4 carbine assault rifles and a couple of grenades, were seized as security forces intensified their search to neutralise a group of infiltrating terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district Monday, officials said.



Firefighters try to douse a fire that broke out at the KBZ Wafer-Namkeen manufacturing company near Nakravadi village, in Rajkot

# Vanity is the quicksand of reason, it sucks into the muck

Many glory-seeking political gambles began with fanning dormant ambers only to find the fiery red of the flames descend on their dreams like the blackening haze of falling dust. What began as a face-off between the Centre and Tamil Nadu over the non-implementation of the 3-language formula as part of the National Education Policy (NEP) has now engulfed many more issues critical to the Southern states.

The Joint Action Committee set up for the purpose has sought an extension on the freeze, based on the 1971 census, by another 25 years. The meeting was hosted by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, and attended by the Chief Ministers of Kerala, Telangana, and Punjab — Pinarayi Vijayan, Revanth Reddy, and Bhagwant Mann, respectively — Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, Bharat Rashtira Samithi leader KT Rama Rao, and Biju Janata Dal president Naveen Patnaik (through video conference), among others.



southern states by virtue of their low population growth rates and higher levels of urbanisation, have lost out the most. Kerala lost 27.7 per cent of the funds allocated to it between the 12th and 15th Finance Commissions and Tamil Nadu 23.1 per cent. Today, when we calculate, the difference between tax collection in a state as a percentage of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) and what it receives from New Delhi, again as a proportion of its GSDP, we find that all the states in the South and East are losing out (except Andhra Pradesh) and are subsidizing those in the North (starting with Bihar) and the East".

ing resonance. Stalin is advocating for a "Dravidian" model common to the south emphasizing priority investment in human capital. Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah has already denounced the tax grab from which the south was suffering to the benefit of the north. The idea of a "Southern States Forum" is being talked about. Tensions are likely to increase for political, economic and social reasons.

attempts at promulgation of Hindi continue. Repetitive attempts ditto, the same fate ditto. The Narendra Modi-led BJP was knocked out of reckoning of the southern states after losing its sole bastion in the South, Karnataka to the Congress in 2023. The Bharat Rashtira Samiti (BHRS) yielded to the Congress in Telangana later the same year. The saffron set-up is now desperate for a toehold under. After its drubbing in West Bengal, consolidation in Haryana and worsting of AAP in Delhi, the BJP is now eyeing Bihar where elections are due later this year.

# leisure



## BOND FAME DISCONNECTS ME FROM THE WORLD: CRAIG

Daniel Craig has blamed his James Bond fame for making him feel disconnected from the world. Craig admitted that stepping into the shoes of 007 had a disorienting effect on him, he said: "Fame is disembodied. And no one teaches you how to be famous."

## PAUL RUDD'S 'AWKWARD' ENCOUNTER WITH ORTEGA

Paul Rudd revealed he had an 'awkward' first-ever meeting with actress Jenna Ortega inside an airport lounge. The two actors recently worked together on *Death of a Unicorn*, the new comedy-horror film. However, Ortega said that their first-ever interaction was entirely unplanned and unexpected.



### FORTUNE FORECAST

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**ARIES**  
Today is just another busy day. You may remain hassled sorting out problems at office and then at home. Your bosses may allow you certain concessions and this will ease things to some extent. Ganesha says you will gain valuable guidance from elderly people.

**TAURUS**  
Today might be a day of untying and getting out of the tangles, says Ganesha. You may take the blame for the actions of another. Things may get frustrating around the afternoon and your confidence levels may stoop. Work on your strengths and work out your weaknesses, advises Ganesha.

**GEMINI**  
You will be in a spot of bother owing to financial problems today. You will try to reduce your expenses and increase your savings, but circumstances will be such that you will have to spend your money. You will spend your day in all this financial juggling, says Ganesha.

**CANCER**  
Chances are that your inquisitive nature will put in a difficulty. Others will be angry with you for keeping a secret a vital information. Ganesha counsels you to strengthen ties with friends and give up present attitude.

**LEO**  
Decisions taken in haste will prove to be harmful. You need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of every decision that you take today, considering all the possible alternative thoroughly. You need to be extremely industrious on the work-front as well. You will feel very energetic and raring to go. However, you will run out of energy at the end of the day, says Ganesha.

**VIRGO**  
You will find your banal day-to-day routine work to be very irritating today, says Ganesha. Avoid the tendency to exaggerate things out of proportion. You will not, however, let anything impact on your enthusiasm to work. You will do something novel to win the appreciation of people.

**LIBRA**  
Ganesha says your uniqueness will be the focus of attention and praise today. Your undertaking of various tough tasks and completing them today will showcase your business acumen. You will show your inclination to the finer arts like music and dance.

**SCORPIO**  
Your energy levels are on an all time high today, as you plan to begin a new business venture. You are determined to give in your best and toil hard till you succeed in your plans. Well, and the day turns out to be fruitful and worthy when you garner compliments and positive feedback about your work from your peers, says Ganesha.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
Dark and gloomy, that's what how you feel today, foresees Ganesha. However, the cloud of worries is likely to burst during the latter half of the day. Good news from abroad or a phone call from a friend is likely to cheer you up.

**CAPRICORN**  
You have become workaholic and others may have complaints against you for being so busy. But, you should not take to heart as you are finishing off assignments which have been hanging in there for a long time now. Once done with the work, you'll have ample of time for your lover.

**AQUARIUS**  
You are good with words and with the art of eloquence you manage to get through any situation. Today, thanks to your communication skills, you will be able to crack important deals and make people follow your vision. You, however, need to respects opinions of others' as well, advises Ganesha.

**PISCES**  
You will find yourself ecstatic now that certain important projects you have been slaving over are nearing completion. You will implement new strategies and will hope that everything goes according to plan. You will experience intimate moments with your partner. On the whole, it will be a peaceful and productive day, says Ganesha.

# SHARVARI values her role as AD

**New Delhi:** Before stepping into the limelight as an actress, Sharvari began her career as an assistant director for filmmakers such as Luv Ranjan and Sanjay Leela Bhansali. Looking back at the journey, the actress said that it gave her a lot of experience and exposure. Sharvari, who worked as an assistant director in the movies *Pyaar Ka PUNCHAMA 2*, *Bajirao Mastani* and *Sonu Ke Titu Ki Sweeti*, also spoke about working with Bhansali in a movie.

Asked if she feels her behind the camera experience gives her an extra edge over others, Sharvari told the news agency, "I don't know if it gives me an edge over others but I definitely think that it gave me a lot of experience and a lot of exposure especially because I don't come from a film family, I didn't know how films are made."

"So, for me to work behind the camera was something that was so so important because I got to learn how a film is made and I think that when I stood in front of the camera as an actor, I was definitely more confident because I was aware of how a film is made, what goes behind making a film and I was aware of the people that are working around me," added Sharvari.

Sharvari worked as an assistant director to Bhansali in the 2015 period drama *Bajirao Mastani*, however, working with Bhansali in a film is in her bucket list, Sharvari said that it will be a "dream come true" and has her "fingers crossed."

**Mumbai:** Actress Manisha Koirala expressed that navigating life with curiosity, resilience and an open heart is essential.

Manisha took to Instagram, where she shared a picture of herself stylishly dressed posing in front of an ornate, silver-framed mirror. She is wearing a black suit with a slightly oversized blazer draped over her shoulders, paired with a crisp white button-up shirt and well-fitted black trousers.

For the caption, she wrote: "Navigate life with curiosity, resilience, and an open heart."

One of the most popular and high-profile, the 54-year-old star made her acting debut with the Hindi drama *Saudagar* in 1991. She debuted in Indian cinema with the Hindi drama *Saudagar* in 1991. She worked with Bhansali in *A Love Story*.

## Manisha on how to 'navigate' life



Manisha Koirala expressed that navigating life with curiosity, resilience and an open heart is essential. She shared a picture of herself stylishly dressed posing in front of an ornate, silver-framed mirror. She is wearing a black suit with a slightly oversized blazer draped over her shoulders, paired with a crisp white button-up shirt and well-fitted black trousers.

For the caption, she wrote: "Navigate life with curiosity, resilience, and an open heart." One of the most popular and high-profile, the 54-year-old star made her acting debut with the Hindi drama *Saudagar* in 1991. She debuted in Indian cinema with the Hindi drama *Saudagar* in 1991. She worked with Bhansali in *A Love Story*.

## Shilpa's fitness goals

**Mumbai:** Bollywood actress and fitness enthusiast Shilpa Shetty Kundra is back with some serious fitness fuel to kickstart the week.

Known for her dedication to fitness, the *Dhadkan* actress took to her Instagram handle to inspire her followers by sharing a glimpse of her workout routine and how she is "crushing her fitness goals." Monday, Shilpa posted a couple of her photos with text written on it: "Nothing feels as good as...the happiness of crushing your own fitness goals. What's your #MondayMotivation?." The actress is seen wearing a grey tank top with, "Calm is my super power written on it."

Sharing her photos, the actress wrote in the caption, "Work hard, Calm Raho #MondayMotivation #SwasthRahoMastRaho #FitIndia."

The *Hungama 2* actress often shares her workout videos on social media, motivating her followers to stay active and prioritise their health. With her dedication to fitness, Shilpa inspires fans by showcasing everything from intense training sessions to yoga routines, encouraging a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

On the professional front, Shilpa was last seen in the Amazon Prime Video series *Indian Police Force*, where she portrayed the character of Tara Shetty IPS, the Chief of the Delhi Police Special Cell. She will next be seen in the forthcoming actioner, *Lahore 1947*.

PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

## NATIONAL KALINGA NATYA MAHOTSAV - DAY III



Shree Cultural Association, a troupe from Sambalpur captivated the audience with their performance in Sambalpuri play *Sadhana* at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Monday. Penned by Ashis Sonar, the play was skillfully directed by Satya Ranjan Behera. Among the luminaries, former minister Prafulla Samal, eminent dramatist Purachandra Mallick and journalist Pradosh Patnaik were in attendance. PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

### PEANUTS



### CALVIN AND HOBBS

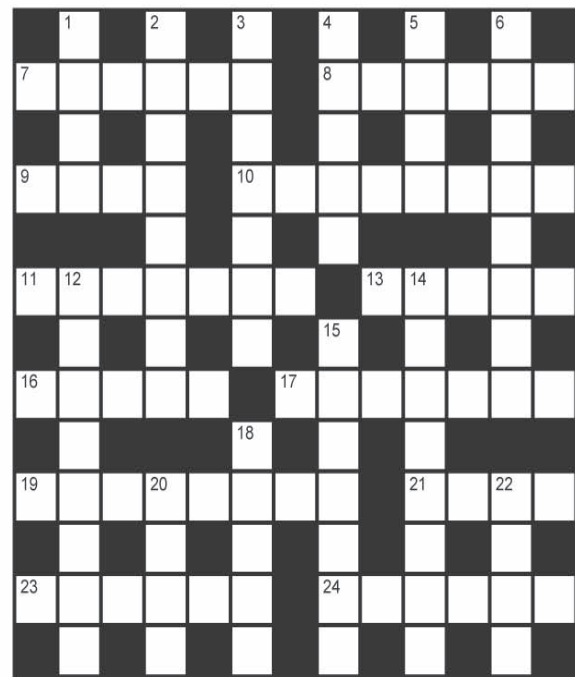


### BREVITY



### FUN POST

### CROSSWORD



- Across**
- 7 Attack suddenly
  - 8 Opulence
  - 9 Wise Men
  - 10 Flavoured
  - 11 Plentiful
  - 13 Aroma
  - 16 Gem
  - 17 Amble
  - 19 Krung Thep locale
  - 21 Garret
  - 23 Merciful
  - 24 Mean
  - 6 Loyal (4-4)
  - 12 Modernise
  - 14 Single great stone
  - 15 Insincerely
  - 18 Department store aim
  - 20 Abadan locale
  - 22 Like some memories
- Down**
- 1 Carbonated drink
  - 2 Boundless
  - 3 Dense fog (3,4)
  - 4 Request earnestly
  - 5 Really big show

### 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.

		8	7					
4		2					5	
	3				8			
	4	3			6		9	
	9				1	4	7	
	8	9	7				3	
			1				3	
					2	1		
					3	9		5

### SOLUTIONS

**CROSSWORD**

S	C	R	I	P	T	A	Z	O	R	E	S
T	O	R	S	A	E	E					
L	I	C	E	O	S	T	R	I	C	H	R
L			D	R	E	R					P
T	E	M	P	U	R	A	E	V	A	D	E
A	C	Y	R								R
C	Y	G	N	E	T		P	R	O	S	I
A	N		D	O							A
N	A	I	V	E		R	O	M	U	L	U
D	T	R	O	P	A						A
O	U	T	O	P	I	A	N				P
U	D	S	N	O							A
R	E	E	K	E	D		S	V	E	L	T

**SUDOKU**

3	8	1	6	2	9	4	5	7
6	7	9	4	5	8	3	2	1
2	5	4	7	3	1	8	6	9
4	6	5	3	7	2	9	1	8
9	3	2	1	8	6	5	7	4
8	1	7	9	4	5	6	3	2
5	9	6	2	1	4	7	8	3
7	2	8	5	9	3	1	4	6
1	4	3	8	6	7	2	9	5

CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW



A workplace that truly supports its people goes beyond policies—it fosters understanding, respect, and real change. With the 'Matrika' menstrual leave policy, we are taking a step toward normalising conversations around women's health and well-being

HARISH KOHLI | PRESIDENT AND MD, ACER INDIA

## PLI SCHEME FOR SPECIALITY STEEL: COMPANIES COMMIT ₹17,000 CRORE

A total of 25 companies signed 42 agreements with the government to manufacture high-end steel at an estimated investment of ₹17,000 crore under the second round of the PLI Scheme for speciality steel, an official statement said Monday



### of the day **Quote**

India and the US plan to negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement. Both countries would focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration



PANKAJ CHAUDHARY | MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCE

Women's workforce participation in India shows a clear divide across metropolitan cities and smaller towns. This can be levelled out with good company policy, especially looking at the opportunities in tier II and III cities. Education levels also enhance this divide



KARTIK NARAYAN | CEO - STAFFING, TEAMLEASE SERVICES

By eliminating referral fees on crores of products and reducing shipping costs, we're making it more lucrative for sellers to sell on Amazon.in



AMIT NANDA | DIRECTOR, SELLING PARTNER SERVICES, AMAZON INDIA

## STOCKS SHINE D-St erases 2025 losses

Renewed optimism by foreign investors, better valuations bolster benchmarks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: Domestic equity markets have reversed this year's losses as both benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty extended their winning momentum to the sixth day in a row Monday after facing heavy corrections recently.

Return of foreign investors after a prolonged period of selling, bargain hunting at lower levels, better valuations and the US Fed signalling two rate cuts in 2025 have boosted investor sentiment, experts said.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex has jumped 4,155.47 points or 5.62 per cent in six days since March 17. The NSE Nifty zoomed 1,261.15 points or 5.63 per cent during this period.

The Sensex had tanked 4,302.47 points or 5.55 per cent last month, while in January it declined 638.44 points or 0.81 per cent. So far in March, the BSE benchmark surged 4,786.28 points or 6.53 per cent.

On Monday, the Sensex jumped 1,078.87 points or 1.40 per cent to settle at an over six-week high of 77,984.38. During the day, it zoomed 1,201.72 points or 1.56 per cent to 78,107.23. The Nifty surged by 307.95 points or 1.32 per cent to 23,658.35.

Intra-day, the benchmark zoomed 358.35 points or 1.53 per cent to 23,708.75.

"After selling a record USD 29 billion over the last five months, foreign investors are showing renewed interest turning net buyers in recent sessions. Foreign outflows have been a major factor in recent corrections. Softer US dollar, after the Trump trade war sparked



Indian markets had a remarkable rebound in March so far. Bargain hunting at lower levels and better valuation, return of foreign investors amid softer dollar and lower US yields and domestic macro-outlook getting better, are the reasons that may have factored in the rebound

SATISH CHANDRA ALURI | ANALYST, LEMONN MARKETS DESK

concerns over US growth, also helped as capital moved from the US to Europe and EMs like India etc," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, noted.

He further said that domestic growth showing signs of revival with Q3 GDP coming at 6.2%, compared to 5.6% in Q2. Increase in govt spending coupled with rebound in agriculture output due to monsoon helped the rebound.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.32 per cent and small-cap index climbed 1.17 per cent. All BSE sectoral indices ended higher, with bankex rallying 2.53 per cent, utilities (2.42 per cent), power (2.31 per cent), industrials (2 per cent), financial services (1.97 per cent), capital goods (1.95 per cent) and realty (1.51 per cent).

As many as 2,496 stocks advanced while 1,640 declined and 162 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"The Indian equity markets staged a strong recovery, erasing all losses from 2025, with the Nifty-50 and BSE Sensex rallying over 7.5% from their recent swing lows of 21,964.60 and 72,633.54, respectively. "The market's uptrend was largely driven by technical buying and value accumulation, particularly after the Nifty-50 breached the key psychological level of 22,000, rather than any significant fundamental shifts," Vishnu Kant Upadhyay, AVP - Research & Advisory, Master Capital Services Ltd, said.

Additionally, FIIs turned net buyers, seizing attractive valuations and further accelerating the rally, he added.

### UNION BANK ORGANISES CSR ACTIVITY

**CUTTACK:** Union Bank of India, Regional Office, Cuttack organised a CSR activity at Gaithipur Village, near Balikuda, Jagatsinghpur March 23 as part of its month long celebration of International Women's Day which had fallen March 8. Sarada Prasanna Jena, MLA, Ersama inaugurated the CSR program in presence of Runilata Behera, Jilla Parishad, Tunilata Behera, Sarpanch, Rama Chandra Mohanty, former Jilla Parishad. Under this activity, as a part of welfare measure, mosquito nets were distributed to 100 needy women and umbrellas to another 100 needy persons by the guests. In this occasion Saroj Kumar Rout, Regional Head, Bishnu Charan Behera, Deputy Regional Head, Chinmay Behera, Chief Manager and lady members of CSR committee Tasanum Naaz, Navnita Sen and Tapaswini Nanda were present from Bank side. Prakash Sundaray, Branch Head of Arilo branch informed about various development schemes of the bank for women customers. The programme was organised by Narendranath Biswal, one of the respected personality of Gaithipur area and well managed by Manosmita Rout.

## Odisha key player in India's steel industry, says Gadodia

Scan Group is a renowned name in iron and steel industry. **Scan Steels Limited** is the flagship company of Scan Group of Industries and represents its integrated steel plant located at Rajgangpur. Through strategic marketing and direct customer outreach, the brand became a household name in Odisha and nearby states. In 2014, it achieved the milestone of getting listed on the BSE. Over the years, the company has expanded to become the state's largest TMT manufacturer through secondary steelmaking. The visionary behind this successful business is **Chairman Rajesh Gadodia** whose commitment to maintaining uniform quality over the years has solidified the brand's reputation. In an interaction with **Orissa POST**, Gadodia shares his entrepreneurial journey. Excerpts...



with India's overall positive trajectory in this sector. The state government has recently approved industrial projects worth ₹32,736 crore, further bolstering the state's industrial landscape. These approvals, granted ahead of the Utkarsh Odisha - Make in Odisha conclave 2025, underscore the state's proactive approach to attracting and facilitating large-scale industrial investments. Odisha's rich natural resources, strategic location, and supportive government policies have positioned it as a key player in India's steel industry. The state is not only witnessing but also actively contributing to the robust growth of India's steel industry, reinforcing its status as a bright spot in the global steel market.

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

■ After completing BTech in Bangalore, I returned to my native place, Rajgangpur, and joined my father, Sawarmal Gododia, in a trading business. Recognising my business acumen, strategic thinking, and knowledge, he encouraged me to venture into manufacturing. Following his guidance, I laid the foundation for my business in 1992 at Rajgangpur. Today, we are a fully integrated steel manufacturer with captive power plants, sponge iron, and SMS facilities. Our company has consistently focused on adding upstream and downstream value-adding installations to optimise processes, reduce production costs, expand market reach, and minimise reliance on the state power grid through captive power generation.

**■ What are the leading challenges that the industry is facing?**

■ The steel sector in Odisha faces challenges like fluctuating raw material prices, high logistics costs, and environmental compliance. Infrastructure bottlenecks and power supply issues also impact production efficiency. Global market volatility and import competition add further pressure. Skilled workforce retention remains a concern for sustained growth. Despite these, Odisha's steel industry continues to expand with strategic investments and policy support.

**■ India remains a bright spot in global steel industry. Are you also witnessing this in Odisha market?**

■ Yes, Odisha is indeed experiencing significant growth in steel industry, aligning

in Odisha and nearby states. The secret to our success lies in low-cost production, superior quality materials, and a dedicated workforce and distribution network. Our organisation fosters long-term relationships, instilling confidence and trust among employees and business partners. Looking ahead, we are expanding the steel business through trading and a new steel plant setup within our existing factory and additional land in Sundargarh with an investment of ₹ 600 crore over the next six years. Additionally, we are diversifying into logistics, real estate, and green energy while planning investments in the NBFC sector. Our ultimate goal is to achieve a group turnover of ₹10,000 crore. We are also in the process of listing on the NSE, allowing our shares to be traded on both exchanges. The steel industry is also moving towards greener technologies, such as hydrogen-based steel-making, carbon capture, and increased recycling; so our focus will be on reducing emissions while also meeting the growing global demand.

**■ As a successful entrepreneur, do you have any advice for the new entrants?**

■ Success in business requires vision, resilience, and adaptability. Always focus on quality, cost efficiency, and customer trust. Innovation and strategic investments drive long-term growth. Build strong relationships and lead with integrity. Stay committed, embrace challenges, and never stop learning.

## SHORT TAKES

### Rupee soars on strong dollar inflows

**Mumbai:** The Indian rupee leaped higher Monday, with persistent dollar sales from foreign banks helping the local unit claw back all of its losses in 2025 so far. The rupee rose to a peak of 85.50 during the session, strengthening past levels last seen at the end of 2024. The currency closed at 85.6350 against the U.S. dollar, up 0.4% on the day. A nine-day streak of gains has boosted the rupee, as the currency benefited from dollar inflows related to inter-company borrowings and repatriation of corporate profits, which are usual in March, the last month of India's financial year. Inflows into Indian bonds - about \$3 billion over March so far - and a pickup in foreign buying of Indian stocks over the last couple of trading sessions have also helped the currency, which was teetering near record-low levels as recently as last month.

### Tech startups clinch \$2.5bn funding in Q1

**New Delhi:** India's tech startups raised \$2.5 billion in the first quarter of 2025, marking a 13.64 per cent increase over the previous quarter and an 8.7 per cent rise from the year-ago period, a feat that secured its spot as the third most-funded country globally after the US and UK, according to a report by market intelligence platform Tracxn. The report highlighted that auto tech, enterprise applications and retail were the top-performing sectors in Q1 2025.

## Biz growth dipped due to weaker services demand

REUTERS

**Bangalore, March 24:** Growth in India's overall business activity softened in March as robust manufacturing expansion failed to offset a slowdown in the services sector, a private survey showed Monday.

HSBC's flash India Composite Purchasing Managers' Index compiled by S&P Global, slipped to 58.6 in March from February's final reading of 58.8, lower than a Reuters poll's median prediction of 59.0.

The 50-mark divides growth from contraction.

The manufacturing PMI index increased to 57.6 from 56.3, remaining in the expansion territory for more than three-and-a-half years.

But the dominant-services sector's PMI index fell to 57.7 from 59.0 in February, contributing to the fall in the overall index. New orders - a key gauge for demand - and output, rose from last month, signaling better operating conditions for manufacturers. In contrast, new business in services eased as demand took a hit.

However, international demand for both manufacturing



and services slowed, expanding at the slowest pace in three

### India's manufacturing sector expanded at a faster pace in March ... The output index rose to its highest level since July 2024

PRANJUL BHANDARI | CHIEF ECONOMIST, HSBC

months. US President Donald Trump has imposed fresh tariffs on goods from China, Canada and Mexico and his constant flip-flops on trade has made the business outlook uncertain. More tariffs on US trading partners are looming April 2. Indian businesses were less upbeat about future activity

as sentiment for the coming year fell to a seven-month low, which also slowed the pace of hiring. Input costs increased at a faster pace in March as goods producers recorded an acceleration to a three-month high.

Businesses did not pass on higher input costs to clients and overall charge inflation rose at its weakest pace since February 2022.

India consumer inflation fell below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) medium-term 4% target in February for the first time in six months, raising the chances of another rate cut next month.

### RBI's \$10 billion forex swap oversubscribed

REUTERS

**Mumbai, March 24:** The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) \$10 billion, 3-year dollar/rupee buy-sell swap auction Monday to boost rupee liquidity was oversubscribed by a little over two times, with the cutoff rate set at ₹5.86.

Under the swap, the central bank will inject liquidity amounting to \$10.04 billion equivalent of rupees into the banking system Wednesday. The transaction will be reversed in three years.

The swap is part of series of measures that the RBI has taken to ease a liquidity crunch in the banking system. The liquidity deficit stood at about ₹2 trillion (\$23.27 billion) last Friday.

The central bank injected about \$64 billion worth of rupee liquidity into the system through open market bond purchases, longer-tenor repo operations, and FX swaps, before Monday's auction.

The RBI set the swap's cutoff premium at ₹5.86, lower than the ₹6.55 set for a similar-sized and duration auction held late last month. The weighted average premium of the bids accepted was ₹5.92, it said, compared to ₹6.73 in the previous auction.

## Private capex share dips to decadal low of 33% in FY24: ICRA

The private sector has instead focused on deploying excess cash at reducing loan burdens rather than investing in new facilities, choosing to run at high capacity utilisation

investments in the economy dipped to a decadal low of 33 per cent in FY24.

Among the private companies, it was the unlisted players which were subdued in investments as compared to the listed entities, as per a report.

It can be noted that for the last few years, the government has been driving investments, leading to concerns in some quarters over the private sector's absence and its impact on the overall economic activity.

The private sector has instead focused on deploying excess cash at reducing loan



burdens rather than investing in new facilities, choosing to run at high capacity utilisation.

Illustrating the importance of investments in the economy, the agency said Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), encompassing the gross addition to fixed assets and intangibles,

Weak domestic consumption, especially urban, muted export demand, and the influx of cheap Chinese imports in some sectors, among other factors, restricted the capacity expansion plans of Indian corporate

K RAVICHANDRAN | CHIEF RATING OFFICER, ICRA

constitutes around 30 per cent of India's nominal GDP, making it the second largest component after private final consumption expenditure. The GFCF has been slowing

down since FY23, largely due to the slowdown in the private sector's activity, the agency said, adding that government capex and household investments in real estate have helped it.

The listed corporates increased their capex spending by 28 per cent in FY23 and 12 per cent in FY24, but the unlisted entities experienced a contraction in FY24, dragging overall private capex growth, the agency said.

The cash generation of corporates has consistently improved, post the Covid shock, with the ratio of cash flow from

operations vis-a-vis capex increasing to 1.6 times in FY2024 from an average of 1.3 times from FY2014 to FY2020. This has also led to a steady reduction in gearing levels to 0.9 times in FY2024 from 1.1 times in FY2014, it said.

"Deleveraged corporate balance sheets, together with improving cash flows from operations, point towards favourable conditions for an upturn in the private capex cycle," Ravichandran said, adding RBI's rate cuts, and income tax relief in the budget could help the process.

# Respites for kabaddi Ashutosh wins thriller for DC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

The IKF had banned the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India in July last year after the 'elected body' was not allowed to take charge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: The international governing body of kabaddi is set to lift suspension imposed on the national federation next month after the court-appointed administrator handed over the charge to the 'elected body'.

International Kabaddi Federation (IKF) President Vinod Kumar Tiwari told PTI that the ban will be lifted after an executive council meeting scheduled next month. The IKF had banned the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India (AKFI) in July last year after the 'elected body' was not allowed to take charge.

"The court-appointed administrator has handed over the charge to the AKFI office bearers who were elected in December 2023. The AKFI office bearers have started functioning from AKFI office at JLN Stadium," Tiwari said in an interview.

"So, the ban on AKFI will be lifted. We will have our executive board meeting (of the IKF) next month and the ban will be officially lifted."

In a February 6 order, the Supreme Court had asked Justice (Retd.) S P Garg, the AKFI administrator, to hand over control of the federation to the office bearers elected in December 2023.

The SC division bench had, however, clarified that it hadn't recognised the elected body of the federation yet, but was passing the order to allow participation of Indian players in the senior Asian Kabaddi Champi-



We did mistakes also, we have not held any tournament in the last eight years. The fulcrum of kabaddi (in the world) is India but there were no national championships or World or Asian championships in India as AKFI has been run by a court-appointed administrator. But things will get back to normal from now onwards. We will conduct 2-3 World Championships consecutively

VINOD KUMAR TIWARI | PRESIDENT, IKF

Championship in Iran.

Tiwari said the IKF had already allowed the Indian players' participation in the Asian Championships.

Earlier in 2019, the Delhi High Court made Justice (Retd.) Garg as the AKFI administrator after quashing appointment of former federation chief Janardan Singh Gahlot as 'Life President' and election of his wife as president.

In the December 2023 elections held under the charge of Garg, Vibhor Vineet Jain was elected AKFI president and Jitendra Thakur as general secretary. But the outcome of the election was kept subject to a petition before the High Court.

That meant that Garg continued to be in charge of the AKFI affairs, leading to the ban imposed on the national federation by the IKF.

Visakhapatnam, March 24: Ashutosh Sharma's late heroics earned Delhi Capitals a thrilling one-wicket win against Lucknow Super Giants in their Indian Premier League season opener here Monday.

Chasing 210, Delhi Capitals slipped to 7/3 in the second over and limped to 116 for six after 13 overs, but Ashutosh's stunning knock — 66 off 31 balls with five sixes and as many fours — delivered his side a sensational win from the jaws of defeat.

Even as wickets fell regularly towards the end, Ashutosh kept his composure and executed stunning bottom-handed strokes to finish the job for his side and give Delhi Capitals a stunning start to their season.

In a contest where fortunes swung from one side to another, DC emerged on top riding on the calm and composed knock from Ashutosh, who hit the winning runs as DC made 211/9 in 19.3 overs.

There was a late twist in the tale — with six runs needed off the final over and one wicket left, LSG skipper Rishabh Pant missed a stumping on the first ball from Shahbaz Ahmed which would have given his side the win but it wasn't meant to be.

LSG, who put on a below-par total on a placid surface here after scoring 209/8, made early inroads to shock Delhi's chase.

A recovery looked largely difficult as Delhi Capitals largely appeared more in damage-control mode than to make a real crack at the target.

However, the pair of debutant Vipraj Nigam (39 off 15 balls, 5x4s, 2x6s) and Ashutosh threatened to turn the tables



on LSG with their 55-run standoff only 22 balls for the seventh wicket, but the second strategic break ended their resistance right upon resumption.

Nigam fell to Digvesh Rathi (2/30) and Ravi Bishnoi (2/53) dismissed Mitchell Starc for a second wicket in quick succession as LSG tightened the screws on a faltering Delhi Capitals.

But despite losing Starc as the eighth wicket, Ashutosh smacked two sixes and a four off Bishnoi in the 18th over and

hit 10 more runs off the final two balls of the penultimate over from Prince Yadav, even as DC lost Kuldeep Yadav.

Earlier, Delhi Capitals staged a strong comeback after Nicholas Pooran (75) and Mitchell Marsh's (72) blitz to keep Lucknow Super Giants to a sub-par 209 for 8.

LSG were at least 30 runs short on a good batting track losing seven wickets for 61 runs after being 133 for 1 in the 12th over.

With no assistance off the pitch, LSG openers went off

the blocks quickly with Marsh bludgeoning half dozen of sixes and an equal number of boundaries, including a 21-ball fifty for his fastest IPL half-century.

Pooran dazzled with his stunning strokeplay to make 75 off only 30 balls with 7 sixes and 6 fours.

LSG appeared set for a total in excess of 240 at one stage, but riding on a splendid spell from Kuldeep (4-0-20-2) and Starc's 3/42, Delhi Capitals applied brakes on their opponent's charge with tremendous success.

## SHORT TAKES

### Singh elected as bureau member of UWW-Asia

Amman: WFI President Sanjay Kumar Singh was Monday elected as a bureau member of United World Wrestling (UWW)-Asia, the national federation has announced. The election took place during the UWW-Asia General Assembly in Amman Monday, a day before the start of the Asian Championship. "This is not just a personal milestone but a testament to the growth and recognition of Indian wrestling at the global level. I look forward to working closely with UWW-Asia to promote and develop the sport across the continent," said Singh. According to WFI, Singh secured 22 votes out of 38, "demonstrating strong support from the Asian wrestling community."

### Women stars retained in BCCI central contracts

New Delhi: India women's team captain Harmanpreet Kaur, her deputy Smriti Mandhana and all-rounder Deepthi Sharma were Monday retained in Grade A, the highest category of central contracts offered by BCCI. Pacer Renuka Thakur, all-rounder Jemimah Rodrigues, wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh and opener Shafali Verma managed to hold on to their Grade B contracts. Left-arm orthodox bowler Rajeshwari Gaikwad, who was in Grade B last year, didn't find a place this season. The Indian team will have to rise to the occasion later this year when the ODI World Cup is at home. Despite all the resources at their disposal, Indian women are yet to win a global trophy.

## ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

### India face tricky Bangladesh

After morale-boosting 3-0 win over Maldives, India look to continue robust record against Bangladesh in men's football

AGENCIES

Shillong, March 24: A 3-0 thrashing of Maldives in their first international match of the year will certainly boost their confidence, but India will be wary of a tricky Bangladesh in their 2027 AFC Asian Cup qualifying round match here Tuesday.

India notched a commanding win over lower-ranked Maldives here March 19, which marked the first win under the charge of Manolo Marquez. The win was also significant as the talismanic Sunil Chhetri led the team with a superb goal in his international return, his 95th in India Jersey.

Bangladesh have been familiar but tricky rivals for India and historically it has not been easy outings whenever the two sides faced each other. India though are currently ranked much higher in the FIFA chart — 126th as against 185th on Bangladesh.

The last match between the two sides had ended in a 1-1 draw in the 2021 SAFF Championships in Maldives with Chhetri scoring India's goal. Chhetri had also scored India's both goals in the 2-0 win over



On Tuesday, March 25, India and Bangladesh will face off for the 29th time in international football. The subcontinental rivalry, perhaps the biggest in the region, has been dominated by the Blue Tigers, who have won 14 contests — including the first one at the 1978 Asian Games — lost just four, and 10 have ended in draws

their eastern neighbours in a 2022 FIFA World Cup qualifying round match.

Bangladesh will fancy their chances as they have come with English Premier League (EPL) player Hamza Choudhury, who is currently playing for Sheffield United on loan from Leicester City.

But India head coach Marquez is not unduly worried about Hamza and said his side

will win on Tuesday if they play according to his plan.

"Hamza, obviously, is a good player who was playing in Premier League. It's good for not just Bangladesh but Asian football that such players are playing for national team. His teammates will be very motivated to play with him," Marquez said at the pre-match press conference.

"We always expect the best version of our opponents. Our approach to every game is similar, whoever the opponents are — Maldives, Bangladesh, Hong Kong or Singapore. You need to know the good and bad about them. But we can't change our style of play. We know if we play a good game, we will win tomorrow," said Marquez.

Tuesday's match holds importance for India as any slip-up could be disastrous in their bid to make it to the 2027 AFC Asian Cup.

## Djoko breaks Nadal's Masters milestone

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Miami, March 24: Novak Djokovic earned a record 411th ATP Masters 1000 match win when he defeated Camilo Ugo Carabelli of Argentina at the Miami Open, breaking a tie with Spaniard Rafael Nadal. The 24-time Grand Slam champion cruised to a 6-1, 6-0 third-round victory over Lucky Loser Carabelli.

The Serbian entered the tournament with 409 Masters 1000 victories, just one behind his longtime rival. He tied Nadal for most match wins (410) since the series' introduction in 1990, when he recorded his 411th Masters 1000 match win on Sunday.

Djokovic, who owns the most titles (40), finals (59) and semi-finals (78) at Masters 1000 level has now moved past Nadal for most match wins (410) since the series' introduction in 1990, when he recorded his 411th Masters 1000 match win on Sunday.

Djokovic's 411th victory comes almost 20 years after his first at a Masters 1000 event. The former No. 1 clinched his maiden victory at that level in Paris in 2005, when he defeated Victor Hanescu.

The 37-year-old has since claimed a record 40 Masters 1000 titles, with his first coming in Miami in 2007. In 2018 he became the first and only player to win all nine Masters 1000 events. By 2020, he had won each tournament at least



I'm honoured to have another milestone, another record broken. There's always something on the line pretty much every time I play, and of course that motivates me to do well at tournaments

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

twice. He is now 411-91 at Masters 1000 events, according to the ATP Win/Loss Index.

The 37 year old Serb, who's vying for his seventh Miami Open title that would surpass Andre Agassi for the most, will take on another young star in 23-year-old Italian Lorenzo Musetti, the 15th seed, in the round of 16.

Djokovic is also chasing his first Masters 1000 title since 2023 when he triumphed in Paris.

### Odisha win in National Women's Hockey League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, March 24: Odisha, Mizoram, Maharashtra and Jharkhand registered wins in their respective matches of the National Women's Hockey League Final Phase here Monday.

In the first match, Odisha defeated Haryana 2-0 in Pool A. Pratiba Kindo (9th minute) and Shibani Lugun (59th) scored for Odisha to take the game away from table toppers Haryana.

Mizoram defeated Madhya Pradesh 2-1 in another Pool A match. Lalitachhungi (42nd) and Manglawmsang (58th) scored for Mizoram while Suneeta Kumari (54th) struck the consolation goal for Madhya Pradesh.

With this win, Mizoram is now at the third position in the pool standings whereas Madhya Pradesh slipped to fifth position.

Maharashtra defeated Bengal 4-2 to secure their first win in the tournament. Sanika Chandrakant Mane (18th), Tanushree Dinesh Kadu (29th), Nikku Gurjar (54th) and Khushi (56th) scored for Maharashtra.

Jamuna Ekka (3rd) opened account for Bengal while captain Subila Tirkey (48th) scored the other goal.

Maharashtra is now at the sixth position whereas Bengal is yet to open account in the pool standings.

In the last match of the day, Jharkhand defeated Manipur 8-0 in Pool A.

## Former CWG medallist Reddy hangs racquet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: India's doubles specialist B Sumeeth Reddy, a member of the 2022 Commonwealth Games mixed team silver medal-winning squad, has announced his retirement as an active badminton player to focus entirely on coaching.

The 33-year-old from Hyderabad, who formed the men's doubles pair with Manu Attri and also played mixed doubles with several shuttlers, including his wife N Sikki Reddy, made the announcement through social media Sunday. "RETIRED AND PROUD. Embracing the next chapter with gratitude and excitement. I thank my family, friends and well wishers for all the support," Sumeeth wrote in an Instagram



post. Sumeeth and Manu, who achieved the highest world ranking of 17, won the 2016 South Asian Games gold medal, qualified for the Rio Olympics, and were also part of the men's team at the Asia Team Championships in Hyderabad.

He represented India at the

2014 and 2018 Asian Games and won the 2015 Mexico City Grand Prix and 2016 Canada Open, along with finishing as runner-up at the US Open and Dutch Open in 2015.

Along with Ashwini Ponnapa, Sumeeth also finished second at the 2017 Syed Modi

I have always pushed my limits and wanted to achieve things that I could not do in my career...

But currently, even though at World Rank 25, I have started to believe that the best phase of my career is already behind me. Also, despite a few other circumstances, I have stepped down from my professional playing career

B SUMEETH REDDY

International.

"Believe me, there will be a time in your career when you will have to stop playing professional sport, and on that day you should be able to step aside with no regrets, knowing that you have given your 110% to become the best version of yourself," he wrote.

## B'desh player Tamim suffers heart attack during match

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 24: Former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal Monday underwent angioplasty after suffering a heart attack during a Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League match in Dhaka.

According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, the incident occurred in the first innings of the 50-over-a-side contest between Mohammedan Sporting Club and Shinepukur Cricket Club when the 36-year-old Iqbal felt pain in his chest.

Tamim, who was leading Mohammedan, fielded for just one over before being rushed to a nearby hospital.

"Initially, a helicopter was



arranged for Tamim's movement to the hospital, but he could not be flown from the BKSP ground in Savar. He was later taken to the Fazilatunnesa Hospital," the report quoted match referee Debabrata Paul as saying.

The treating doctors later issued an official medical bulletin. "He returned to us in a crit-

ical condition. We can call it a heart attack, and we subsequently did an angiogram and angioplasty to remove the blockage. The medical procedure has gone smoothly. He is currently under observation.

"The swift coordination between the medical staff at BKSP and the hospital ensured Tamim was treated quickly," the bulletin read.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board had cancelled a scheduled board meeting this afternoon after the development. BCB president Faruque Ahmed is at the hospital, along with other members. Iqbal had announced his retirement from international cricket for the second time in January this year.