



Nostalgic Nimrat

Actor Nimrat Kaur takes a walk down memory lane, sharing key moments from her journey in theatre

LEISURE | P2



NK bolsters Russian Army

North Korea sends around 3,000 more troops to Russia in January & February in continued support for Putin's war on Ukraine

INTERNATIONAL | P10



Stocks bounce back

Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounds by nearly 318 points on buying in blue-chip HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and L&T

BUSINESS | P11



Wrestlers dominate

Nitesh clinches second bronze medal for India in Senior Asian Wrestling Championship 2025 in Amman

SPORTS | P12

GANDHI MARG TURNS BATTLEFIELD

Lightning strikes claimed 1,418 lives in 5 years: Pujari

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Lightning strikes have claimed 1,418 lives in the state over the past five years, Revenue and Disaster Management (R&DM) Minister Suresh Pujari told the Assembly Thursday.

Replying to a query of BJP legislator Tankadhar Tripathy, the R&DM minister said the fatalities took place between 2020-21 and 2024-25.

Pujari said lightning strikes claimed 339 lives during 2020-21, 296 in 2021-22, 306 in 2022-23, 272 in 2023-24 and 205 in 2024-25.

Mayurbhanj district registered the maximum 134 lightning deaths, followed by Balasore (110), Ganjam (104) and Keonjhar (100), he added.

Boudh district recorded the lowest of 11 lightning deaths, Pujari said.

To protect lives from lightning strikes, the Forest, Environment and Climate Change department prepared an action plan in 2023-24 which was implemented during 2024-25, he said.

The minister said Rs 7.59 crore has been sanctioned to Forest department to plant 23 lakh palm saplings. "So far, 19 lakh palm saplings have already been planted in 51 forest divisions," Pujari added.

Notably, palm trees act as natural conductors during lightning strikes and prevent loss of lives.

Odisha government had declared lightning as a state-specific disaster in June 2015.

According to the state disaster response fund guidelines, an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh each has been paid to the next of kin of those killed in lightning strikes.



UP IN ARMS: Congress activists hurl chairs at police personnel during a protest on Mahatma Gandhi Marg in Bhubaneswar, Thursday, while in a retaliatory action, cops lathicharge a protester



PICS: MANORANJAN MISHRA

A day after Congress MLAs were denied entry to Assembly premises following their phased suspension, the Mahatma Gandhi Marg in Bhubaneswar virtually turned into a battleground Thursday. Thousands of party workers pelted stones and threw chairs at police personnel when they were obstructed from proceeding towards the House in protest against 'rising' crimes against women. It prompted the police to resort to lathicharge, use water cannons and burst teargas shells to disperse the agitating activists. Scores of party workers, policemen and media representatives were injured in the melee, while OPCC chief Bhakta Charan Das and some other leaders were picked up by the cops for allegedly instigating the violence. Das, meanwhile, threatened to launch a 'Nyaya Satyagraha' across the state, demanding safety for women amid the 'rising' crime graph

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: More than 50 persons, including police personnel, were injured as Congress supporters clashed with police here Thursday after being stopped from marching to the Assem-

bled on the Mahatma Gandhi Marg in the heart of the City, an officer said. Around 2,400 police personnel were deployed on roads leading to the Assembly, which was turned into a fortress, ahead of the 'Vidhan Sabha Gherao' programme.

As the Congress workers successfully breached the security cordon and broke the first barricade, police began a lathicharge, besides using teargas shells, and water cannons.

The Congress, which has been vociferously raising the issue in the Assembly over the last few weeks leading to the suspension of its multiple MLAs, alleged that the police used excess force on the protesters who were demanding an all-party House Committee

to probe the cases, and could have arrested them instead.

Police said they were compelled to use force as the protesters hurled stones, bottles and chairs at the on-duty security personnel after breaking the first barricade. The state BJP demanded stringent action against those who attacked the police. "Fifteen police personnel were injured in the stone pelting by the protesters. The conditions of four of them were serious. A TV journalist also sustained a head injury," ACP Narasingha Bhola said.

DGP YB Khurania, who met the injured cops in the hospital, said stringent action will be taken against the lawbreakers. DCP Jagmohan Meena said, "Some people in the crowd have

also sustained injuries. All are being treated at the Capital Hospital." The protesters violated prohibitory orders under BNSS Section 163, which were imposed in the area due to the ongoing Budget session of the Assembly, he said.

"We've received information that there was an attempt to set a police vehicle on fire. The driver of the van luckily managed to thwart it. We're probing the incident," Meena said.

State Congress chief Bhakta Charan Das, who led the protesters and later courted arrest, alleged, "The police used excess force and attacked the activists while they were on the way to the Assembly. There was no point in assaulting the agitators. The police could have arrested them instead."

"Many of our workers have been injured, and the conditions of four of them were serious. The activists are being treated in different hospitals. We're not afraid of arrests," he added.

Congress leaders claimed that over 40 activists were hurt in the police action, and among them was the party's former state president, Jayadev Jena, who sustained injury on his hands, and AICC member Roselina Tirkey.

In the evening, state BJP president Manmohan Samal visited the Capital Hospital and met the injured cops and the journalist undergoing treatment there. "We strongly condemn the attack on the police and journalists on duty. There is no place for criminals in politics," he said. **P3**

MDM for Class IX, X students from April 1

Bhubaneswar: A little over a month after Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced that mid-day meal (MDM) programme would be extended to Class IX and X students at government and government-aided schools, the School and Mass Education (S&ME) department Thursday issued a letter to the nodal officers of PM Poshan saying that the scheme will come into effect from April 1. The decision was taken with a view to increasing the nutritional level of students, and enhancing their enrolment, attendance and retention at the secondary level, S&ME department Additional Secretary SK Mohapatra said. **P3**

Putin's India visit

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin has accepted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's invitation to visit India and preparations are underway for it, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Thursday. In a video address to a conference titled 'Russia and India: Toward a New Bilateral Agenda' hosted by the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), Lavrov said, "Arrangements are currently being made for Putin to visit India."

IRREGULAR by MANJUL



While you were busy collecting Saugat-e-Modi, they came and bulldozed your house

Lok Sabha okays Bill on immigration, foreigners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Lok Sabha passed the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 Thursday, with Home Minister Amit Shah asserting that those who come to India for business, education and investment are welcome, but those who pose a threat to security will face stringent action.

Various amendments moved by Opposition members were negated and the Bill was passed by a voice vote.

Shah said the Bill is necessary to strengthen the country's security and economy, promote manufacturing and trade, get global recognition for the education system and help universities earn international repute.

Replying to a debate on the Bill, Shah said the proposed legislation will strengthen the country's security, boost economy and business, besides encouraging the health and education sectors.

He also said the Bill will ensure the country gets up-to-date information about every foreigner visiting India.

"This is very important. The main issue is that the immigration is not an isolated subject but it is directly or indirectly linked to various issues. The Bill will ensure a close monitoring of everyone who visits India, why do they visit India and how long they want to stay in India. It is absolutely necessary to know the details of every foreigner visiting India," he said after the three-hour-long debate.

Discoms collected ₹457.49cr fine: Min

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Power distribution companies (discoms) in the state have collected Rs 457.49 crore as fine from consumers in the last five years, Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo has informed the Assembly.

Responding to a query of BJP MLA Upasna Mohapatra, Singh Deo, who holds the Energy portfolio, said a total of 8,70,458 consumers have been penalised during the period. Among districts, Ganjam recorded the highest fine collection of Rs 40.77 crore, followed by Cuttack (Rs 37.70 crore) and Balasore (Rs 34.49 crore).

While authorities justify fines as measures to curb power theft and ensure timely bill payments, consumers continue to voice concerns over steep penalties and billing discrepancies.

Trump announces 25% tariffs on auto imports

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Washington, March 27: President Donald Trump said he was placing 25 per cent tariffs on auto imports, a move the White House claims would foster domestic manufacturing but could also put a financial squeeze on automakers that depend on global supply chains. "This will continue to spur growth," Trump told reporters Wednesday. "We'll effectively be charging a 25 per cent tariff. The tariffs on autos would start being collected April 3," he said.

The tariffs, which the White House expects to raise USD 100 billion in revenue annually, could be complicated as even US automakers source their components from around the world.

The tariffs could be complicated as even US automakers source their components from around the world

The tax hike means automakers could face higher costs and lower sales, though Trump argues that the tariffs will lead to more factories opening in the US and the end of what he judges to be a 'ridiculous' supply chain in which auto parts and finished vehicles are manufactured across the US, Canada and Mexico. To underscore his seriousness about the tariffs directive he signed, Trump said, "This is permanent."

Trump reiterated his willingness to challenge allies by saying Thursday on social media that if the European Union

coordinated with Canada, tariffs 'far larger than currently planned' would be placed on them in retaliation.

Shares in General Motors tumbled roughly 5 per cent in Thursday morning trading. Ford's stock fell 2 per cent. Shares in Stellantis, the owner of Jeep and Chrysler, dropped 1 per cent. But the stock prices of EV makers Tesla and Rivian were up.

The American Automotive Policy Council, which represents domestic automakers, said in a statement that it is critical that tariffs are implemented in a way that avoids raising prices for consumers and that preserves the competitiveness of the integrated North American automotive sector. **P11**

Ostracised over gene-edited babies, He Jiankui seeks comeback

Chinese scientist He Jiankui, who set off global outrage and landed in jail after he skirted ethical guidelines and claimed that he created genetically modified babies resistant to HIV, is now attempting to make a comeback with a new controversial project, seeking to use gene-editing to prevent Alzheimer's disease in future generations.

However, gaining the trust of a scientific community that treats him as a pariah is a major challenge before him.

While international media has dubbed Jiankui as 'China's Frankenstein', the self-styled gene-editing pioneer has no academic affiliations and he declines to reveal where his funding comes from or who

his backers are. It isn't helping that he won't repudiate his controversial approach. In his March 11 X post, Jiankui wrote, "Ethics is holding back scientific innovation and progress."

At his Beijing home in a gated compound, a relaxed Jiankui outlined his plans for a scientific comeback. He can't travel—he said China won't renew his passport—but hopes to send two Chinese colleagues to the US to conduct research on mice and monkeys for the Alzheimer's project. After that, he hopes to conduct human trials, and he has identified South Africa as a place where that might be possible. The Wall Street Journal reported.

Gene-editing embryos to im-



plant in wombs isn't condoned by any country; scientists and ethicists say the practice raises concerns on many fronts, including unknown risks to

future generations. But updated ethical guidelines issued by South Africa's National Department of Health in May 2024 included a new section on such

research, saying it 'holds significant potential'. Some scientists have called on South Africa to revise the guidelines, fearing it might be moving toward embracing the controversial technique, it said, adding, the South African health department didn't respond to requests for comments.

It could not be learned what, if any, US contacts are still retained by Jiankui, who studied and conducted research in Texas and California.

On the wall of Jiankui's apartment hung an oil painting depicting him talking to James Watson, the co-discoverer of DNA's double-helix structure. He said he met the Nobel laureate, who caused controversy with 2007 comments about race

as a basis for genetic differences in intelligence, at a 2017 forum. "Make people better," Jiankui recalls Watson telling him.

James' son Duncan wrote, in an email, that his father, who turns 97 in April, no longer gives interviews.

Jiankui's attempt to return to research has raised fresh concerns in the scientific community and left questions about Beijing's attitude toward him.

Meanwhile, Jeffrey Kahn, director of Johns Hopkins Berman Institute of Bioethics, said Jiankui's secretiveness in his latest research is a concern. "Let's hope there's greater transparency as he goes forward," Kahn said.

AGENCIES

leisure



SYDNEY SWEENEY CALLS OFF WEDDING

Hollywood actress Sydney Sweeney and her fiancé, Jonathan Davino, have encountered significant challenges in their relationship, leading them to call off their wedding, according to a recent report. Sweeney, 27, and Davino, 41, were first linked in 2018 before getting engaged four years later.

CATE BLANCHETT TALKS ABOUT AGEISM, SEXISM IN HOLLYWOOD

Oscar winning-actress Cate Blanchett, who has been in the industry for almost three decades, has talked about ageism and sexism that comes with Hollywood. She also went on to explain how the industry has evolved for women of a certain age since she began acting.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
If you are about to begin some important work, today is not the day, says Ganesha. But keep yourself motivated, despite minor problems. Do something you've never done before. Think out-of-the-box: grow your own mint, make some chocolates.

TAURUS
As an administrator, you will command with an iron fist today, predicts Ganesha. In the afternoon, you may find change slowly creeping in; you may discover a more harmonious approach to managing people as compared to a dictatorial style. You will come out with flying colours from any adverse situations.

GEMINI
Religious pursuits will take up a large chunk of your time today. You will incur expenses on religious rituals and charity work. You will find yourself going to a place of worship in search of peace and solitude, says Ganesha.

CANCER
You must get ready yourself to handle a few usual situations in an unusual way, foretells Ganesha. You will probably learn a few lessons in public psychology during the afternoon. Before arriving at any crucial decision, weigh the pros and cons with an unbiased mind, says Ganesha.

LEO
So what is it that inspires people to jump off a mountain with nothing but a parachute on their back? Guess you are going to find the answer to that question today, if not literally, then at least metaphorically. Ganesha foresees that you will indulge and delight in valorous deeds today. It is all about the adrenaline rush for you, even if it means taking spur-of-the-moment decisions on the home front.

VIRGO
Take stock of the situation you are in. Assess first and only then make a move, cautions Ganesha. In the afternoon, get footloose and relieve yourself of the cramped and overworked environment of your desk. But bid your time on bids and sealed tenders using all of your experience and business sense, says Ganesha.

LIBRA
You may get caught up in relationship issues today, foretells Ganesha. But your discretionary powers will help you steer clear of any misconceptions. Be willing to dig up the maximum support from your subordinates at work, but also keep an eye out on your opponents' moves.

SCORPIO
Chances are your beloved will share the most intimate vibes with you today, says Ganesha. The entire day shall be quiet and peaceful. Ganesha hopes your skilled negotiation will rescue you from being short changed.

SAGITTARIUS
Time is something that once spent can never be earned back, says Ganesha. The importance of time will dawn upon you today as you undertake the massive challenge of organising your life and planning your goals. At the workplace, you will put in a lot of effort, but may fall short of reaching a level that is expected of you.

CAPRICORN
Every venture is fraught with risks and accompanied by uncertainties, but if you have any inclination to start one of your own today, you won't be in two minds about it, says Ganesha. For the professionals, the day may bring recognition and accolades. This aside, your innate talent and knack for completing work on time will earn you the respect and goodwill of your seniors.

AQUARIUS
You need a break! Plan a trip, go for a movie, join a weekend meditation retreat. You may be burning yourself out. A little holiday will get you going once again. If nothing else, a game of tennis, or a brisk walk in the evening should do the trick.

PISCES
Frustration born out of a sense of stagnation will make you aggressive today. And while you are not likely to be able to meet all your deadlines, you will still make enough of an impact for people to realise the importance of your presence. Worry not, for things will take a turn for the better soon, says Ganesha.



Rashmika's biggest fears

Mumbai: Actress Rashmika Mandanna has revealed that she fears deep waters and heights. The actress treated her fans with a question and answer session on Instagram, where she was asked about her "biggest fear."

To which, she said: "Hmmm... Heights or deep waters."

An ardent K-Drama fan herself, the actress was asked about her favourite Korean show. "Most favourite hmmm... Almost every series I've watched so it's really hard to pick... but if I really have to then I'd say 'It's ok not to be okay' (sic)."

A user wanted her to suggest some "good dra-

mas", Rashmika replied: "I just finished watching love scout. There's this Chinese drama which I loooooooved called the First Frost... So cuteeee it was! And now I am watching something called the undercover high school (sic)."

On the work front, Rashmika will be seen sharing the screen with Salman Khan in the highly-awaited *Sikandar*.

Helmed by AR Murugadoss, *Sikandar* has been produced by Sajid Nadiadwala. Along with Salman and Rashmika as the leads, the cast also includes Kajal Aggarwal, Sathyaraj, Sharman Joshi and Prateik Babbar in important roles.

She also has the Ayushmann Khurrana-starrer *Thama*. Made under the direction of Aditya Sarpotdar of Munjya fame, *Thama* revolves around a relentless historian who delves into ancient texts, unravel- ing chilling truths about local vam- ends.

Nimrat takes a walk down memory lane

Mumbai: Actress Nimrat Kaur took a nostalgic walk down memory lane, sharing key moments from her journey in theatre.

Celebrating the art form that shaped her as a performer, she opened up about the lessons she learned and the challenges she faced along the way. With heartfelt reflections, she highlighted the importance of theatre in her life. Thursday, the Airlift actress took to her Instagram handle and shared a couple of photos from her theatre performances.

For the caption, Nimrat wrote, "Snapshots from a time I owe every- thing to as an actor... timestamps of my learnings, failings and most

importantly getting up to start all over again. Theatre was, is, and will always continue to be my inner compass, holy fire and my favourite playground. Where I learnt to question, create, be bold and vulnerable all at the same time. In the words of Augusto Boal "Theatre is the art of looking at ourselves." Here's to the magic of the stage, may it forever continue to inspire, to introspect and enchant us all. Happy World Theatre Day."

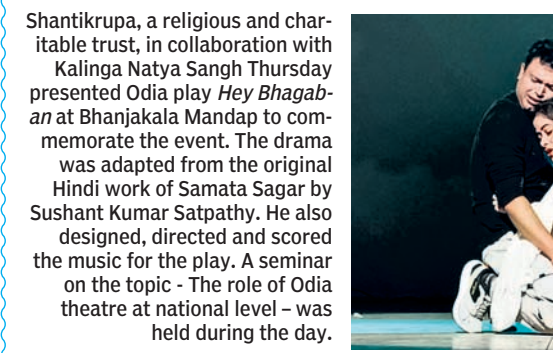
In the photos, Kaur is seen performing in various plays, fully immersed in different characters, showcasing her passion for the stage.



WORLD THEATRE DAY CELEBRATIONS IN CITY



Members of Gobardanga Shilpayan, a troupe from West Bengal, staged *Uttam Purush* at Rabindra Mandap, Thursday. The play, written and directed by Ashis Chattopadhyay, was performed in Bengali as well as Hindi. The event was organised by Odia Language, Literature and Culture department and Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi in collaboration with the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (Kolkata), Ministry of Culture, Government of India.



Shantikrupa, a religious and charitable trust, in collaboration with Kalinga Natya Sangh Thursday presented Odia play *Hey Bhagaban* at Bhanjakala Mandap to commemorate the event. The drama was adapted from the original Hindi work of Samata Sagar by Sushant Kumar Satpathy. He also designed, directed and scored the music for the play. A seminar on the topic - The role of Odia theatre at national level - was held during the day.



Members of Odisha Natya Sangha took out a padyatra from the Buddha Temple to Rabindra Mandap on the occasion.

Special event at Utkal University of Culture

Bhubaneswar: Utkal University of Culture (UUC) also organised a special programme to commemorate the day. The event was presided over by varsity VC Prasanna Kumar Swain. Odisha Sahitya Akademi and OSNA Secretary Chandrasekhar Hota joined the event as chief guest. Renowned playwright and critic Narayan Sahu delivered the keynote address and elaborated on the role of theatre in societal communication. As part of the centenary celebrations of legendary Odia playwright Manoranjan Das, a performance of his play *Sandhan* was also staged.

Waheeda almost missed her iconic 'Guide' role

Mumbai: Waheeda Rehman and Dev Anand shared a legendary on-screen partnership in Bollywood, known for their captivating chemistry, memorable songs, and iconic films. Their collaboration, which began with *CID* in 1956, reached its peak with the 1965 classic *Guide*. This bilingual romantic drama, directed by Vijay Anand and produced by Dev Anand, is based on RK Narayan's novel *The Guide*

and remains one of their most celebrated works. It tells the story of Raju, a freelance tour guide, and Rosie, the repressed wife of a wealthy archaeologist, and was even screened at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

However, Waheeda almost didn't sign on for *Guide*, citing a previous clash with the film's original director, Raj Khosla. Waheeda revealed in an interview that she had a difference of opinion with Khosla on a previous film and was unwilling to

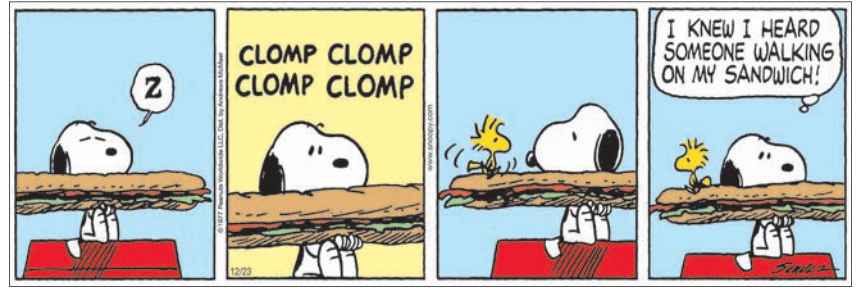


work with him again. Despite her reluctance, Dev Anand was determined to bring her on board and persuaded her to reconsider. She initially asked why his brother, Vijay Anand (Goldie), wasn't directing, but Goldie was busy with *Tere Ghar Ke Samne*.

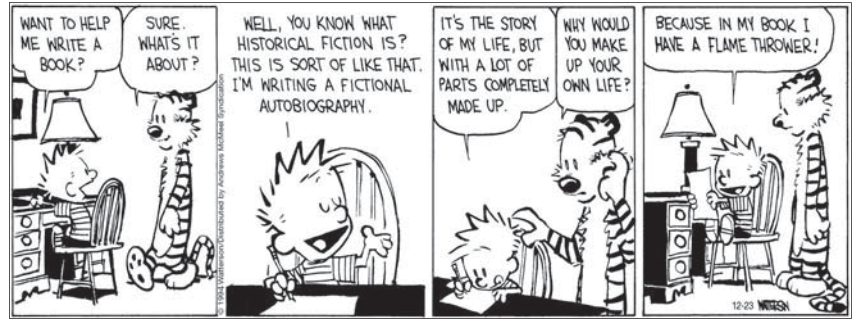
The film faced another hurdle when Chetan Anand replaced Raj Khosla but wanted a different heroine. Chetan preferred Priya Rajvansh, but Dev was firm about casting Wa-

heeda because they needed a dancer, and Priya could not dance. Eventually, Vijay Anand took over as director, and Waheeda joined the cast. The result was a timeless classic, and *Guide* remains one of Waheeda's and Dev Anand's most iconic films. Their seven-film collaboration, including *Prem Pujari* and *Gambler*, is remembered for its stellar performances and unforgettable music.

PEANUTS



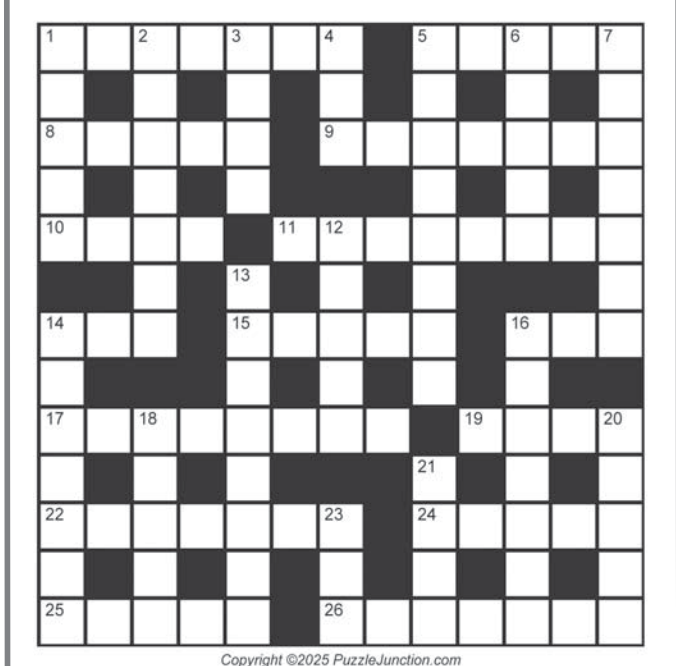
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



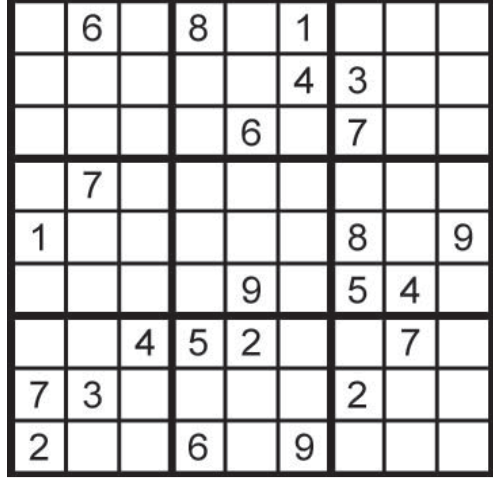
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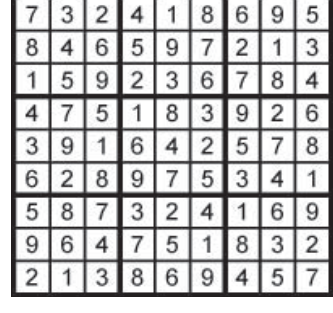
- Across**
- 1 Baseball diamond part
 - 5 Trifling
 - 8 Publicist's concern
 - 9 Birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte
 - 10 Flub
 - 11 Nagging old woman
 - 14 Old salt
 - 15 Uniform shade
 - 16 Craze
 - 17 Elite group
 - 19 Kittiwake
 - 22 Aspice
 - 24 Chose
 - 25 Pine product
 - 26 Witness
 - Down**
 - 1 Cake topper
 - 2 Taste sensation
 - 3 Fifty-fifty
 - 4 Medic
 - 5 Wall hanging
 - 6 Put to the test
 - 7 Longed
 - 12 Anticipate
 - 13 Closet denizen?
 - 14 Firebird
 - 16 Ruffle some feathers
 - 18 Tulip starters
 - 20 Hunting place
 - 21 Feathery scarves
 - 23 Modern (Prefix)

SUDOKU

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



SOLUTIONS



CHECK FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE PUZZLES TOMORROW

Cong takes battle to streets

The Lower PMG Thursday virtually turned into a battlefield as thousands of Congress workers fought a pitched battle with the police during a protest seeking an investigation by a House Committee into crimes against women that they allege have increased since the BJP came to power in the state in June last year. The Congress activists broke barricades when the security personnel tried to prevent them from entering Assembly premises, resulting in a violent scuffle that left over 50 people injured. Orissa POST captures moments of the free-for-all skirmish and retaliatory police action



NUTRITION BOOST FOR STUDENTS

MDM for Class IX, X students from April 1

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, March 27: A little over a month after Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi announced that mid-day meal (MDM) programme would be extended to Class IX and X students at government and government-aided schools, the School and Mass Education (S&ME) department Thursday issued a letter to the nodal officers of PM Poshan saying that the scheme will come into effect from April 1.

The decision was taken with a view to increasing the nutritional level of students, and enhancing their enrolment,



attendance and retention at the secondary level, S&ME department Additional Secretary SK Mohapatra said.

The total estimated financial implication amounting to Rs 570.71 crore annually will be borne by the state government under 'Mukhyamantri Poshan Yojana', he said in the letter

to the state nodal officer of PM Poshan, Girish Chandra Singh. The government also decided to provide three nutrition-rich laddoos to students of Class I to X every week from April 1, he added.

The laddoos will be distributed among the students during morning assembly on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, Singh said in a letter to the District Collectors.

The cost of each laddoo is Rs 3.50, he said.

An additional egg will also be provided to the students covered under PM Poshan. At present, two eggs are being provided each week.

BJD sprinkles 'Ganga Jal' as cops enter Assembly

AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Legislators of Opposition BJD Thursday sprinkled 'Ganga Jal' in the Assembly before attending the proceedings, alleging that the House had been "spiritually polluted" by the entry of policemen.

Police had Tuesday night entered the Well of the Assembly to evict Congress members who were staging a protest demanding a House Committee to probe crimes against women committed after the BJP came to power in the state last year.

Led by Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik, the BJD lawmakers were seen sprinkling 'Ganga Jal' from earthen pots with mango leaves in every nook and corner of the House.

"We sprinkled 'Ganga Jal' to purify the Assembly. It got polluted as the Speaker allowed the police to enter the Well of the House," BJD member and former minister Arun Kumar Sahoo said.

State yet to recover ₹2,065 cr from mining violators: Min

DEBADURLLAV HARICHANDAN, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Almost seven years after the submission of a report on illegal mining in Odisha by the Justice MB Shah Commission in the Supreme Court, the state government is yet to recover a staggering ₹2,065 crore from defaulters who inflicted hazardous environmental and forest damages, Minister for Steel and Mines Bibhuti Bhusan Jena told the Assembly, Thursday.

Elaborating, Jena said that while a cumulative violation to the tune of ₹1.81 lakh crore was flagged in the report, the state government has so far managed to collect ₹1.61 lakh crore from the defaulters.

In response to Athagarh BJD MLA Ranendra Pratap Swain's question, the minister

remarked that ₹789 crore is yet to be collected for violation of environmental standards. "In 2018, the government took action against 23 defaulters for unrecovered amount to the tune of ₹2,719 crore under the Orissa Public Demands Act, 1962", he added.

The UPA government in 2010 had constituted a commission of inquiry, led by Justice MB Shah, to inquire into the alleged illegal mining in the state, particularly the mining of iron and manganese. The matter then picked momentum, snowballing into a major controversy, with many mining lease holders challenging it in the apex court. The Shah Commission, in its report on illegal mining in Odisha, highlighted unauthorised extraction, environmental violations, and a nexus between

officials and mining firms.

The Commission had noted large-scale deforestation, water pollution, and damage to tribal livelihoods. Regulatory bodies, including the government of Odisha and Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), were found negligent in the Commission's findings.

Meanwhile, in response to Swain's question on the sudden dip in mining revenues in 2022-23, Jena said due to the export duty imposed on iron ore pellets, the revenues saw a minor reduction. Reportedly, the state earned revenue of ₹42,791 crore in 2023-24, while till February 2025, it has posted a collection of ₹32,242 crore.

Notably, the state logged a revenue collection of ₹34,188 crore in 2021-22, which slipped to ₹22,683 crore in 2022-23.

Passion for history makes Khurda daily wager turn to writing

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

Bhubaneswar, March 27: At a district-level function held at Khurda last month on the occasion of 'Magha Saptami', a little-known writer was felicitated for his research work on the war history of the area, which was well appreciated by the audience.

This was because the author of 'Khordha Itihasa Re Juddha,' depicting the battles fought by 'Paikas' (the erstwhile warrior clan of Khurda) and their heritage didn't come from any literary background, neither did he complete his formal education.

He is a daily wager and slogs day in and day out to make his, and his family's, ends meet.

Meet 55-year-old Shankar Sahoo, a resident of Banamalipur village in the district, whose love for books (history books in particular) shaped his life's journey marked by hard labour and poverty.

Shankar grew up in a poor family as the third among four brothers. Financial struggles forced him to drop out of school after Class IX. However, his curiosity and passion for reading ceased to die down.

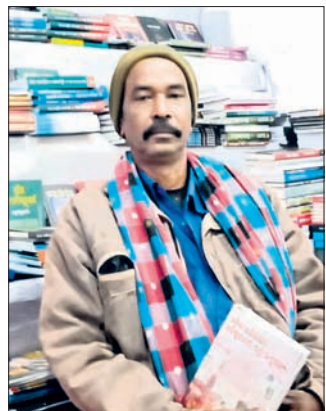
From a young age, Shankar was drawn towards history, fas-

inated by tales of ancient civilisations, dynasties, and the past that shaped the present.

Despite working as a labourer to support his family, Shankar found ways to read about history. "I saved half of my daily earnings and travelled to book fairs in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar to buy books," Shankar says with a chuckle.

His thirst for reading was so strong that he once went to the market with ₹400 to buy a dress for his daughter, but ended up buying books instead.

Shankar says even after long hours of physical labour, he makes time to visit public librar-



ies to get immersed in books. Over the years, he built his

own collection and transformed a section of his rickety thatched house into a small library using cardboard cartons and steel trunks. His collection of history books runs into a few hundreds, while he has thrown open the library doors open to children in his village.

One of the most defining moments in Shankar's life came when he laid his hands on the works of author Pradeep Kumar Patnaik. Deeply inspired by Patnaik's works, Shankar reached out to him, expressing his desire to write.

"He was deeply moved by my book 'Bhanjagada Aitiha'

and contacted me. That very day, I sensed his passion for writing. I guided him to publish his first book, and then he never looked back. Shankar is a very hardworking person who seeks to make a difference in his society," Patnaik says in his appreciation for the unassuming writer.

In 2016, Shankar published his first book, 'Odisha Ra Prachina Rajya o Rajya Bansabali,' a detailed account of Odisha's ancient kingdoms and royal dynasties.

Since then, he has written and published six to seven books, and has also contributed as an

editor to several other books.

He says his efforts to preserve history through writing caught the attention of the literary community, and many established writers extended their support to him.

Later he authored, Biramati Tapang Gada Itihas, Khordha Itihasa Re Judha Prasanga, Mundabali and some more books on history.

Over the years, Shankar's dedication and contributions have been recognised with several prestigious awards. He was awarded with Odisha Itihasa Parijata Saman, Khordha Saman, to name a few.

₹5 per litre incentive for farmers sought

Bhubaneswar, March 27: At the 28th general body meeting (GBM) of Orissa State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation (OMFED) here recently, the council members called for an increase in incentive paid to milk farmers and requested to uniformly set ₹5 per liter incentive for all milk farmers year-round.

Currently, the farmers receive an incentive ranging from ₹1 to ₹5 per liter.

The meeting was chaired by OMFED chairman Kishore Chandra Pradhan and was attended by key figures including vice-chairperson Sunita Baral, and MD Vijay Amruta Kulgane, along with district presidents, general secretaries, and other office bearers

of the organisation.

Deputy GM (HR) Jayakrushna Patnaik delivered the welcome address, and GM (Finance) Suresh Kumar Altia presented the audit report for the financial year 2018-19.

A significant support was raised for the state government's Mukhyamantri Kamdhenu Yojana (MKY), which encourages the rearing of female calves. Additionally, the meeting focused on the need for improved milk collection practices, emphasising the importance of increasing both the quantity and quality of milk procured from farmers.

Presently, OMFED collects approximately 5.4 lakh liters of milk, daily, with plans to raise this volume to between six and seven lakh liters within end of the year.



POETIC TRIBUTE: World Odisha Society hosted the 'Hrushikesh Poetry Evening' in New Delhi recently to honour Sahitya Akademi Award-winning poet Hrushikesh Mallick. The event saw participation from eminent litterateurs, Odia community representatives, and NRIs from 72 countries. Chief guest Ashok Vajpeyi praised Mallick's poetic vision, while other dignitaries lauded his literary contributions. WOS chairman Kishore Dwibedi delivered the welcome address

Indore Mayor visits BMC

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Indore Mayor Pushyamitra Bhargav visited the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) Thursday, where he was welcomed by BMC Mayor Sulochana Das, Deputy Mayor Manjulata Kanhar, Commissioner Rajesh Prabhakar Patil, and other officials.

Commissioner Patil introduced the corporation members and highlighted Indore's achievements in sanitation and waste management, emphasising its consistent top rankings in Swachh Survekshan. He also outlined the City's sanitation model, which has set a benchmark across India.

Mayor Das briefed the delegation on Bhubaneswar's sanitation and development initiatives, stressing citizen-driven participation in maintaining cleanliness. Discussions also covered staff training and exposure visits to improve sanitation management.

Bhargav, sharing Indore's experience, credited its success to a three-step approach: active citizen participation, dedicated service by Safai Mitras, and zero tolerance for violators. He also appreciated Bhubaneswar's sanitation efforts and city aesthetics.

Jharsuguda hits 41.4°C; heatwave to last 3 days

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Many parts of Odisha experienced extreme hot weather Thursday with Jharsuguda emerging the hottest place in the state at 41.4 degrees Celsius, even as the India Metrological Department (IMD) in New Delhi warned of severe heatwave conditions for the next three days across the country, including Odisha, from Friday.

Thursday, temperatures in several regions in the crossed the 40 degrees Celsius mark, while the Capital city recorded a maximum of 38.5 degrees Celsius. Sambalpur recorded a maximum of 40.0 degrees Celsius while Hirakud sizzled at 40.1 degrees Celsius. Bolangir (40.8), Titlagarh (40.0), Boudh (40.5) and Subarnapur (40.2) also reported high levels of heat, IMD sources said.

The weather office has issued heatwave warnings for the coming days, predicting that places like Sambalpur, Boudh, and Jharsuguda are likely to experience extreme temperatures in the near future. The relentless heat is taking its toll on the local population, especially vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and outdoor workers.

The heatwave conditions are not only affecting Odisha, but it is also impacting other parts of the country, triggering widespread concern about public health and safety, particularly heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses.

The Centre has taken various steps to address the growing heatwave crisis. In a letter addressed to the chief secretaries and administrators of all states and Union Territories (UTs), Union Health Secretary Pun-



PIC: BIKASH NAYAK

ya Salila Srivastava stressed the urgency of reviewing preparedness in health facilities to handle cases of heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses. She emphasised that health facilities must be stocked with essential medicines, intravenous fluids, oral rehydration salts (ORS), ice packs, and cooling equipment to manage heat-related emergencies effectively.

The Health ministry has also advised states to continue training medical staff and community health workers to recognise and respond to heat illnesses. In addition, public health officials are being encouraged to participate in virtual refresher training sessions to stay up-to-date on the latest techniques for managing heatstroke and related conditions.

One of the primary concerns highlighted in the letter is the need for fire safety in health facilities. With the rising temperatures, the risk of fires in healthcare settings is an additional challenge. The Health Secretary has also urged all health facilities to conduct thorough inspections and ensure compliance with fire safety regulations, including obtaining the necessary fire no-objection certificates (NOCs).

Focus on food distribution, public safety

In response to the extreme heat conditions, state's Food Supplies and Consumer Welfare department has issued a directive to all District Collectors to take preventive measures to safeguard public health. The department has recommended adjusting the timings for distributing food grains under the Public Distribution System (PDS). Distribution will now take place early in the morning between 7am and 10am, and in the evening between 5pm and 8pm, to avoid exposing beneficiaries to the scorching heat during midday hours.

Furthermore, temporary shades will be set up at Fair Price Shops (FPS) to provide shelter for people collecting their food supplies. The department has also instructed that adequate provisions for drinking water and ORS be made available at all FPS points and Rice Receiving Centres (RRCs) to ensure that people stay hydrated and safe from the heat.

Regional seminar on coir industry

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The regional office of the Coir Board, Bhubaneswar, recently organised a regional seminar on "Coir Industry in Odisha: Application and Environmental Impact" here at a City hotel, drawing around 200 coir artisans and entrepreneurs from Pipili, Nimapada, and Satyabadi blocks.

The seminar was inaugurated by the block development officer (BDO) of Pipili, with participation from dignitaries representing KVIC, NSIC, DIC Puri, Coconut Development Board, LDM Puri, and regional officer T Durgadas, who welcomed the guests and officially commenced the event.

The conference featured four technical paper presentations on coir applications and environmental impact. An exhibition of innovative coir products provided participants with a platform to explore new market opportunities.

The initiative marks a significant step in boosting Odisha's coir industry, fostering traditional craftsmanship and eco-friendly industrial practices for sustainable development.

CRUT to expand Ama Bus services across state

Bhubaneswar, March 27: The 49th board meeting of Capital Region Urban Transport (CRUT) focused on enhancing safety, service quality, and expanding public transportation in Odisha. Chaired by Development Commissioner and CRUT chairperson Anu Garg, the board reviewed operations and discussed the introduction of Ama Bus services in new cities, including Angul, Jharsuguda, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Baripada, Jeypore (Koraput), Balasore and Rayagada.

To improve commuter safety, new speed limits were introduced: 35 km/h for electric buses, 40 km/h for diesel buses on city routes, and 50 km/h on intercity highways.

Additionally, regular training for drivers will be conducted, covering safe driving practices, behavioral training, electric bus operations, and first-aid protocols. An Accident Committee of the State Transport Authority (STA) will investigate incidents, with a monthly accident review to strengthen safety measures.

To enhance passenger sup-



port, CRUT has launched a new toll-free assistance number (18005700218), operational from 6am to 10pm. The board also approved the introduction of a pass system in areas beyond the capital, including Rourkela, Sambalpur, and Berhampur.

A new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for hiring and training captains and guides will be implemented to ensure professionalism and safety. Captains will receive training at the HMV Driving Training Institute. Additionally, a Key Performance Indicator (KPI)-based reward system will be introduced to recognize top-performing staff and enhance operational efficiency.

Garg reaffirmed CRUT's commitment to creating a safer, more efficient, and passenger-friendly public transport system for Odisha's residents.

CLASSIFIED AFFIDAVIT

By virtue of an affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Dharamgarh, I Hemangini Sunani, W/o. Himansu Sekhar Mangaraj and D/o. Dinabandhu Sunani, R/o. Village/PO.: Chichia, P.S.: Golamunda, Dist. Kalahandi, PIN: 766029 declare that I have changed my name from Hemangini Mangaraj to Hemangini Sunani. Henceforth I shall be known as Hemangini Sunani for all future purposes.

By virtue of an affidavit No.01/1 sworn before the Executive Magistrate, Kesinga, Dist.-Kalahandi on dated 24.03.2025 Rajesh Naik, At/Po - Laitara, PS-Kesinga, Dist.-Kalahandi (Odisha) do hereby declare that I have changed my minor daughter's name from her Aadhaar Card CHATNA NAIK instead of CHETNA NAIK. Henceforth she will be known as CHETNA NAIK for all purposes.

CRS approves new Boudh-Purunakatak rail line

THE INSPECTION OF THE NEWLY-CONSTRUCTED RAIL LINE MARKS A CRUCIAL STEP IN ENSURING SAFETY AND OPERATIONAL READINESS, BRINGING THE RAIL PROJECT CLOSER TO ENHANCING CONNECTIVITY

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Commissioner of Railway Safety Brijesh Mishra recently inspected the newly-constructed 26.888 km rail line between Boudh and Purunakatak, a key segment of the Khurda Road-Bolangir rail project. The inspection assessed the track, signaling system, and bridges to ensure safety and operational readiness. This marks a major milestone in the project, which aims to enhance connectivity in Odisha's remote regions.

According to East Coast Railway (ECoR), the Khurda Road-Bolangir rail line spans a total length of 301 km, out of which 240 km has been completed and made operational. The recent inspection, con-



ducted March 25 and 26, led to the approval for commissioning the Boudh-Purunakatak section. Senior ECoR officials accompanied the CRS team during the assessment.

The rail project is being developed simultaneously from both Khurda Road and Bolangir to accelerate its completion. Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw has been closely monitoring its progress, making it a high-priority initiative.

ECoR general manager Parmeshwar Funkwal has also been reviewing the status of the project and instructing officials to expedite the work as per the Railway Board's timeline. The engine rolling and track testing between Boudh and Purunakatak have already been successfully completed.

Significant infrastructure developments have been made in the newly-constructed Purunakatak-Champapur stretch,

including nine major bridges, two Road Over Bridges (ROBs), 15 Road Under Bridges (RUBs), and 35 minor bridges. These structures are essential for ensuring safe and efficient rail operations.

Meanwhile, work on the remaining 62 km section between Purunakatak and Daspalla, which involves tunnel construction through dense forests and sanctuary zones, is progressing steadily. The completion of these tunnels will mark a major breakthrough for the project.

The Khurda Road-Bolangir rail line is expected to transform regional connectivity and boost economic growth in Odisha's remote areas. By facilitating smooth train operations and enhancing trade opportunities, it will contribute significantly to the state's infrastruc-

ture development. The Ministry of Railways remains committed to delivering this critical project on schedule.

With the successful completion of the Boudh-Purunakatak section, Indian Railways has demonstrated its dedication to overcoming engineering challenges in difficult terrains.

Once all necessary infrastructure and amenities are in place, a final decision will be taken regarding the commencement of train services. A trial run has already been conducted, confirming the track's fitness for regular operations.

As the project advances, the Khurda Road-Bolangir rail line will play a vital role in strengthening Odisha's transportation network and fostering long-term economic development.

Boyanika outlets offer record discounts

Bhubaneswar, March 27: Boyanika - the apex handloom organisation of the state has launched a special discount drive across all its outlets Thursday, including stalls at the NH Expo at Exhibition Ground and Tansali National Crafts MeLa at Janata Maidan here.

The event was inaugurated by Handlooms, Textiles & Handicrafts Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta. "The initiative not only celebrates the exceptional skills of Odisha's weavers but also supports their livelihoods and promotes the



state's rich cultural heritage on a global platform." The special initiative has been launched for the Odisha Divas celebrations, offering visitors a unique opportunity to experience and own the rich handloom heritage of the state. The discount

offer (20%+10%+5%) will be available across all Boyanika outlets till March 31.

Night Bazaar at Boyanika Exclusive and Bayan Bhawan, designed to promote the unparalleled artistry of state's handloom sector also offers an additional 5 per cent discount from 11pm to 7am every night from March 27 to April 1.

The Night Bazaar will enhance the shopping experience with instrumental classical music performances, live loom demonstrations and food counters, creating a vibrant and engaging atmosphere for visitors during extended night hours.

WEATHER		
	BBSR	CTC
Max Temp	38.5°	36.8°
Min Temp	24.6°	23.2°
Humidity	79%	78%
Rainfall	Nil	Nil
FORECAST Mainly clear sky		

MARKET WATCH		
INDEX	VALUE	VARIATION
SENSEX	77,606.43	▲ 317.93
NIFTY	23,591.95	▲ 105.10
DOLLAR	85.635	▲ 0.01
EURO	92.46	▲ 0.36
GOLD	₹88,305	▲ ₹799
SILVER	₹1,01,242	▲ ₹1,826

FOR CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS CONTACT OUR BOOKING STATIONS

Acharya Vihar-Dayal Agency-9437135727, A.P. Tours and Travel, Maitri Vihar, C.S. Pur-9861301598, Aurobindo Market-Sai Audio & Electronics-9438304668, Airport Road-Sai Baba Variety Store-9090071530, Anish Infotech- Tankapani Road-9861341488, Bapuji Nagar- Dreamland Studio- 9777517314, Baramunda Rental Colony-Maa Ramchandi Communication-9658821469, Baramunda Housing Board Colony-Pappu Variety Store-9040500106, Cuttack Road-Alishan Snacks-8984236754, District Center (Chandrasekharpur)-Sai Google Mart-9776056507, Forest Park-DTDC Couriers & Services (HB Services)-7381024156, IRC Village-Bapi Xerox-909090404, Gift Hut(Antriksh Gifts & Decors Pvt. Ltd.)-9954781084, Pruthvi Medicine-9853314816, Janpath-Krupajal Book Store-7978646669, Jaydev Vihar-AK Enterprises-7978116618, Subam Sai Books Store-8895550649, Swain Graphics- 9337121249, Jagannath Mobile Point- Janpath Road, Ram Mandir- 9938475415, Kanan Vihar-Auro Electronics-8260697560, Khandagiri- Swosti Mobile Centre- 7992914045, World Solution- 9938317559, KIIT Road-Jugad Jn-9338545031, Laxmi Sagar-Aditya Mobile-9438191836, Lewis Road-Spider Web-7809186415, Metro Satellite City-Arogya Mitra Medicine Store-9853621640, Madhusudan Nagar-Mohapatra Communication-9124446664, Maa Santoshi travels- Gajapati Nagar- 9777675867, Nayapalli- The Cake Room- 7873660137, Near Mayfair Lagoon-Cookiemann-9439491273, Nigamananda-Omm Sai Travels-9668284823, Nr Cosmopolis Main Gate- Shreeram Medical Store- 8763711714, Net Square- Niladri Vihar (C.S. Pur)- 7205634821, Priyadarshini Market-Astro Point-9938134346, R.N. General Store-Nilakantha Nagar-9438642501, Sahid Nagar- Maa Communication- 9437353424, Sahini General Store- Near Patia Railway Station, Mahavir Vihar- 9937586626, Satya Nagar-Baishnavi Mixture & Sweets-7894821764, Samantapur- Download Point-7504557743, Sailashree Vihar-Harsha Book Store-8093449515, Saheed Nagar-Jagannath Graphics-7978652670, Photo World-7978468191, Sainath Photo Studio-8984436129, Shanti & Co-9937071063, Siripur-Omm Maa Sarala Communication-9777682449, Sushree fashion- Jagmara-9938714347, Shree Vision- Sailashree Vihar-9861476678, Unit-3-LIC of India Premium Point-9337787080, Unit-7- LIC Premium Point- 9338227422, VSS Nagar-Friends Cake & Bake-8658200930, Jeet Infoworld-7205195782, XIMB Square-LD Books-9658061373.

MYSTERY SHROUDS GIRL STUDENT'S DEATH

Suicide note reveals new angle

POST NEWS NETWORK

Udala, March 27: The death of a Class IX girl student at the Anwesha hostel, meant for tribal girls in Udala, Mayurbhanj district, has taken a new turn after the discovery of a suicide note Thursday.

The note suggests the girl ended her life over a love affair, police officials investigating the death confirmed while ruling out the involvement of hostel authorities and others.

Police have registered a case of unnatural death (15/25) and started an investigation. However, the incident triggered panic among the hostel residents. Out of 170 students, 23 fled the hostel for their homes late Wednesday night with their guardians.

Guardians blamed poor security and negligence in the hostel for the death of the girl student. Guardians Tripti Manjari Patra and Rozalin Patra voiced concerns, stating that their children no longer feel safe at the hostel.

Family members of the deceased student accused the



hostel management of negligence, claiming that inadequate safety measures led to the tragic death.

After reports surfaced, members of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Bhanja Sena, a local outfit, staged a protest Thursday on the Udala hospital premises demanding compensation for the deceased student's family.

On being informed about the protest, Kaptipada Sub-Collector Sushant Kumar Barik, project administrator Naren-

dra Khamari, and other officials visited the site to pacify the agitators. They provided an immediate financial assistance of ₹10,000 from the district Red Cross fund to the deceased student's family, with the sub-collector assuring further support.

Authorities are continuing the investigation to uncover the complete circumstances surrounding the incident.

Notably, a parents' meeting was held at the hostel Wednesday. After attending

the meeting, the parents of the deceased student returned to their residence under Khunta police limits. However, during the evening prayer session, the student was found missing. Following a search, her body was discovered hanging on the second-floor balcony of the hostel.

After being informed, the student's parents rushed back to the hostel. According to the student's father, she had been suffering from epilepsy and was receiving treatment from a traditional healer.

Police initially began investigating the incident from an angle of superstitious practices and traditional healing. However, the case took a new turn after a suicide note was recovered by a forensic team. Police have launched an investigation into the phone number mentioned in the note.

Additionally, suspicion has arisen as CCTV cameras on the second floor were found to be non-functional. Furthermore, the student's feet were reportedly touching the ground, raising doubts about the circumstances of her death.

Rajnath, Shivraj, visit Talcher, pay tributes to late Debendra Pradhan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Bhubaneswar, March 27: Union Ministers Rajnath Singh and Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, and other dignitaries Thursday paid tributes to veteran BJP leader Debendra Pradhan who passed away last week.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and others attended a function held at Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's house at Talcher in Angul district on the occasion of late Debendra Pradhan's 11th day (Ekadasaha) rituals following his demise.

Taking to X, Rajnath Singh said, "Visited Talcher in Odisha and paid tributes to former Union Minister Dr. Debendra Pradhan ji, who passed away earlier this week. He was very well-read and scholarly. Widely respected as a warm and kind-hearted person, he had a vision for a developed Odisha and a 'Shaktishali Bharat'."

"We worked together in Atalji's Government. I will always fondly recall my interactions with him. In his long public life he worked extensively for the welfare of people, specially the

poor and marginalised sections of our society. In this hour of sadness, my thoughts are with his son Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, other family members and followers," Singh added.

Similarly, Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Rural Development Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also visited Pradhan's house at Talcher and paid tributes.

"His life was dedicated to service to the nation and social uplift. It was my good fortune that I got the opportunity to work with him. His development vision, his policies, and

his resolve to serve the people are an inspiration for all of us. Today, his son and Union Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan Ji is carrying forward the same resolve of serving the people with full devotion. I pray to Lord Shri Jagannath to grant the departed soul a place at his feet. Humble tribute!" he said in a social media post.

Chief Minister Majhi said, "I, along with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, attended the 11th Day function of late Dr. Debendra Pradhan."

Man awarded life term for murder

PNN & AGENCIES

Balasore, March 27: Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge, designated OPID court, Biswajit Das Thursday convicted a murder accused and awarded him life imprisonment along with ₹6,000 penalty.

The court further ordered a 13-month jail term in case the convict failed to pay the fine amount.

The convict identified as Samarendra Malik, 43, of Pinchhabani village under Nilgiri police station limits had attacked his neighbour Baidhar Barsal with a sharp edged weapon following altercations between them over land dispute July 8, 2022.

With grievous injuries, Baidhar was shifted to SCB Medical college and hospital at Cuttack but he succumbed to the injuries on the way to the hospital.

The daughter-in-law of the deceased Saraswati Barsal had lodged an FIR with local police. The cops after carrying out an investigation arrested the accused on the charge of murder.

The accused was tried under section 302 of IPC and 27 of Arms Act. The court after examining 15 witnesses, 18 exhibits and 6 material objects pronounced the verdict Thursday.

"The convict would undergo life term rigorous imprisonment and pay ₹6,000 penalty," said Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Kumar Panda.

Youth dies during physical test for home guard post

POST NEWS NETWORK

Deogarh, March 27: A youth died during a physical fitness test for home guard recruitment at the Reserve Police Ground here Wednesday. The deceased was identified as Saheb Dehury, 19, a resident of Budhido village.

According to sources, Dehury collapsed while running during the physical fitness test around 3pm. Police personnel immediately rescued and admitted him to the Deogarh district headquarters hospital.



Despite receiving treatment, doctors pronounced him dead late Wednesday night.

Family members alleged that Dehury died due to medical

negligence. His father claimed when they searched for a doctor at the hospital Wednesday night, none were available.

The incident sparked tension on the hospital premises as family members and locals protested, demanding action against the responsible doctor and compensation for the bereaved family.

Deogarh Sub-Collector Parikshita Sahu and tehsildar Karna Mallick visited the hospital to pacify the agitated crowd. They assured the family of ₹30,000 in immediate financial assistance from the district Red Cross fund.

Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO) Bishwamohan Mishra also visited the hos-

pital and promised strict action against any medical staff found guilty of negligence following an inquiry.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi expressed grief and announced an ex gratia of ₹4 lakh for the next of kin of the deceased youth. Earlier this month, two candidates died while appearing for the physical test for the posts of forest guard, forester and livestock inspector. The examination was conducted by the Odisha Sub-Ordinate Staff Selection Commission (OSSSC).

AAI team completes pre-feasibility study for Rourkela Airport

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, March 27: A team of Airport Authority of India (AAI) officials has completed the pre-feasibility study of Rourkela Airport. The team, which arrived Monday, toured the airport site and nearby areas like Sector-13 and the OMFED plant Tuesday.

Bimal Bisi, president of Sachetan Nagarika Mancha (SNM), an organisation advocating for development of the airport, stated, "Discussions were held this afternoon at the AAI office in Delhi. Work will begin once the AAI receives both the pre-feasibility and obstacle limitation surface (OLS) survey reports, along with the necessary land from the state government."

The AAI team, which included experts from various departments, assessed the airport's potential for upgrading to 4C CAT 1 IFR operations. The team members are VR Topo, DGM (Civil), SK Bindhani, DGM, CNS, Pravin Unnikrishnan, DGM (ATM-FPD), Abdul Aziz, SM (PLG), Ajaya Kuma, manager, operations, Megha Rohilla, AM, architecture and nodal officer of the project for AAI Suresh Chandra Hota, who earlier worked as the airport manager of Bhubaneswar.

The upgrade will enable larger aircraft to land, with plans for an instrument landing system for night operations, a solar panel system, a 250-seat terminal, a convention hall and a cafeteria lounge.

Jumbo herd wrecks havoc in Keonjhar; one critical

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, March 27: A herd of 18 elephants has wreaked havoc in the Sadar forest range of the Keonjhar forest division as the pachyderms destroyed crops and left a villager critically injured Wednesday night.

Sources said the elephant herd left Salarapantha forest and travelled through Mahadejoda, Tikarpada, and Hanumanghati villages and eventually reached Kadagarh village.

Locals along with Forest officials and members of the elephant repellent squad reached the spot and tried to drive away the elephants back into the forest. Despite their efforts, villagers spent a sleepless night attempting to keep the herd

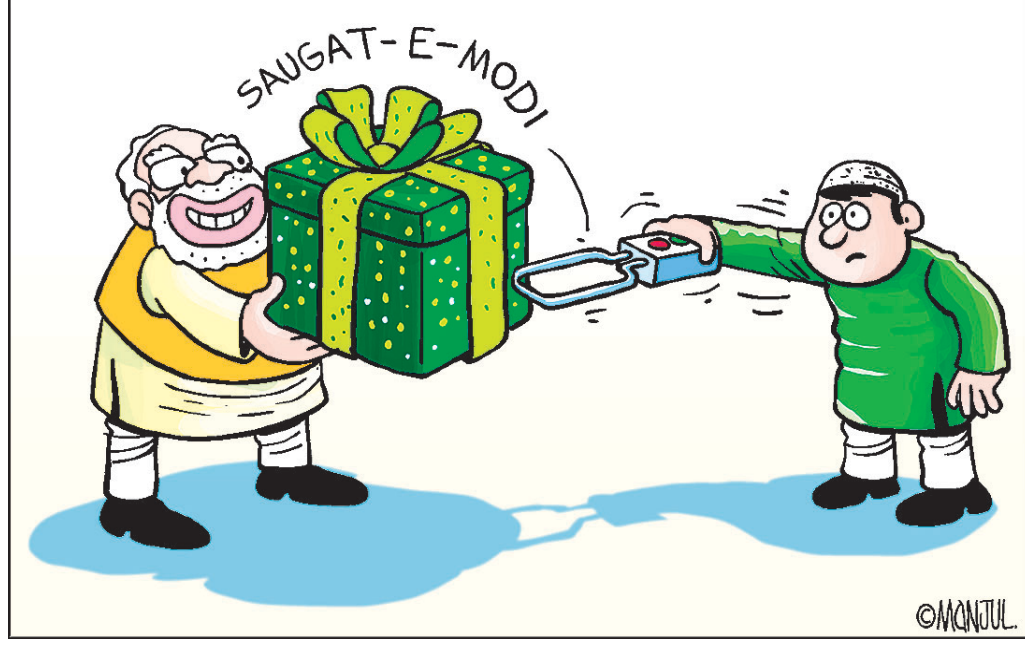
away from their homes. The elephant herd was spotted near the Ambadhara forest Thursday morning.

Meanwhile, a villager Hemant Behera, 30, of Tikarpada village fell down and broke his right arm while trying to drive away the animals. He was admitted to the district headquarters hospital in Keonjhar for treatment.

The elephants also damaged various vegetable crops in the area. Seeking compensation for their losses, locals have demanded that the herd be driven back into the forest.

Assistant Conservator of Forests (ACF) Ashok Das said, "We are monitoring the herd's movement. Compensation will be provided for the damage caused."

POLITICKLE by MANJUL



AI cameras to monitor forests in Ghumusar

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, March 27: A network of around 100 advanced AI-powered cameras will be installed in Ghumusar North and South forest divisions in Ganjam district as part of the Forest and Environment department's plans to deploy such surveillance devices across the state's forests with an aim to curb poaching and illegal tree felling.

In addition to the cameras, 16 AI surveillance towers will be constructed at strategic locations for efficient monitoring in the two forest divisions. "Both forest divisions have submitted proposals to the state government for approval, with implementation expected in the coming days," Bhanjanagar MLA Pradyumna Kumar Nayak told Orissa POST.

Nayak said the installation of AI cameras will help track and apprehend poachers and timber smugglers. "It will also enhance the safety of endangered wildlife and aid in preventing illegal transportation of minor minerals," he said.

To boost tourism, various projects are also being planned in both Ghumusar forest di-



visions. Ten cottages will be constructed near a hill stream along the Ulingia-Bhalingia road to provide accommodation for tourists. Additionally, the government will revive the historic tradition of building glass houses on hilltops, which are reminiscent of the colonial era when British officials enjoyed panoramic views from similar structures, the MLA added.

Further, tourist cottages will also be built near the Bhanjanagar reservoir at a cost of

around ₹10 crore. "Specialised equipment from England will be imported for the project. Additionally, three wooden cottages will be built within the forest division to promote eco-tourism," Nayak said.

Given the rising movement of elephants in the region, a dedicated elephant hospital will also be set up to ensure proper care and treatment for the giants. Sick elephants from Ganjam, Nayagarh and Kandhamal districts will receive treatment at

Given the rising movement of elephants in the region, a dedicated elephant hospital will also be set up

the facility, he said, adding that a 10-acre forest near Benuabadi has been designated to establish the hospital, work on which is set to commence soon.

Nayak expressed confidence that these initiatives will significantly enhance forest protection and promote tourism in both Ghumusar forest divisions, contributing to both conservation and local economic growth.

In recent years, wild animals have been increasingly straying out of forests to nearby human habitats in search of food. To address this issue, the Forest department has planned cultivation of fruit-bearing trees such as guava, mango, and jackfruit on 10-acre area at three different sites to ensure a sustainable food supply for wildlife, Nayak said.

Additionally, the Chakara Ghat and Ghatishula areas are

being developed to attract tourists. Nayak stated that an initial allocation of ₹6 crore has been received for Chakara Ghat's development, with another ₹6 crore expected soon.

Similar initiatives of installing AI cameras in other states showed positive results, prompting a trial installation in Similipal and Rourkela forest divisions last year, which yielded promising outcomes. Based on these results, the state plans to expand the project by installing AI cameras in all 51 forest divisions.

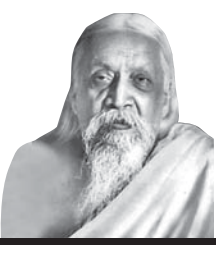
State government officials have requested proposals from all forest divisions to determine the number of cameras required. According to North Ghumusar Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Himanshu Sekhar Mohanty, the division has proposed the installation of five towers and 50 cameras. Similarly, South Ghumusar DFO Binod Acharya has submitted a proposal for 13 towers and 30 cameras.

Legislator Nayak praised the government's initiative, stating that AI camera installations would significantly aid forest management and wildlife protection efforts.

DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATION, JAJPUR
Annexure-1
Request for Proposal (RFP)
No.CAD-2966: District Mineral Foundation (DMF), Jajpur invites Request for Proposal (RFP) in prescribed format from reputed organisations for "Selection of Agency for Strengthening of Tasar sericulture and livelihood through value addition in Jajpur District".
The detail of the RFP is available in the district web portal i.e. www.jajpur.odisha.gov.in
Sd./-
Collector & Managing Trustee,
DMF, Jajpur
OIPR-30025/11/0007/2425

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Interested Manufacturers / Suppliers are requested to visit JCI website www.jutecorp.in for detailed information related to the tender.
All the applicants are requested to submit their tender copy along with requisite documents only through speed post or directly at the tender drop box within stipulated timeline at The Jute Corporation of India Limited Head Office Address - Patsan Bhavan, 3rd and 4th Floor, Block-CF, Action Area 1, New Town, Kolkata 700156. Online submission of any kind of documents shall not be entertained.
CBC 41122/12/0056/2425

India of the ages is not dead nor has she spoken her last creative word; she lives and has still something to do for herself and the human peoples.
SRI AUROBINDO



Surviving Trump 2.0

US President Donald Trump has raised the specter of economic and geopolitical turmoil in Asia. While individual countries have few options for pushing back against Trump's transactional diplomacy, protectionist trade policies, and erratic decision-making, a unified region has a fighting chance.

The challenges are formidable. Trump's crude, bullying approach to long-term allies is casting serious doubt on the viability of America's decades-old security commitments, on which many Asian countries depend. Worse, America's treaty allies (Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines) and its strategic partner (Taiwan) fear that Trump could actively undermine their security, such as by offering concessions to China or North Korea.

Meanwhile, Trump's aggressive efforts to reshape the global trading system, including by pressuring foreign firms to move their manufacturing to the United States, have disrupted world markets and generated considerable policy uncertainty. This threatens to undermine growth and financial stability in Asian economies, particularly those running large trade surpluses with the US – such as China, India, Japan, South Korea, and the ASEAN countries.

Currency depreciation may offset some of the tariffs' impact. But if the Trump administration follows through with its apparent plans to weaken the US dollar, surplus countries will lose even this partial respite, and their trade balances will deteriorate. While some might be tempted to implement retaliatory tariffs, this would only compound the harm to their export-driven industries.

Acting individually, Asian countries have limited leverage not only in trade negotiations with the US, but also in broader economic or diplomatic disputes. But by strengthening strategic and security cooperation – using platforms like ASEAN, ASEAN+3 (with China, Japan, and South Korea), and the East Asia Summit – they can build a buffer against US policy uncertainty and rising geopolitical tensions. And by deepening trade and financial integration, they can reduce their dependence on the US market and improve their economies' resilience.

One priority should be to diversify trade partnerships through multilateral free-trade agreements. This means, for starters, strengthening the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – which includes Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and Vietnam – such as by expanding its ranks. China and South Korea have expressed interest in joining.

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership – comprising the ten ASEAN economies, plus Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea – should also be enhanced, through stronger trade and investment rules and, potentially, the addition of India. Given the Asia-Pacific's tremendous economic dynamism, more robust regional trade arrangements could serve as a powerful counterbalance to US protectionism.

Asia has other options to bolster intra-regional trade. China, Japan, and South Korea should resume negotiations for their own free-trade agreement. Japan and South Korea are a natural fit, given their geographic proximity and shared democratic values. The inclusion of China raises some challenges – owing not least to its increasingly aggressive military posture in the region – but they are worth confronting, given China's massive market and advanced technological capabilities. With the US putting economic self-interest ahead of democratic principles, Asian countries cannot afford to eschew pragmatism for ideology. Beyond trade, Asia must build on the cooperation that began after the 2008 global financial crisis. The Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization, which provides liquidity support to its member countries (the ASEAN+3) during crises, should be strengthened. Moreover, Asian central banks and finance ministries should work together to build more effective financial-stability frameworks – robust crisis-management arrangements, coordinated policy responses, and clear communication – to stabilize currency markets and financial systems during episodes of external volatility.

Trump is not the only reason why Asia should deepen cooperation. The escalating trade and technology war between the US and China is threatening to divide the world into rival economic blocs, which would severely disrupt global trade and investment. But there is still time to avoid this outcome, by building a multipolar system comprising multiple economic blocs with overlapping memberships. By fostering economic integration, within the region and beyond, Asian countries would be laying the groundwork for such an order.

In an age of geoeconomic fragmentation, Asian countries could easily fall victim to the whims of great powers. But by strengthening trade partnerships, reinforcing financial cooperation, enhancing strategic collaboration, and building economic resilience, they can take control over their futures and position Asia as a leading architect of a reconfigured global economy.

The writer, a Professor of Economics at Korea University, is a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank and a former senior adviser for international economic affairs to the president of South Korea.



Lee Jong-Wha

IN AN AGE OF GEO-ECONOMIC FRAGMENTATION, ASIAN COUNTRIES COULD EASILY FALL VICTIM TO THE WHIMS OF GREAT POWERS

MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY

FOCUS JOURNALISM

Journalists are often accused of demanding accountability from others but rarely turning the searchlight within. This week, when a large amount of cash was seized from the home of a sitting Delhi High Court judge, there was justifiable outrage on many TV networks. "Who will judge the judges?" fumed indignant news anchors. Twenty-four hours later, the CBI quietly filed a closure report in the Sushant Singh Rajput suicide case, stating there was no evidence of any foul play. Yet there was no outrage in the media or a noisy debate on the implications of the CBI report. When the truth is, the nation wants to know, and certainly ought to know, whether there will be any mea culpa from those who had launched the most vicious character assassination campaign against Rhea Chakraborty, Sushant's girlfriend.



The nation wants to know, and certainly ought to know, whether there will be any mea culpa from those who had launched the most vicious character assassination campaign against Rhea Chakraborty, late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's girlfriend



Rajdeep Sardesai

RHEA'S PLIGHT HIGHLIGHTS HOW MANY NEWS NETWORKS HAVE LOST THEIR MORAL COMPASS IN A MADDENINGLY COMPETITIVE UNIVERSE

Remember Rhea, the young woman who suddenly found herself in the midst of a raging controversy when Sushant, a talented Hindi film star, was found dead in his Mumbai home in June 2020. Initially, the prime-time TV narrative suggested that Rhea and her family were guilty of abetment to suicide; then it was claimed that it was a case of murder conspiracy in which Rhea was under the scanner. From being accused of being a gold-digger who had an eye on Sushant's money to being targeted as a drug-dealer and part of a global drug cartel, the campaign against Rhea was malicious and unrelenting. She was accused of black magic, referred to as a 'chudail' and in other abusive terms. Social media was even worse: a systematic and sustained campaign was launched to seek 'Justice for Sushant' by making Rhea the prime culprit. Nothing was proven, all charges were found to be baseless, and yet such was the media frenzy that Rhea was arrested and spent a month in Byculia jail, if only to feed the ravenous 24x7 news media cycle.

Today, almost five years later, Rhea has been cleared and declared innocent, but her

nascent film career is almost finished. Her brother was due to go abroad to do an MBA, but the Narcotics Control Bureau investigation scotched his dream. Rhea's father was an army doctor who had served the country's soldiers for 25 years, and yet he too was not spared by the wolf pack in the media. A middle-class professional family was ruined by a cabal of rogue news anchors whose singular intent was to create a TRP drama that would garner eyeballs and act as a Weapon of Mass Distraction (WMD).

Recall that this was an enormously fraught period as the rapidly spreading Covid virus had pushed the country into an unprecedented national lockdown. Cooped up in their homes because of social distancing rules, people were desperately looking for comfort. When the media should have been guiding them through the health emergency, a section of the news media chose to titillate them with the worst kind of voyeurism in the name of 'investigative' journalism. WhatsApp messages of Rhea in conversation with filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt were put out in the public domain in brazen violation of privacy rules, only to create a prurient discourse that had no tangible connection with the Sushant case. From dragging in Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Aaditya Thackeray (then a minister in the Maharashtra government) to even roping in Bollywood A-listers like Deepika Padu-

kone and Karan Johar for police questioning, every attempt was made by hyper-ventilating anchors to create a prime-time reality show to divert attention and push alternate agendas when the country was going through the trauma of Covid-related deaths.

In a sense, the Rhea case marks a particularly low point in the moral abyss confronting news TV. There is much to admire about the live news TV wheel: the zeal and passion with which stories are reported from different corners of the country can be addictive and even, at times, ensure a measure of accountability. Unlike in a previous era, there is no place to hide from the camera any longer. At the same time, the intrusive camera is a double-edged sword: it sheds light but can also hurl into a snake-pit of darkness and toxicity where the lines between right and wrong are wholly and deliberately blurred.

Rhea's plight highlights how many news networks have lost their moral compass in a maddeningly competitive universe. The private news TV revolution that began so promisingly in the mid-1990s has been almost devoured by those who have chosen to tread an amoral path where sense is replaced by sensation and news by noise. Rhea was trapped in a web of malice and misogyny; a fiercely independent woman almost became a victim of her own image. She was the 'perfect' vamp-like fig-

ure for a media ecosystem that neatly divides the world into heroes and villains. Sushant was the rising star, an innocent boyfriend being manipulated by an 'evil' woman: it's the kind of familiar storyline that was ideal fodder for a TV soap opera masquerading as news.

Which brings me to the original question: will those who damned and villainized Rhea actually ever be held accountable? This isn't just a simple case of individual defamation. Journalists—myself included—may get a story wrong and periodically have to apologize for incorrect information. But the Rhea case wasn't just about wrongful journalism; it was a willfully malevolent attempt to destroy the life and reputation of a defenseless woman who wasn't even given a chance to tell her side of the story. I recall interviewing a tearful but stoic Rhea in August 2020: it was the first time anyone had spoken and actually listened to her. But instead of seeing the interview as a purely legitimate journalistic exercise, I was repeatedly attacked on social media for allegedly providing Rhea with cover-fire. It was only the support of the India Today TV management that offered some respite.

Today, five years on, my stand has been vindicated. Well, sort of. More importantly, Rhea's courage in the face of a terrible personal trauma has finally seen a glimmer of hope. But closure will only come when those who venomously targeted her are made to pay a price. It cannot simply be a case of public amnesia that allows the news wheel to quickly move onto the next big story. The incessant hounding of Rhea must become an example of what must never be repeated if credibility and public faith in the news media are to be restored. Rhea won't ever get back the last five years of her life, but she deserves her dignity to be returned. An unqualified apology would be a good starting point.

The writer is a senior journalist and author. His latest book is '2024: The Election That Surprised India.'

SPECTRUM SOCIETY

Caring, sharing & benevolence

Happiness is crucial for overall well-being, enhancing mental and physical health and fostering a positive life. Research indicates that higher levels of happiness correlate with longer life expectancy and lower mortality. However, wealth alone does not guarantee happiness; trust, social support, and philanthropy play significant roles. While some argue that happiness is a choice, it is also linked to critical life outcomes such as health, longevity, job satisfaction, and marital peace.



Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

INDIA MADE A TRIVIAL IMPROVEMENT IN ITS HAPPINESS INDEX, UP FROM 126 IN 2024 TO 118 THIS YEAR

Well-being and life satisfaction, closely tied to happiness, are about 30 to 40 percent heritable, 10 percent dependent on circumstances, and 40 percent influenced by mindset. The remaining 20 percent depends on our lifestyle and environment. Unfortunately, increasing consumerism and hedonism are contributing to higher levels of unhappiness. The World Happiness Report

2025, averaging data from 2022 to 2024, highlights the impact of caring and sharing on happiness. Finland tops the list as the happiest country for the eighth consecutive year, followed by other Nordic countries like Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden. In contrast, Afghanistan ranks as the unhappiest country. India, despite a slight improvement from 126th in 2024 to 118th in 2025, remains behind countries like Ukraine, Mozambique, and Pakistan.

Life evaluations, which measure the quality of life, are assessed through GDP per capita (PPP), social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make choices, generosity, and perception of corruption. These six factors explain over three-quarters of the variation in life evaluations across countries and years. Emotional well-being, including positive and negative emotions, is also examined. Freedom and generosity are strongly associated with posi-

tive emotions, while social support and freedom significantly reduce negative emotions.

The report further ranks countries based on six measures of benevolence: donating, volunteering, helping a stranger, and expectations of wallet return by a neighbour, stranger, or police officer. Despite India's overall ranking, it performs better in specific benevolence measures, such as donating (57th) and volunteering (10th). However, it ranks poorly in corruption perception (96th out of 180 countries).

Benevolent actions, especially those involving caring connections, choice, and clear positive impact, enhance well-being. Balanced social support interactions improve well-being and reduce depressive symptoms. Unforced giving, particularly when the impact is clear, leads to greater happiness. For example, living kidney donors report higher satisfaction when their donation is impactful.

Within-country inequality in well-being has increased over the past two decades, while global happiness inequality remains constant. High-trust environments mitigate this inequality. Caring and sharing, especially through activities like sharing meals, reduce well-being inequality. Countries providing more untied official development assistance (ODA) tend to be happier, while those with high refugee populations are less so.

National policies significantly impact well-being. Finland's universal health, education, and social support systems exemplify this. India should follow suit by providing free, high-quality health and education to all. By fostering a culture of caring and sharing, and by implementing policies that support well-being, countries can enhance the happiness and quality of life for their citizens.

The author is an Odisha-based columnist and economist.

WISDOM CORNER

war does not determine who is right - only who is left
BERTRAND RUSSELL

Tradition becomes our security, and when the mind is secure it is in decay
JIDDU KRISHNAMURTI

Our own self-realization is the greatest service we can render the world
RAMANA MAHARSHI

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

- 1854: France and England declared war on Russia, joining forces with the Ottoman Turks in the Crimean War.
- 1890: American bandleader Paul Whiteman, called the "King of Jazz" for popularizing a musical style that helped to introduce jazz to mainstream audiences during the 1920s and '30s, was born.
- 1930: Built as Byzantium about 657 BCE, then renamed Constantinople in the 4th century CE after Constantine the Great made the city his capital, the Turkish city of Istanbul officially received its present name.

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



Criminal wastage

Sir, Even though we have sufficient monsoon rains and there is a sufficient stock in all the water resources, we still feel the shortage. This is only because of regular leakage from the water pipes and other wastage caused by the public misusing water. Thus, a huge quantity of fresh water is flowing into the sea from the leaking pipes, causing shortages during the summer season. April was very hot, and the month of May continued to be very hot. Leakage from the water mains is the major reason for the shortage. It is time to curb the criminal wastage of water from the water outlets in the city. We should penalize the people responsible for pipe leakages and have regular check-ups to prevent water pipe leakage on an ongoing basis. Proper maintenance work must also be undertaken periodically. A disaster management cell must work 24 hours a day to solve leaking problems regularly.

CK Subramaniam, NAVI MUMBAI

Safer, inclusive society

Sir, Apropos, "Women bouncers make their mark in male-dominated field," Orissa POST, Mar 27. As women break the stereotype of traditional security roles being male-dominated, the rise of lady bouncers in India is a testament to the evolving landscape of event security. By addressing the emotional and practical concerns of women, lady bouncers ensure that events are safe, inclusive, and enjoyable for everyone. Their presence empowers women to reclaim their space in social settings, fostering a sense of security that goes beyond mere physical protection. They are trained to manage crowds, de-escalate potential conflicts, and handle emergencies with a level of sensitivity that resonates with women. This unique approach addresses a significant problem faced by women in India—a lack of security that is both practical and emotional. Moreover, lady bouncers challenge societal norms and empower women by providing them with employment opportunities in a field that was traditionally male-centric. The inclusion of lady bouncers at events is not just a trend; it is a movement towards a safer and more inclusive society. As more people recognize the importance of this shift, we can look forward to a future where safety is a given, not a privilege.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE



Delhi zoo implements heat relief measures



mercury reaching 38.9 degrees Celsius, according to the IMD. For primates, air coolers have been placed in their enclosures, and special fruit ice balls are being prepared daily to provide them hydration and nutrition. Reptile enclosures are also being kept cool with shaded areas and wet gunny bags for snakes, officials said.

From April 1, all 'summer action plan' measures will be implemented to provide the animals with comfort during the heat

From air coolers in enclosures and frequent water showers to shaded resting areas and running water in pools, the zoo will take various measures to keep the animals comfortable this summer.

The National Zoological Park will roll out a series of summer care measures to ensure the well-being of animals, Kumar said. Kumar added that the Delhi zoo has devised a structured plan for different animal species, ensuring their comfort during the peak summer months.

The measures include continuous running water in pools for carnivores, herbivores, and reptiles, along with sprinklers and shaded areas to prevent overheating. In carnivore enclosures, water pools will be kept filled and shaded, while sprinklers will be installed for tigers, lions, leopards, and jackals to help them beat the heat during the summer season. From April 1, all 'summer action plan' measures will be implemented to provide the animals with comfort during the heat, Zoo Director Sanjeet Kumar said.

Herbivores, including sambar deer, nilgai, blackbucks, and elephants, will receive frequent showers. Similarly, rhinos will be bathed twice daily to keep them cool. The capital recorded its hottest day Thursday in March, in the last three years, with the bears, which are highly sensitive to heat, will be kept in shaded feeding cells during extreme temperatures, with large ice blocks provided for relief. Their moats are cleaned and refilled daily, and they are also given fruit ice cubes to help them stay hydrated. Apart from these species-specific measures, the zoo has installed thermometers in key enclosures to monitor temperature fluctuations. Seasonal fruits like watermelon, cucumber, and coconut water have been incorporated into the diets of primates, bears, and herbivores to provide extra hydration.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Animals at the Delhi zoo will get a cool treat fruit ice cubes while water sprinklers will be installed for tigers, lions, leopards, and jackals to help them beat the heat during the summer season. From April 1, all 'summer action plan' measures will be implemented to provide the animals with comfort during the heat, Zoo Director Sanjeet Kumar said.



Police detain Samajwadi Party workers who were protesting against the Agra incident, a day after the premises of SP leader Ramji Lal were allegedly vandalised by Karni Sena, in Lucknow, Thursday

Man arranges wife's marriage to her lover

A man in Uttar Pradesh's Sant Kabir Nagar district decided to marry off his wife to her lover after getting to know about their affair



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bablu, a resident of the Katar Mishra village, Dhangtha police station area, facilitated the marriage of his wife Radhika to Vishal Kumar Monday. Bablu, who works as a labourer in another state, married Radhika, originally from the Gorakhpur district, in 2017. They have two children.

According to locals, Radhika had been involved in a relationship with Vishal, also from the same village, for the past year-and-a-half. When Bablu discovered the affair, he asked Radhika to end it, but she refused. Instead of escalating the situation, Bablu decided to arrange their marriage. He took Radhika and Vishal to Dhangtha Tehsil Monday, where an agreement was prepared, and the couple got married at a temple in the presence of villagers. Bablu said that he had noticed Radhika's involvement with Vishal and had repeatedly asked her to stop, but she did not comply. "I

decided to arrange their marriage to avoid potential harm to myself. In recent days, we have seen that husbands have been killed by their wives," Bablu told PTI. Muskan along with her lover Sahil allegedly killed her husband Saurabh in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut and hid the body inside a drum. The incident has been in the spotlight for the last week. "After seeing what happened in Meerut, I decided to get my wife married to her lover so that we both can live peacefully," he added. Bablu has decided to keep custody of his two children.

Friday namaz on roads, rooftops prohibited

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Sambhal (UP), March 27: There is no restriction on offering namaz in Sambhal in the traditional manner but gathering in large numbers on rooftops has been prohibited to prevent accidents, top police officials said Thursday. Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh continues to remain tense since November 24 last year when violence erupted in the city's Kot Garvi locality during a survey of the Mughal-era Jama Masjid. The incident led to the death of four people due to gunfire while several people including police personnel sustained injuries. Sambhal Superintendent of Police (SP) Krishna Kumar Bishnoi said clear instructions have been issued to ensure that namaz is offered only at designated Eidgahs and mosques, and not on roads. Bishnoi said a security strategy has been put in place for Friday, with the deployment of 10 companies of the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) and Rapid Response Force (RRF). The force will be stationed across key locations, and their deployment will be adjusted according to the situation.



Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh continues to remain tense since November 24 last year when violence erupted in the city's Kot Garvi locality during a survey of the Mughal-era Jama Masjid
The incident led to the death of four people due to gunfire while several people including police personnel sustained injuries. He said a meeting with police personnel was held to ensure a smooth and peaceful gathering. He said crowd management is a priority and measures have been taken to prevent large congregations at a single location. "People have been advised

to offer namaz at their local Eidgahs instead of assembling in large numbers at one place. Namaz on roads will not be permitted," he said. A peace committee meeting was also conducted to address any concerns from the community. Authorities have ensured the cleanliness of Eidgahs, roads and drainage systems. Asked about permission for rooftop prayers, SP Bishnoi said, "Individuals may pray inside their homes but no prayers will be allowed on streets under any circumstances." He expressed the hope that namaz would be conducted peacefully and without any disruptions.

Speaking to reporters about the preparations for 'Alvida' (last Friday of Ramzan) prayers, ASP Shresh Chandra said adequate police deployment has been planned under the sector and zone system to ensure peaceful observance. He said during a peace committee meeting, some people inquired whether namaz could be offered on rooftops. It was clarified to them that crowds on rooftops could lead to accidents and hence, such gatherings were discouraged and prohibited. Similarly, offering namaz on roads has also been prohibited due to safety concerns and potential traffic disruptions, he said. "There are no restrictions on offering namaz in the traditional way inside mosques and Eidgahs, and they will be conducted peacefully according to tradition," ASP Chandra said. He further clarified that mosques with small loudspeakers would continue their practice without interference. He emphasised that for several years, authorities have ensured that namaz is not offered on roads and this rule remains unchanged this year as well.

MCD directs govt offices, RWAs to take measures to prevent mosquito breeding

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: To curb the spread of dengue, malaria and chikungunya, the MCD has asked Delhi government offices, educational institutions, religious places and market associations to 'eliminate' stagnant water. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has mandated strict preventive measures to eliminate mosquito breeding sites across the city and enhance sanitation efforts, particularly in high-risk areas such as slums and densely populated regions. The guidelines apply to all



government offices, educational institutions, commercial establishments, religious places, market associations, and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs). According to the directives, institutions must ensure that overhead tanks, coolers and water storage containers are properly covered and cleaned regularly. Stagnant water must either be removed or treated with petrol, diesel, or Temephos granules to prevent mosquito breeding. Authorities have also stressed the need to dispose of discarded items such as broken bottles, plastic cups, tyres, and coconut shells, which could serve as potential breeding grounds. The civic body has directed all establishments to appoint

a nodal officer responsible for implementing these preventive measures and coordinating with health officials. In case of violations or repeated mosquito breeding, legal action could be initiated. It has also been said that since there is no specific treatment or vaccine for dengue and chikungunya, prevention remains the most effective strategy. Citizens have been urged to cooperate with the administration to keep their surroundings clean and mosquito-free. In addition to enforcing these guidelines, the civic body has outlined a multi-pronged strategy focusing on early detection, community participation, and strict monitoring of breeding grounds. The plan includes door-to-door inspections, penalties for stagnant water accumulation, and enhanced coordination between municipal bodies and health departments. As part of an awareness campaign, authorities are urging residents to clear waterlogging in and around their homes, use mosquito nets, and report symptoms at the earliest.

Delhi to provide free online coaching for CUET, NEET

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The Delhi government Thursday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with BIG Institute and Physics Wallah Limited, to offer free crash courses to students for CUET and NEET preparation after Class 12. The initiative signed between the Delhi Directorate of Education and BIG Institute and Physics Wallah Limited is a joint initiative of a joint initiative of NSDC International, Ministry of Skills, Government of India that will provide free online coaching for NEET and CUET to 1.63 lakh government school students. The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and Education



Minister Ashish Sood. Sood said the programme will begin April 1 and will include 180 hours of coaching over 30 days, with six hours of classes per day. "This pro bono initiative will equip our students with the

necessary guidance to excel in these crucial exams, significantly enhancing their chances of securing admission into top medical colleges and central universities," he added. Chief Minister Gupta said the initiative aims to help govern-

ment school students secure admissions in medical and engineering colleges. "With this, more and more students from Delhi government schools will get the oppor-

tunity to enrol in good colleges and successfully clear entrance exams for medical and engineering programmes," she said. Under this initiative, students will receive six hours of daily online coaching from April 2 to May 2, 2025, covering subjects such as Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, General Aptitude and English, according to a statement. The programme includes PDF notes for structured revision, regular scheduled tests to track progress and a dedicated doubt-resolution mechanism for continuous support, it said. The statement said the initiative would be a 'game-changer' for students from marginalised communities, ensuring that financial constraints do not hinder their academic aspirations.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (AGRI.), AGRICULTURE ENGINEERING DIVISION, KENDRAPARA
E-mail ID : eagg-kendrapara@gov.in

Govt. of Odisha "e" procurement Notice
Bid Identification No. : E.E.(A), Kendrapara Division - 08/2024-25
No.L-214 : The Executive Engineer (Agril.), Agriculture Engineering Division, Kendrapara on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in single cover system in ONLINE MODE, for 02 Numbers of Projects i.e. for Construction of vehicle stand of CDAO office campus Jajpur & Provision of 63 KVA Transformer to ADO office Marshaghai

1. Estimated Cost	: As Mentioned against column No-03
2. Bid Cost	: Rs. 4,000/- as Mentioned against each in Column-04
3. Period of completion	: Calendar Months Mentioned in Column - 06
4. No. of works (Tender)	: 02 nos.
5. Class of Contractor	: As Mentioned in Column - 05
6. Date & Time of availability of bid document in the portal	: From Dt.29.03.2025 at 10.00 A.M. to Dt.08.04.2025 at 5.00 P.M.
7. Last date/Time for receipt of bids in the portal	: Dt.08.04.2025 at 5.00 P.M.
8. Date of submission of documents	: Dt.29.03.2025 at 10.00 A.M. to Dt.09.04.2025 at 5.00 P.M. (Except Holidays)
9. Date & time of opening of online bids	: Dt.10.04.2025 at 11.00 A.M. & onwards
10. Name and address of the officer inviting Bid	: Executive Engineer (Agril.), Agriculture Engineering Division, Kendrapara

Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>.
A. All the volumes/documents shall be uploaded in the portal by the Procurement Officer Administrator and published by Procurement Officer Publisher (Officer Inviting tender)
B. The Tender documents published by the Tender Inviting Officer (Procurement Officer Publisher) in the website "<http://tendersodisha.gov.in>" will appear in the Latest.
C. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website "<http://tendersodisha.gov.in>". Any addendum/corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.
Sd./ Executive Engineer (Agril.)
Agriculture Engineering Division, Kendrapara
OIPR-01471/11/1008/2425

national



It was a pleasure to speak with HM King Philippe of Belgium. Appreciated the recent Belgian Economic Mission to India led by HRH Princess Astrid

COURT REFUSES INTERIM BAIL TO SHAHI JAMA MASJID PRESIDENT

A local court Thursday rejected the interim bail plea of Shahi Jama Masjid president Zafar Ali and posted his regular plea April 2, officials said. Additional district judge II Nirbhay Narayan Rai heard the interim bail plea and dismissed it, said additional district government counsel Hariom Prakash Saini



of the day note

The BJP has spread poison against Islam for years, and now it seeks the Muslim community's votes... The BJP should clarify whether it wants to offer poison or food to Muslims



UDDHAV THACKERAY | SHIV SENA (UBT) CHIEF

The desire of our elderly citizens to go on pilgrimage often remains unfulfilled due to financial difficulties. We are happy that we are able to fulfil their desire. Besides persons of 60 years of age or above, widows and abandoned women will also be covered as beneficiaries under the scheme



VISHNU DEO SAI | C'GARH CM

There is a hidden agenda behind the delimitation exercise, which is to reduce reserved tribal and Dalit seats. Attempts were made earlier, which were thwarted by Disom Guru Shibu Soren



HEMANT SOREN | J'KHAND CM

SHORT TAKES

Man kills his 4 kids by slitting throats

Shahjahanpur (UP): A 36-year-old man allegedly killed his four children by slitting their throats before hanging himself in a village under Roza police station here, an officer said Thursday. Rajiv Kumar, a native of Manpur Chachari village, killed his three daughters -- Smriti, 12, Kirti, 9, and Pragati, 7 -- and five-year-old son Rishabh, Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi said. Family members said that Rajiv was undergoing treatment for his mental illness.

Protests in Jammu over terror incidents

Jammu: Shiv Sena Dogra Front (SSDF) activists Thursday set ablaze a Pakistani flag here to protest over terror incidents in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district, where two cops were injured. The gunfight erupted this morning when security forces spotted terrorists near the Jakhola village in the Ghati Juthana area of Rajbagh, approximately 30 kilometers from the site of Sunday's encounter in the Hiranagar sector of the district. Dozens of SSDF activists, led by chairman Ashok Gupta, gathered at the city centre and burnt down the flag amid anti-Pakistan slogans during the protest.

Modi to visit RSS founder's memorial

Nagpur: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a visit to RSS founder Dr K B Hedgewar's memorial in Nagpur March 30 and lay the foundation stone of the extension building of Madhav Netralaya Premium Centre. The memorials of Hedgewar and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's second Sarsanghchalak M S Golwalkar are located at the Dr Hedgewar Smriti Mandir in Nagpur's Reshimbagh area.

Man shot dead

Thane: A 45-year-old man was shot dead by an unidentified person in Navi Mumbai, a police official said Thursday. Baburao Wagmare was shot dead in Garade village at around 4:30pm Wednesday, the Panvel police station official said. "Efforts are on to nab the accused. A probe is underway to find out why Wagmare was shot. A case of murder and other offences under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has been registered," he said.

Oppn raises concern over 'politicisation' of Birla's remarks on LoP



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: An Opposition parties' delegation met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla Thursday to flag the "denial of opportunity" to Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi to speak in the House, as well as the "politicisation" of his asking the Congress leader to follow the rules of procedure. Congress's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi said the INDIA bloc delegation, comprising the Congress, SP, TMC, DMK, Kerala Congress, RJD, IUML, RLP and MDMK, met the speaker during the Zero Hour.

Sources said Gogoi, Congress general secretary organisation K C Venugopal, Congress whip Manickam Tagore, DMK's A Raja, SP's Dharmendra Yadav, TMC's Kalyan Banerjee, and NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule were among the MPs who met the speaker. "We have given a letter, which was signed by many parties, including the RSP and Shiv Sena (UBT). We conveyed our collective concern and disappointment to the speaker on how the ruling side is violating the traditions, rules and culture of the House," Gogoi told reporters after the meeting. He said the main matter was the context and issue over which Birla made a statement on the LoP Wednesday. "He made a reference to Rule

349 and said the members and the LoP must follow this. What specific incident he was referring to was not clear. There was politicisation and propaganda over the speaker's remarks. We apprised the speaker of how his remarks had been politicised outside," Gogoi said.

"When the LoP stood up, the House was adjourned. He was not allowed to speak, despite his name being taken in the House. The whole country saw it. LoP is a constitutional post. Remarks were made about him but he was not allowed to speak. There was no clarity on what incident the speaker was referring to but the BJP IT cell was politicising the issue," he said, terming the incident saddening.

The convention of allowing the LoP to speak when they stand up has been disregarded repeatedly. This breaks from past parliamentary practices and diminishes the space for a healthy debate in the House, the Congress leader said. "A well-functioning democracy requires the smooth operation of Parliament, where all members, irrespective of party affiliation, are given an equal opportunity to debate, deliberate and discharge their constitutional duties. However, certain disturbing trends have emerged, which undermine the sanctity of Parliament," the sources quoted the Opposition leaders as saying in the letter.

HC asks JU to stop inviting politicians

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, March 27: The Calcutta High Court Thursday directed Jadavpur University authorities not to invite any political functionary to programmes organised by the institution.

It also stated that functions within the campus should be held with the sole participation of academicians. The court, while pointing out that the authorities cannot shy away from regulating entry of outsiders, observed that the university need not be reminded that no person, except a student, is entitled to enter the campus or stay in the hostels. Exceptions to that rule, if made, should have prior permission of the authorities, the court said.

In the wake of the recent clashes which broke out between a group of students and West Bengal Education Minister Bratya Basu's convoy, the court was hearing a PIL alleging lawlessness and indiscipline in Jadavpur University and seeking judicial intervention in restoring order at the institution.

Noting that the minister's vehicle was allegedly damaged when he visited the university for a meeting, a division bench presided by Chief Justice T S Sivagnanam wondered why the politician accepted the invitation to visit the campus in the first place, if the situation there was not conducive.

"It is not clear why the University has not approached the state for assistance. This aspect will be considered on the next date of hearing... Recently, a highly ranked politician was attacked at the university. If the situation is not conducive, it is not clear as to why such important persons accept invitations to the university, which may have a negative impact. There will be a direction to the university to not conduct any functions by inviting political functionaries," the bench ordered.

The bench, also comprising Justice Chaitali Chatterjee (Das) directed that only academicians should be invited to its programmes or seminars.

Oppn targets govt on US tariff threats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Opposition MPs Thursday raised concerns over US President Donald Trump's tariff threats, with senior Congress leader P Chidambaram asking the government to clarify India's response, emphasising that there has been no discussion in Parliament or consultation with Opposition parties on the issue.

Initiating a discussion on the Finance Bill 2025 in the Rajya Sabha, Chidambaram cautioned that a trade war would lead to depressed exports, lower FDI, higher inflation and currency depreciation. He said India must stand with saner



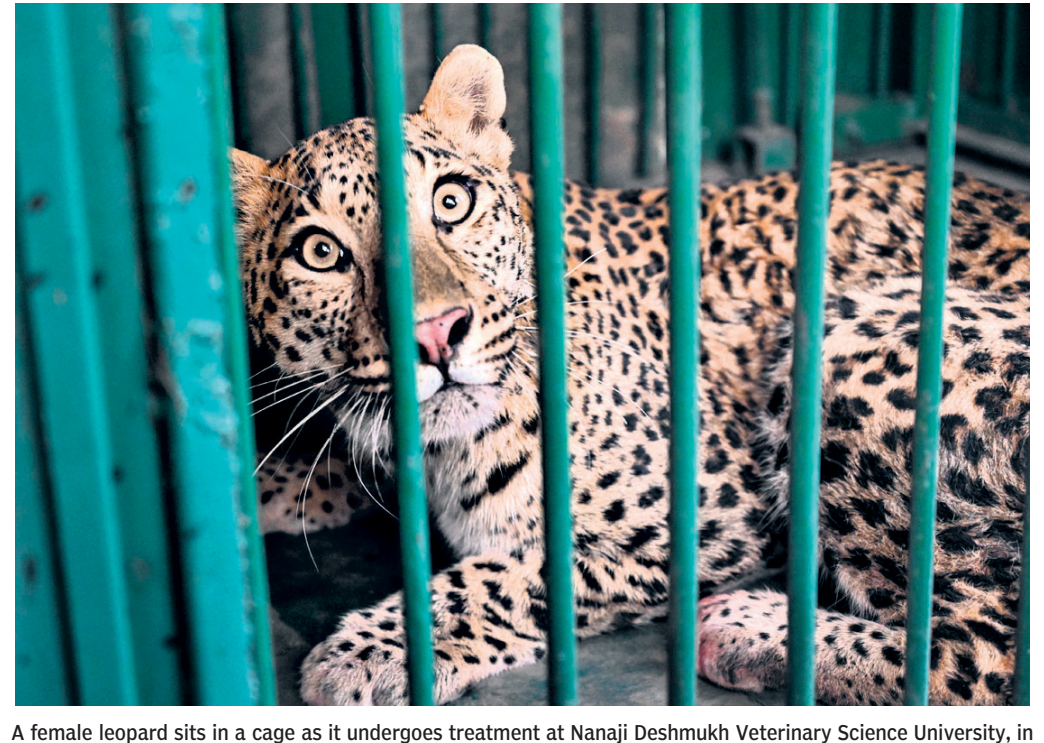
voices in the world, such as Canada, Britain, France, Germany and Japan, and collectively do everything to prevent a tariff and trade war.

Referring to Trump's statement that the US will impose tariffs from April 2, the former finance minister said, "What is the government's response? What is India's response? There has been no statement of policy, no discussion in Parliament, and

no consultation with Opposition parties. The government is holding its cards close to its chest if it has any cards at all". Chidambaram further said, "A tariff war will lead to a trade war. The whole world will be hurt..."

He alleged that Sitharaman had announced customs duty reduction on various items, including motor vehicles, passenger cars, goods, transport vehicles, motorcycles, bicycles and even toys in the Union Budget 2025-26 under Trump's pressure.

Congress leader Rajeev Shukla expressed alarm over the impending trade tensions, warning of a "substantial tariff burden" after April 1.



A female leopard sits in a cage as it undergoes treatment at Nanaji Deshmukh Veterinary Science University, in Jabalpur. The female leopard was trapped in a storeroom at Ordnance Factory Khamaria, forest officials said after the rescue

MLC admits privilege notice against Kamra

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 27: The Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLC) has admitted a breach of privilege notice against stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra for allegedly insulting Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde during a recent performance.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare has also been named in the notice. Maharashtra legislative council chairman Ram Shinde told PTI Thursday he has accepted a privilege notice against Kunal Kamra over the 'traitor' jibe and had forwarded it to the Privileges Committee.

The controversy stems from Kamra's recent show at the Habitat Comedy Club in Khar, where he performed a parody song targeting Eknath Shinde. The act prompted a backlash from Shiv Sena supporters, who vandalised the club and the hotel in which it is located on Sunday night.

"I have accepted the notice of breach of privilege against Kunal Kamra and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sushma Andhare and have sent it to Privilege Committee chairman Prasad Lad. The future course of action regarding the motion will be decided by the committee," Ram Shinde said.

The notice was originally moved on Wednesday by BJP MLC Pravin Darekar, who also serves as Leader of the House. Presenting the motion, Darekar said, "Kunal Kamra performed a song containing personal and insulting references to Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde."

Darekar further alleged Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Andhare had supported the performance and "used objectionable language, which amounts to contempt of the House." According to Darekar, both Kamra and Andhare "disrespected the dignity of legislative institutions through their remarks". BJP MLC Prasad Lad, who



Kamra has refused to apologise, asserting he would not hide under the bed waiting for the controversy to die down

was appointed chairperson of the Privileges Committee last year, will now review the notice along with other committee members.

If the committee finds merit in the complaint, the motion may be brought for discussion in the House. Meanwhile, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena MLA Ramesh Bornare submitted a breach of privilege notice in the state assembly against Sushma Andhare for allegedly mocking Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Minister of State for Finance Ashish Jaiswal extended support to Bornare's notice.

BJP leader Sudhir Mungantiwar urged that the members of the Assembly's privilege committee be named soon. Presiding officer Sanjay Kelkar said Speaker Rahul Narwekar would take a decision on the notice. Rahool Kanai, social media in-charge of the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena, Wednesday alleged Kamra and Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut shared a similar ideological position. He questioned the timing of the controversy surrounding Kamra's parody show, suggesting political intent. As per police sources, Kamra, who is currently in Puducherry according to his Instagram bio, has been asked to appear before authorities within a week.

Kannada actress denied bail in gold smuggling case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, March 27: A sessions court in Bangalore Thursday rejected the bail plea of Kannada actress Harshavardhini Ranya alias Ranya Rao in the gold smuggling case. This was the third she failed to get the court relief.

According to the prosecution, Ranya admitted to using hawala channels to facilitate gold purchases. In response, the authorities have issued a notice to initiate a judicial investigation, which they believe will uncover further financial irregularities.

Officials claim that Ranya handed over the smuggled gold to a merchant named Sahil Jain, who was arrested by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) Wednesday. This brings the total number of arrests in the case to three. During the hearing, DRI lawyer Madhu Raj revealed that Ranya and Raj made approximately 26 trips to Dubai together, often departing in the morning and returning the same evening.

Before her arrest, the actor allegedly booked a flight ticket for Raj, who then handed over the gold to her in Dubai.

Gold bars worth ₹12.56 crore were seized from Ranya, the step-daughter of DGP rank officer K Ramachandra Rao at Kempegowda International Airport March 3 upon her arrival from Dubai.

Following this, searches were conducted at her residence, where officials recovered gold jewellery worth ₹2.06 crore and Indian currency amounting to ₹2.67 crore.

Senior IPS officer Ramchandra Rao has also been questioned in connection with the case. Following these developments, the Karnataka government placed him on compulsory leave March 15, effective immediately and until further notice.

CBSE bans 'dummy school' students from exams

In its ongoing crackdown on "dummy schools", the Central Board of Secondary Education is contemplating amending examination bye-laws to disallow such students from appearing in the board exams and will have to take the National Institute of Open Schooling test



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: CBSE students not found attending regular schools will not be allowed to appear for Class 12 board examinations, officials said and added that the onus of taking admission in "dummy schools" lies with students and parents.

In its ongoing crackdown on "dummy schools", the Central Board of Secondary Education is contemplating amending examination bye-laws to disallow such students from ap-

pearing in the board exams and will have to take the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) test.

"In case candidates are found missing from school or are found to be non-attending during surprise inspections undertaken by the board, such candidates may not be allowed to appear for the board examination. The onus of not attending regular school also falls on the concerned student and his or her parents," a senior board official told PTI. The official said action against schools pro-

moting such a "dummy" culture or sponsoring non-attending students will be taken in accordance to the board's affiliation and examination bye-laws. The issue was also taken up in the recent Governing Board Meeting of the board where it was recommended that the decision be implemented from academic session 2025-2026. "In

the examination committee the matter was discussed elaborately and came to the conclusion that as per the board regulations, a minimum of 75 per cent attendance is mandatory for students to be eligible to appear for the board examinations."

In case the required attendance is not met, merely enrolling at a non-attending school

may not entitle such students to appear for the CBSE examination, he said. "Such students may approach the NIOS to appear in the examination if not allowed by CBSE. It was also discussed that the board offers a 25 per cent relaxation only in cases of exigencies such as medical emergencies, participation in national or international sports events and other serious reasons," the official added.

The board is considering that those students who do not have required attendance, the board may not consider their candidature and disciplinary action may also be taken against the school for referring such students for the exam.

Scores of students preparing for engineering and medical entrance exams prefer to take admission in dummy schools so that they can focus solely on their preparations for com-

petitive exams. They do not attend classes and straightforwardly appear in the board exams.

Aspirants also choose dummy schools to take advantage of state-specific quotas for admissions to medical and engineering colleges. For example, candidates who complete their senior secondary education in Delhi become eligible for the Delhi state quota in medical colleges, giving them an additional incentive to enrol in dummy schools in the capital.

The rise of dummy schools is a growing concern, particularly for students preparing for competitive engineering and medical entrance exams. Many students enrol in dummy schools, allowing them to bypass regular attendance while focusing entirely on exam preparation. These students only appear for board examinations.

national



It did not matter which political party they belonged to. Every single person was focused on helping the disaster victims who had lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods. For me, it was the first glimpse of the courage, strength and resilience of the people of Wayanad

97 INDIAN FISHERMEN IN SL CUSTODY: EAM

A total of 97 Indian fishermen are currently in the custody of Sri Lanka, of which 83 are serving sentences, three awaiting trial and 11 were apprehended Thursday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar informed the Rajya Sabha



of the day quote

It is not possible at all...pirin-thathu pirinthatu dan (once split, split forever)...we cannot tolerate them (Panneerselvam and aides) pawning the party to the enemies

If a farmer's son finds cow dung foul-smelling, it means he has lost touch with his roots and his society. Munshi Premchand once wrote that if a farmer's son dislikes cow dung, famine is inevitable. If Akhilesh Yadav finds cow dung stinky, it is certain that his party is heading towards political extinction

Today, we see a new Uttar Pradesh, one that takes decisions with care, transparency, and honesty. These are the same values that have brought about significant changes in the state

Cash row: Bar bodies meet CJI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Leaders of six high court bar associations Thursday met Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and sought withdrawal of the recommendation to transfer Delhi High Court judge Yashwant Varma to the Allahabad High Court.

Soon after the meeting, Allahabad High Court Bar Association (AHCBA) president Anil Tiwari said the CJI had assured them of considering the demands. However, the CJI did not promise anything, said sources privy to the development.

The representatives of six high court bar associations met the CJI and four collegium members, Justices B R Gavai, Surya Kant, Abhay S Oka and Vikram Nath. They raised several demands, including setting in motion criminal action over the cash discovery from the judge's official home.

"The five members (of the collegium) listened to us very carefully and told us in a positive way 'each and every point raised by you in writing will be considered by us strictly within the premises of law. Don't worry at all'. This is a very big statement by five senior judges," Tiwari told media persons soon after the meeting. He said the bar body would reconsider whether or not to continue with the indefinite strike.

"I do not know what decision will be taken," he said. The CJI referred to the reasons behind collegium's recommendation to transfer Justice Varma to his parent high court at Allahabad, Tiwari added. The CJI said in any case, Justice Varma, who was de-rostered by the Delhi High Court following a directive from him, wouldn't be discharging any judicial function



IN THE WAKE OF THE CONTROVERSY, THE APEX COURT COLLEGIUM RECOMMENDED THE REPATRIATION OF JUSTICE VARMA, FROM WHOM WORK WAS WITHDRAWN BY THE DELHI HIGH COURT FOLLOWING A DIRECTIVE FROM THE CJI, TO HIS PARENT ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT

ON MARCH 22, THE CJI CONSTITUTED THE THREE-MEMBER COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN IN-HOUSE INQUIRY INTO ALLEGATIONS AND DECIDED TO UPLOAD THE INQUIRY REPORT OF CHIEF JUSTICE D K UPADHYAY OF THE DELHI HIGH COURT IN THE INCIDENT

we, we have all launched," another bar leader said. He said the bar leaders have brought to the notice of the CJI the larger issue of corruption in the judiciary.

"One thing we pointed out to the chief justice and his collegium is our concern is not Justice Yashwant Varma per se, because he is just one of the symptoms. We are looking at the disease itself, and we have pointed out that when the courts or in the collegium is unable to pull out the bad apples. It affects the entire judiciary," said advocate Yeshwant Shenoy, president of the Kerala High Court Bar Association. Shenoy said in the meeting the need to create a system through which the bad apples could be picked out upon identification was stressed upon.

Not only the CJI, but the entire collegium members understood the concern, and assured they also want a "clean judiciary", he added.

Meanwhile, lawyers in the Allahabad High Court, protesting against the transfer of Delhi High Court judge Yashwant Varma to the court, have said their strike will continue Friday.

2 terrorists killed in J&K encounter

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Jammu, March 27: A fierce gun battle in a remote forested area of Kathua district has left two terrorists dead and five security personnel injured as the security forces intensified their operation to neutralise an infiltrating group of about five militants, officials said Thursday.

It was not immediately clear whether it was the same group that had been evading an earlier cordon in Sanyal forest of Kathua region or another batch of freshly infiltrated terrorists. The encounter triggered intense firing and explosions, the officials said.

The gunfight, centred near Jakhole village in the Ghati Juthana area of Rajbagh, involved a group of approximately five terrorists and an initial exchange of gunfire resulted in injuries to Special Police Officer Bharat Chalotra, who sustained facial wounds. He was treated at a Kathua hospital before being transferred to Government Medical College Hospital in Jammu, where his condition was stated to be stable.

The officials said that two terrorists were killed in the onslaught led by the Special Operations Group (SOG) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and assisted by the Army, the BSF and CRPF. Adding to the tension, three security personnel, including a Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), were reportedly trapped near the gunfight's location, adjacent to a rivulet concealed by dense foliage. The officials said a clear picture would emerge only after the ongoing encounter ended. It may be mentioned that a group of terrorists were intercepted by the SOG in the Hiranagar sector of Kathua district Sunday evening.

Govt to mobilise ₹8L-cr via bonds in first half of FY26



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The Centre plans to raise ₹8 lakh crore through dated securities during April-September period of 2025-26 to fund the revenue gap, the finance ministry said Thursday.

Out of gross market borrowing of ₹14.82 lakh crore estimated for 2025-26, ₹8 lakh crore, or 54 per cent, is planned to be borrowed in the first half (H1) through issuance of dated securities, including ₹10,000 crore of Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs), an official statement said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget proposed to borrow ₹14.82 lakh crore by issuing dated securities to meet revenue shortfall in the next financial year. Fiscal deficit, the gap between the government's total revenue and total expenditure, is estimated to be 4.4 per cent of GDP for FY26 as compared to 4.8 per cent of the GDP estimated for the current financial year.

In absolute terms, the fiscal deficit is pegged at ₹15,68,936 crore for the financial year 2025-26. To finance the fiscal deficit, the net market borrowings from dated securities are estimated at ₹11.54 lakh crore. The balance financing is expected to come from small savings and other sources.

"Coming to 2025-26, the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at ₹34.96 lakh crore and ₹50.65 lakh crore, respectively. The net tax receipts are estimated at ₹28.37 lakh crore," Sitharaman had said in her Budget speech.

According to the latest official statement, the gross borrowing would be completed through 26 weekly auctions ranging between ₹25,000 crore and ₹36,000 crore. The market borrowing will be spread over 3, 5, 7, 10, 15, 30, 40 and 50 year securities and the share of borrowing (including SGrBs) under different maturities will be 3-year (5.3 per cent), 5-year (11.3 per cent), 7-year (8.2 per cent), 10-year (26.2 per cent), 15-year (14 per cent), 30-year (10.5 per cent), 40-year (14 per cent) and 50-year (10.5 per cent).

The government will carry out switching/buyback of securities to smoothen the redemption profile, it said. The government will continue to reserve the right to exercise greenshoe option to retain an additional subscription of up to ₹2,000 crore against each of the securities indicated in the auction notifications, it said.

POST OF THE DAY

Fasting for 72 hours is the best medicine on Earth. It triggers your body to "eat up" tumors, inflammation, and toxins.

KHARGE CALLS FOR UNITY

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: Giving a clarion call to the party's district chiefs to work unitedly with a long-term strategy to win upcoming state elections, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge Thursday asserted the organisation's ideology is strong but it cannot be implemented in the country without power.

Addressing the first of the three scheduled meetings of District Congress Presidents, Kharge said that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, INDIA bloc parties fought unitedly against the BJP and its allies, restricting them to 240 seats. Had the Congress got 20-30 seats more, an alternative government would have been formed, he said.

Calling the DCC chiefs the first line of party's defence at the ground, he said their inputs will be crucial in planning the party's strategy. "Our 'Save Constitution' campaign ex-

posed BJP-RSS' secret desire to change the Constitution. Today, the BJP is short of majority and dependent on two allies. A prime minister who arrogantly claimed (they would win) 400 seats was dealt a significant blow by us," Kharge told the DCC chiefs from 13 states and three Union Territories present at the Indira Bhawan here. "The Congress Party secured almost 100 seats. If we had worked harder, we could have gained 20-30 more seats. A gain of such seats could have led to the formation of an alternative government in the country," Kharge said at the meeting.

"Had we achieved this, we could have halted the systematic assault on our independent institutions, democracy, and the Constitution," he said. He said the Congress' battle against the BJP and the RSS continues both inside and outside Parliament. "We must take this fight to the streets."



BJP workers during a protest against the state government at Chaura Maidan, in Shimla district, Himachal Pradesh. Hundreds of BJP workers, including women, gathered near Chaura Maidan here against the Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led government and shouted anti-government slogans during the protest named 'Maha Pradarshan'.

Four children die, over dozen fall sick at rehab centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Lucknow, March 27: Four special needs children died and at least 16 were taken ill, allegedly after they had their dinner at a government rehabilitation centre in the state capital's Para area, officials said.

On Tuesday evening, more than 20 special needs children residing at the centre experienced sudden illness, possibly after food poisoning, and were taken to Lokbandhu hospital. Lucknow District Magistrate Vishak G told PTI, "A total of four children including two girls and two boys of the shelter home aged between 12 and 17 years of age have died. Their bodies have been sent for post-mortem and their viscera will be preserved."

Dr Rajeev Kumar Dixit, Medical Superintendent of Lok Bandhu Raj Narayan Combined Hospital, told PTI Videos that around 20 children were brought to the hospital Tuesday evening from the rehabilitation centre. "All these children are mentally challenged. They were severely dehydrated when they arrived. Despite our best efforts, two children died," he had earlier said.

Two more critically ill children, who were referred to another government hospital, succumbed, he said. The condition of the remaining 16 has improved, he added. A medical team has been sent to the shelter home to observe the health of the remaining children. He has formed a committee to determine the cause of the alleged food poisoning.



Heatwave: Centre outlines measures for state health facilities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: With temperatures across the country soaring, the Centre has asked states to review the preparedness of health facilities for the management of heatstroke cases and heat-related illnesses.

In a letter, Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said with the onset of summer, an increase in the exposure to heat, including extreme conditions may occur. Some places of the country have begun witnessing high temperatures, she noted while enclosing the Seasonal Outlook from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for summer 2025.

She drew attention to public health and clinical guidelines on 'Heat and Health' available on the website of the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and requested states to disseminate these guidance documents to all districts for effective preparedness of health departments



and health facilities to prevent, manage, and monitor the health impact of extreme heat.

Srivastava mentioned that from March 1 onwards, through daily surveillance, patient-level information on clinical diagnosis of heatstroke is being captured on Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) for all states and UTs. Training sessions in virtual mode have been conducted recently by the National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health,

NCDC, she said. She asked them to ensure that these are carried forward with the training material provided by NCDC and that all health professionals are trained to report on Integrated Health Information Platform.

She highlighted that the daily heat alerts generated by the IMD are shared by NCDC with states and these alerts include forecasts of heat wave for the next three-four days may be disseminated promptly to all

In a letter, Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava said with the onset of summer, an increase in the exposure to heat, including extreme conditions may occur

Some places of the country have begun witnessing high temperatures, she noted while enclosing the Seasonal Outlook from the India Meteorological Department for summer 2025

health facilities.

"State, district, and city health departments may ensure the implementation of Heat-Health action plans and support in planning, managing and assessing response to heat along with other responding agencies," Srivastava stated.

She urged the health departments of states and UTs to continue efforts for sensitisation and capacity building of medical officers, health staff, and grass-root level workers on heat illness. Its early recognition and management. "Health facility preparedness must be reviewed for the availability of adequate quantities of essential

medicines, intravenous fluids, ice packs, ORS and all necessary equipments to provide active, emergency cooling," she underlined.

The Union Health Secretary said the guidance on developing heatstroke management units and emergency management of severe heat-related illnesses has been disseminated. Availability of sufficient drinking water at all health facilities and the continued functioning of cooling appliances in critical areas must be ensured, she stressed. Highlighting fire safety measures, she said health facilities should conduct thorough inspections, safety and electrical load audits and ensure fire NOC compliance. Srivastava also urged states to utilise Information, Education and Communication (IEC) as well as community level awareness materials developed by the National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health on the precautions to be taken by people to safeguard themselves against heat wave.



Our soldiers, when they are engaged and deployed, are there to react and respond to the decisions of the commander in chief and, if they are in a conflict situation, to respond to it
EMMANUEL MACRON | FRENCH PRESIDENT

MYANMAR JUNTA PREPARING FOR DECEMBER ELECTION
The chief of Myanmar's ruling junta vowed Thursday to hold a free and fair election in December, as he urged armed opponents in a widening civil war to renounce violence and pursue dialogue. Min Aung Hlaing during a speech at the country's annual armed forces day parade said the military was seeking to hold a "dignified" election



international

of the day quote

I would like to extend our gratitude on behalf of Russia for the fact that India, including its Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been following a balanced approach to the Ukraine crisis at all times and called for settling it through dialogue and by addressing its root causes
SERGEY LAVROV | FOREIGN MINISTER, RUSSIA

The British economy will only grow by 1 per cent this year, half the rate previously anticipated
RACHEL REEVES | TREASURY CHIEF, UK

I am very concerned about the behaviour of the American government. I am concerned because free trade is being harmed and I am concerned because multilateralism is weakened
LUIZ INACIO LULA DA SILVA | PRESIDENT, BRAZIL

SHORT TAKES

US approves \$2bn drone sale to Qatar

Dubai: The United States has given an initial approval for the energy-rich Mideast nation of Qatar to buy eight armed MQ-9B Predator drones for its military, an estimated purchase worth nearly \$2 billion. The State Department approval announced early Thursday for Qatar comes after Doha had been trying to purchase the drones during the Biden administration, but hadn't gotten the OK despite serving as an interlocutor for Washington to the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iran's theocracy and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The immediate approval under President Donald Trump serves as a far-different starting point for his government's relations with Qatar — particularly after he initially backed a four-nation boycott of Doha during his first term.

11 Indian fishermen arrested by Sri Lanka

Colombo: The Sri Lankan Navy Thursday arrested 11 Indian fishermen and seized their trawler for allegedly poaching in the island nation's water, according to an official release. The arrests were made during a "special operation" in the northern sea area off Delft Island, the Navy said in a press release. The 11 fishermen were brought to the Kankasanthurei Harbour and will be handed over to the Fisheries Inspector of Mailadi for legal proceedings, it said.

Olympic skier, his father die in hotel fire

Istanbul: A fire at a closed ski resort hotel in northwest Turkey killed an Olympic skier and his father Thursday, two months after a blaze at another Turkish winter resort left 79 dead. The victims were named as Yahya Usta, president of the Turkish Ski and Snowboard Teachers Association, and his 25-year-old son Berkin Usta, a skier who represented Turkey at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games.

Indian fisherman dies in Pak jail

Karachi: A 52-year-old Indian fisherman has died allegedly by suicide at the Malir Jail in Pakistan's Karachi, a jail official said Thursday. "Gaurav Ram Anand Tuesday night hanged himself with a rope in the washroom of the barrack where Indian fishermen are jailed," Jail Superintendent Arshad Hussain told PTI. According to the Jail Superintendent, Anand was declared dead by the prison doctor at around 2:30 Tuesday night.

NK bolsters Russian army

The military equipment North Korea has sent to Russia includes a 'considerable amount' of short-range ballistic missiles, 170 millimetre self-propelled howitzers and around 220 units of 240 millimetre multiple rocket launchers



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Seoul, March 27: North Korea sent around 3,000 additional troops to Russia in January and February in continued support for Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine, South Korea's military said Thursday in its latest assessment. The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said North Korea has also been sending more missiles, artillery equipment and ammunition to help Russia and that North Korea could increase its weapons supplies further depending on the war situation. Russia and Ukraine recently agreed on a limited ceasefire, though both sides have accused each other of violations. The military equipment North Korea has sent to Russia includes a "considerable amount" of short-range bal-

listic missiles, 170 millimetre self-propelled howitzers and around 220 units of 240 millimetre multiple rocket launchers. North Korea has sent approximately 11,000 military personnel to fight in the war against Ukraine in its first involvement in a large-scale conflict since the 1950-53 Korean War, and the Joint Chiefs assessed that around 4,000 of them have been killed or wounded. South Korea's National Intelligence Service previously attributed the high North Korean casualties to the troops' likely struggles in adapting to drones and other elements of modern warfare. North Korean troops are further disadvantaged by the crude tactics of their Russian commanders, who have sent them into assault campaigns without providing rear-fire

Kim observed tests of newly developed reconnaissance and attack drones this week and called for their increased production

support, the spy agency told lawmakers in January. Still, Ukrainian military and intelligence officials have assessed that the North Koreans are gaining crucial battlefield experience and have been key to Russia's strategy of overwhelming Ukraine by throwing large numbers of soldiers into the battle for Kursk. The South Korean military report came after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un expressed his unwavering support for

Russia's war in Ukraine during a meeting with a top Russian security official, Sergei Shoigu, last week in Pyongyang. State media reports said Kim and Shoigu reaffirmed their commitment to uphold a major mutual defence treaty agreed upon last year. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko told Russian media Thursday that the governments were discussing a potential visit by Kim to Moscow but did not specify when it might take place.

KIM SHOWCASES NEW MILITARY DRONES
Kim's military support of Russia has raised concerns that he may receive Russian technology transfers in return, further strengthening the threat posed by his nuclear-armed military. Experts say drones are among the potential areas where North Korea might seek to acquire Russian technology and know-how. North Korean state media said Thursday that Kim observed tests of newly developed reconnaissance and attack drones this week and called for their increased production. Kim in recent months has been emphasizing the development of drones, and the tests were the latest display of his country's growing military capabilities.

Baloch insurgents target bus passengers; kill 6

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Karachi, March 27: Insurgents shot dead six people and abducted three after stopping a bus in Balochistan, and offloading passengers from Pakistan's Punjab. In another terror attack in the province, three people were killed and 17 injured after a bomb exploded near a police vehicle, officials said.



The two attacks come a fortnight after the banned separatist outfit Balochistan Liberation Army laid siege to a train in the Bolan district and killed 26 hostages, including 18 security personnel. The bus attack occurred in the Gwadar district when armed men stopped a Karachi-bound passenger bus near the Kalmat area on the Ormara highway late Wednesday, said Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Hafeez Baloch. "The gunmen offloaded some passengers and shot six people, five of whom were killed instantly while one survivor passed away later in the hospital Thursday morning. "Armed men killed six passengers after checking their ID cards and took away three others," he said, adding that all victims belonged to the country's Punjab province. No group claimed responsi-

bility for the attack, but in the past, ethnic Baloch terrorist groups carried out such targeted attacks against the people of Punjab. In a separate terror incident, a bomb exploded near a police vehicle in the Barech Market area of Quetta Thursday, killing three people and injuring 17 others. Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind said that an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was hidden in a motorcycle which detonated near a parked police vehicle. Police surgeon Dr Ayesha Faiz said that three people were killed and another 21 injured, including four policemen. However, the interior ministry confirmed only two deaths in a statement. Video footage showed people gathering at the scene of the blast, with the flaming wreckage of the motorcycle next to the charred police pickup truck. The attacks were condemned by the country's top leadership.

SNIPPETS

'Go back to your country': US Rep to UK journalist

New York: A pro-Donald Trump Congresswoman asked a British reporter to "go back to your country" when she was questioned about a leaked Signal group chat of senior US officials about a planned military strike on Yemen. A video posted on the internet showed Republican representative from Georgia Marjorie Taylor Greene clashing with a British journalist during a press conference Wednesday. The journalist from UK's Sky News television channel attempted to ask Greene about the Signal chat leak controversy when the politician cut her off, demanding to know where she was from, according to US media reports. When the journalist replied that she was from the United Kingdom, Greene launched a scathing attack and said, "We don't give a crap about your opinion and your reporting. Why don't you go back to your country where you have a major migrant problem?" She continued and said, "You should care about your own borders... do you care about people from your country, what about all the women who are raped by migrants?"



Pro-monarchy winds blow in Nepal

Nepal's political parties through a Parliament declaration abolished the 240-year-old monarchy in 2008 and turned the erstwhile Hindu kingdom to a secular, federal, democratic republic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA



Kathmandu, March 27: Pro-monarchists in Nepal Thursday announced to intensify their agitation by organising a protest rally on Friday with the aim of reinstatement of monarchy. Holding a press conference here, they also announced forming a Joint People's Movement Committee led by Navaraj Subedi, an 87-year-old staunch supporter of former King Gyanendra. The pro-monarchists said they will organise a grand protest rally at Tinkune area near the Tribhuvan International Airport demanding restoration of monarchy. Nepal's political parties through a Parliament declaration abolished the 240-year-old monarchy in 2008 and turned the erstwhile Hindu kingdom to a secular, federal, democratic republic. The Socialist Forum, a four-party alliance, is also organising a demonstration in favour of republic system at

Bhrikutimandap area of Kathmandu to counter the pro-monarchists Friday. CPN-Maoist Centre, CPN-Unified Socialist among others are joining the demonstration with the aim of strengthening republic system in the country. In view of the protests being organised by two different groups in Kathmandu, Nepal police have tightened security and increased vigilance. The pro-monarchists, including leaders of Rastriya Prajatantra Party, have been raising their voice for reinstating monarchy since the democracy day February 19, when ex-King Gyanendra in a message said that "time has come for us to assume responsibility to protect the country and bring about national unity". Meanwhile, Minister for Home Affairs Ramesh Lekhak has said that an autocratic system cannot be an alternative to

democracy. Speaking at a meet-and-greet programme of leaders organised by the Nepali Congress (NC) at Rupandehi district, Lekhak said that no society that has moved forward will retreat backward and that an autocratic system cannot be an alternative to democracy. He recalled that the NC has struggled for democracy for eight decades and added that there has been an attempt to create a negative narrative on democracy. The minister said that the NC will move forward firmly for the protection of democracy and the Constitution. "We should not head towards autocratic system just because we see some weaknesses in democracy. In a democracy, the government listens to the people and speaks up. Let us not be under the illusion that an autocratic system will be better," he said.

Yunus asks China to reduce interest rates on Chinese loans

Beijing: Gearing up for his meeting with President Xi Jinping, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus Thursday asked China to reduce interest rates for Chinese loans and waive commitment fees on Chinese-funded projects. Yunus, who met Chinese Executive Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang on the sidelines of the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference in Hainan, sought Chinese support in an array of developments, Bangladesh media reports said. He also called for a reduction of interest rates for Chinese loans from three per cent to 1-2 per cent to Bangladesh and sought a waiver of commitment fees on the Chinese-funded projects in Bangladesh. China is Bangladesh's fourth-largest lender after Japan, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, with total loans disbursed since 1975 coming to \$7.5 billion, according to a report in the Daily Star newspaper of Bangladesh. Yunus, who arrived in Hainan Wednesday on a four-day visit, is due to meet President Xi Friday.



Spain's wild horses in peril, despite key role in wildfire prevention

REUTERS

Amil, Spain, March 27: The wildfires that used to burn each summer in the woods above the Spanish village of Barro have diminished to almost none since Lucia Perez started grazing wild horses there. "There used to be fires every year but since 2019 when we started coming here we've had one small fire in the first year and nothing since," said Perez, 37, explaining how by clearing the undergrowth between the trees the horses help stop fires igniting and spreading. Fire prevention is one of several roles wild horses play in preserving the northwestern region of Galicia's delicate ecosystems, scientists say. But Europe's largest herd of wild horses has dwindled to less than half the 22,000 that roamed its mountains, forests and heathlands in the 1970s. On the Serra da Groba heath 80 km (50 miles) southwest of Barro, a herd of wild horses

feasts on the yellow flowers of gorse, "selectively clearing" a plant that is especially combustible, said Laura Lagos, a researcher at the University of A Coruna. This allows other plants such as purple-flowering heather and white asphodels to thrive, she said. It also helps preserve the heather around peat bogs, abundant in sphagnum mosses, one of the most effective ecosystems for capturing carbon. A 2021 study by the University of A Coruna, in which Lagos took part, found that grazing heathlands by wild horses was best for preventing wildfires while promoting plant biodiversity and capturing carbon, when compared to other potential uses of the land such as planting long-term pine forests, short-term Eucalyptus forests or grazing by domestic animals. "Studies show that where wild horses graze the heath's biodiversity increases," Lagos said. "They are a fundamental part of the ecosystem. They



benefit both the flora and the fauna associated with these open spaces." Grazing by sheep and cows can also prevent fires, but the horses have particular physiological characteristics that allow them to thrive in Galicia's terrain, including moustaches that appear designed to protect their lips from the prickly gorse. **NEOLITHIC ROCK CARVINGS** Drier, hotter weather due to climate change is increasing

the frequency of wildfires in Galicia. The region lost 96,900 hectares through fires between 2001 and 2023, according to Global Forest Watch. This has coincided with the proliferation in Galicia of the Eucalyptus tree, a pyrophyte species that depends on fires to help it release and spread seeds. Eucalyptus trees also reduce pasture for the horses as only ferns grow under them. Brought from Australia to Galicia by a missionary in the

19th century, they have spread thanks to demand for their wood from local pulp mills and now account for 28% of all trees in Galicia, according to a local government study. In September, the village of San Colmede was spared from a fire that ripped through 270 hectares of Eucalyptus and scrub in the surrounding hills thanks to grazing by animals and by the native oaks, sweet chestnuts and birches that grow near the village and burn more slowly, acting as a shield, said firefighter Cesar Leiros. Rock carvings depicting wild horses being hunted by men are evidence of their existence in Galicia dating back to the Neolithic period. In time, humans and horses developed a relationship. Known as "besteiros" in the Galician dialect, people would look out for the health of the free-roaming horses in exchange for occasionally domesticating one or selling it for meat.

'ECOLOGICAL JEWEL' Perez, who works in a school, runs a smaller rapa with her stonemason husband Niko Souto, 41, in the village of Amil. They don't make a profit, she said. The proceeds help pay for fencing to stop the horses wandering onto roads or farmland. Costs, including vet fees, insurance, fencing, micro-chipping and GPS equipment for tracking, are multiplying, Souto said. The horses are classified as livestock and Javier Alvarez-Blazquez, a retired lawyer who owns ten horses in the Serra da Groba, wants new legislation that recognises their unique circumstances. The Galician regional government should help besteiros cover some of the costs of looking after them, he said. The sale of a foal can generate 60 euros (\$65.08) but it doesn't compensate for expenses - excluding insurance and erecting fencing - of about 100 euros a year per horse, he said.

Business

of the day **QUOTE**

There have been few instances of sudden dip in solar power generation in the country in recent months

SHRIPAD NAIK | MINISTER OF STATE FOR POWER

India's overall economic scenario remains positive, with GDP growth rate pegged to be the highest globally and inflation also under control

ANUJ PURI | CHAIRMAN, ANAROCK

New Zealand is magical in winter, and with this season being India's biggest vacation period, our JV with Tourism New Zealand intends to maximise the opportunity

RAJEEV KALE | PRESIDENT AND COUNTRY HEAD - HOLIDAYS, MICE, VISA, THOMAS COOK

SHORT TAKES

Anytime \$ payments by Axis, JP Morgan

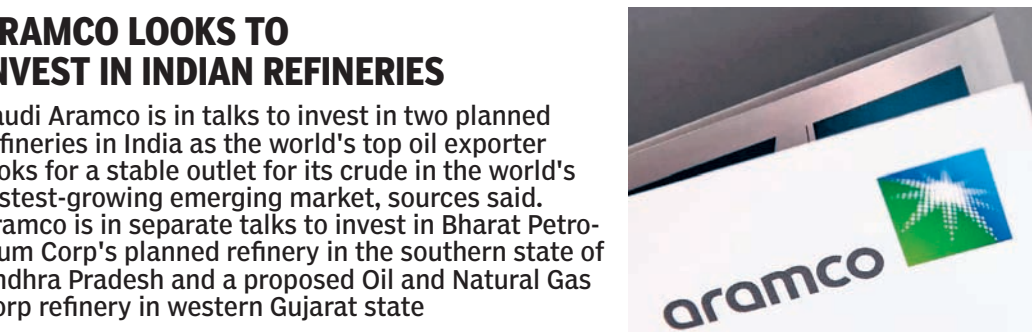
Mumbai: India's Axis Bank has partnered with JP Morgan to offer real-time US dollar payment capabilities to commercial clients in the country, facilitated by Kinexys, the US-based lender's blockchain and digital assets unit. This is the first instance where an Indian company will have the flexibility to make or receive dollar payments at any time, JP Morgan said in a statement Thursday. Axis Bank will deliver the 24/7 dollar clearing capability for clients out of Gujarat International Finance Tec-City, or GIFT city, an international financial services center.

BIS raids Amazon, Flipkart warehouses

New Delhi: The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has conducted extensive raids on Amazon and Flipkart warehouses here, seizing thousands of products lacking proper quality certifications, the government said Thursday. In a 15-hour operation March 19 at an Amazon Sellers Pvt Ltd warehouse in Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area, BIS officials confiscated more than 3,500 electrical products, including geysers and food mixers, valued at approximately ₹70 lakh. A separate raid at Instakart Services, a Flipkart subsidiary, resulted in the seizure of 590 pairs of sports footwear without required manufacturing marks, worth around ₹6 lakh, an official statement said.

ARAMCO LOOKS TO INVEST IN INDIAN REFINERIES

Saudi Aramco is in talks to invest in two planned refineries in India as the world's top oil exporter looks for a stable outlet for its crude in the world's fastest-growing emerging market, sources said. Aramco is in separate talks to invest in Bharat Petroleum Corp's planned refinery in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh and a proposed Oil and Natural Gas Corp refinery in western Gujarat state



TRUMP TARIFFS

Black clouds over auto components makers

Trump's 25% auto tariffs cast uncertainty over India's \$7 billion component exports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: US President Donald Trump's decision to slap a 25 per cent tariff on all auto imports has cast uncertainty over India's nearly \$7 billion of exports to America, which industry fears could squeeze margins.

Automobiles and car parts imported to the US would face a 25 per cent tariff starting April 2.

While India is not a big exporter of cars to the US, Tata Motors' luxury car subsidiary Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) is deeply entrenched in the American market. About 23 per cent of JLR's over 4,00,000 units sold in FY24 were in the US. These were all exported from its UK plants.

JLR's profitability is likely to be impacted as passing on added costs to consumers may dent its market share, analysts said.

The options before it are to pass the cost to consumers, cut expenses, or absorb the hit. A fourth option is to set up a US manufacturing facility to mitigate the damage.

Indian auto ancillary firms will see the biggest hit as they export a lot of components to the US. Sona BLW Precision Forgings, Bharat Forge, and Samvardhana Motherson International Limited (SAMIL) will be vulnerable to the tariff blow.

Sona BLW derives 43 per cent of its revenues from US exports, while Bharat Forge gets 38 per cent from sales to the US.

According to industry estimates, India's auto component exports to the US were



This step will hit for sure but it is not a 'Tsunami'. It is not too much of a big hit and Indian suppliers will work out how to retain their market share in the US

RAVI G BHATIA | PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR, JATO DYNAMICS

\$6.79 billion in FY24, while the country's imports from the US stood at \$1.4 billion at 15 per cent duty. Prior to Wednesday's announcement by Trump, the US charged almost 'nil' duty on imported components.

"It is the Indian auto components industry that is more likely to face the heat due to the US tariff as exports from here to the US are significant.

Indian vehicle makers are less likely to be impacted as there are no direct exports of fully built cars from India to the US," an industry executive told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

About a fifth of the revenue of India's auto component sector is derived from exports. Of this, 27 per cent is to the US market alone.

The operating profitability of indirect suppliers who supply to Tier I suppliers or OEMs in

other countries with end destinations in the US would also be impacted.

However, select automotive component players, with US-based manufacturing facilities, may see some offsetting gains from better capacity utilisation.

In the case of passenger cars, India exported a modest \$8.9 million worth of vehicles to the US in 2024, which is just 0.13 per cent of the country's total exports of \$6.98 billion.

Truck exports to the US stood at just \$12.5 million, representing 0.89 per cent of India's global truck exports and these figures confirm a limited vulnerability.

However, some impact is likely in car chassis fitted with engines, where America accounted for \$28.2 million of India's \$246.9 million in global exports (11.4 per cent).

"The segment that warrants the most attention is auto parts. India exported \$2.2 billion worth of auto parts to the US in 2024, comprising 29.1 per cent of its global auto part exports. While this initially appears concerning, a closer look reveals a level-playing field," experts noted.

The US imported \$89 billion worth of auto parts globally last year, with Mexico accounting for \$36 billion, China for \$10.1 billion, and India for just \$2.2 billion.

Odisha one of the fastest growing markets: Meher

Minerva Automobiles is a trusted Mahindra dealership known for offering certified vehicles, innovative solutions, and customer-centric services. Located in Bolangir, the dealership has been a prominent player in the area for over two decades and is known for its positive customer experience and top-notch servicing. The man behind this successful venture is **Managing Director Brijesh Meher**, an MBA graduate who left his job and started with jewellery business but later entered the automobile sector. Over the course of its journey, the dealership has established a firm foothold in the industry. In an interaction with **Orissa POST**, Meher shares his entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



Please tell us about your early life and entry into the automobile industry.

After I completed my MBA from Bangalore in 2004, I worked with an MNC for 2 years. Then I returned to my home town Bolangir to start retail jewellery business called 'Minerva Jewellers' in 2006. In 2012, I got an opening for Mahindra dealership for western Odisha region, and did not hesitate even a bit to grab the opportunity to start Mahindra dealership in 2013 in the name of Minerva Automobiles Pvt. Ltd.

Automobile market in India is on a roll. Are u also

witnessing the sales surge in Odisha market?

Yes indeed. During Covid-19, the industry got bogged down badly to suddenly witness a big surge towards the end as people started preferring private transport. And with a spurt of new models in the market, the industry started growing steadily - especially in the SUV segment. Odisha hasn't lagged behind; in fact it has been one of the fastest growing markets in the country. With road and infra spending happening at good speed in the last 3-4 years, the growth in auto sales has also been steady.

Being one of the prominent dealers in the state, what do you think are the challenges that the industry is facing?

No major challenges off late. But I feel the constant rise in interest rates has dampened auto sales a bit - especially in the commercial segment. Also, formation of the new government in Odisha has sort of slowed down institutional and government sales a bit in the last nine months. With stability and faster policy decisions, things should improve from here on.

What role do you believe

EVs play in sustainable mobility?

The EV industry is still in its nascent stage and facing lot of challenges like absence of charging infrastructure and range anxiety. But it is undoubtedly a much-needed alternative to fossil fuels. Companies are also coming up with newer and better models, which will help boost the sale of electric vehicles.

How important is customer satisfaction in this line of business?

Customer satisfaction is of utmost importance in this industry. Amid tough competition, if you cannot make your customers satisfied, don't expect them to return to you.

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

Going by my experience, my advice to the new entrants would be: Do whatever you can to make your employees happy and content, and in turn, they will take care of your customers. Secondly, automobile dealership is very demanding these days as it requires a lot of dedication, hard work and involvement. Be fully involved, and reap benefits.

RBI may cut rate by 25 bps in April: Ind-Ra Markets rebound

Total 75 bps reduction likely in FY26

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The RBI's monetary policy committee is expected to cut benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points in its policy review meeting next month to push growth, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said Thursday.

"We expect the headline inflation in FY25 to cool off to 4.7 per cent. Monetary easing may be limited to 75 bps in FY26," Ind-Ra Chief Economist and Head Public Finance, Devendra Kumar Pant said.

However, if the impact of US reciprocal tariff turns out to be higher than expected, there may be higher easing by RBI, Ind-Ra said in a statement.

The RBI's monetary policy committee is scheduled to meet 6 times in the next fiscal 2025-26 beginning April 1. The first meeting is slated for April 7-9.

Ind-Ra expects the monetary policy committee (MPC) to opt in for a 25bps cut in policy rates in its forthcoming April 2025

meeting," the rating agency said. Higher and stubborn inflation had prompted the RBI to tighten the monetary policy, and it raised the policy rate by 250 bps between May 2022 and February 2023, reaching 6.5 per cent.

In February 2025, the repo rate was cut by 25 bps to 6.25 per cent. Ind-Ra expects the headline retail inflation in March quarter of FY25 to fall below 4 per cent, after a gap of 21 quarters.

It expects RBI to go in for maximum three rate cuts in

FY26, aggregating to 75 bps.

"These along with one rate cut in February 2025 would translate in a 100bps cut in the current policy easing with the terminal policy rate at 5.5 per cent and average inflation at around 4 per cent, which would translate in a real repo rate of 1.5 per cent in FY26," Ind-Ra said.

The February 2025 MPC minutes suggest that the RBI is cognizant of slowing growth momentum. This suggests that while the low and stable inflation is the prime target of the RBI, the growth support through monetary policy will increasingly be a focus area of monetary policy, Ind-Ra added.



Indian billionaires' wealth third of country's GDP

284 billionaires amass cumulative wealth of ₹98L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, March 27: The cumulative wealth of 284 Indian billionaires is a third of the country's GDP, a report said on Thursday.

Gautam Adani, who helms the conglomerate headquartered in Gujarat's Ahmedabad, has emerged as the biggest wealth gainer globally with a ₹1 lakh crore jump in his fortune to ₹8.4 lakh crore, as per the Hurun Global Rich List.

Reliance Industries' Mukesh Ambani saw a 13 per cent decline in his wealth to ₹8.6 lakh crore, according to the yearly report which uses a cut-off at January 15. His \$100 billion fortune has helped him reclaim the title of being the richest Asian.



Adani, who had suffered a significant setback to his fortunes after the Hindenburg report pointing to governance lapses in the conglomerate, saw a 13 per cent increase in his fortunes in the last year.

The country is home to 284 billionaires whose cumulative wealth rose by 10 per cent to ₹98 lakh crore, or a third of the country's GDP, the report said.

Interestingly, amid the concerns on concentration of wealth in few hands, the list pointed out that India has sur-

ADANI BIGGEST WEALTH GAINER WITH ₹1L-CR JUMP IN HIS FORTUNE TO ₹8.4L-CR

INDIA RANKS THIRD IN THE NUMBER OF BILLIONAIRES, BEHIND ONLY THE US, CHINA

passed China in the average wealth of every billionaire is ₹34,514 crore as against ₹29,027 crore in China.

The list, which considers January 15 as the cut-off, said that 175 Indian billionaires have seen a rise in wealth over the past year, while 109 saw

MUSK RICHEST GLOBALLY

On the global front, Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk recorded the biggest wealth surge, gaining \$189 billion over the past year. The billionaire retained his title as the world's richest person for the fourth time in five years, becoming the first individual to cross the \$400 billion mark. Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos followed in second place with a net worth of \$266 billion. Meanwhile, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg secured a spot in the top three for the first time, driven by strong investor confidence in Meta's AI and tech advancements. This year's Hurun list also saw notable names from entertainment, sports, and social media. Among them were singers Jay-Z, Rihanna, Taylor Swift, and Paul McCartney.

their network decline or remain the same.

Roshni Nadar with a net worth of ₹ 3.5 lakh crore became the richest Indian woman, and fifth richest woman globally, after her father transferred 47 per cent stake in HCL to her. From a city perspective, Mumbai added 11 billionaires to take the total up to 90 such super-rich people, but lost the tag of being Asia's billionaire capital to Shanghai this year. Healthcare industry has the

largest number of billionaires in India at 53, followed by by consumer goods with 35 entrants and industrial products with 32 entrants, according to the list. The average age of Indian billionaires is 68, two years higher than the global billionaires' average age, the list said.

Thirty-four-year-old Shashank Kumar and Harshil Mathur of Razorpay are the youngest Indian billionaires with a fortune of ₹8,643 crore each, the list said.

Mumbai, March 27: Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by nearly 318 points Thursday on buying in blue-chip HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, L&T, and Bajaj Finance amid foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 317.93 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 77,606.43 amid the monthly derivative contracts expiry day. During the day, it surged 458.96 points or 0.59 per cent to 77,747.46. The NSE Nifty rallied 105.10 points or 0.45 per cent to 23,591.95.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Zomato, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Titan were the biggest gainers.

Tata Motors tanked over 5.5 per cent after US President Donald Trump announced he would impose 25 per cent tariffs on imported cars.

Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel, HCL Tech and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the lag-

gards. "Domestic indices maintained optimism throughout the day, driven by sustained foreign fund inflows and the purchase of blue-chip stocks. However, the 25 per cent tariff on auto imports imposed by Trump has affected auto stocks and raised concerns within the pharma sector. Despite these challenges, the broader market demonstrated resilience, supported by expectations of double-digit earnings growth in FY26, driven by easing inflation and a downward trend in interest rates, which are anticipated to improve domestic fundamentals," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹2,240.55 crore Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Auto and telecommunication were the laggards.

The BSE benchmark gauge tanked 728.69 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at 77,288.50 on Wednesday. The Nifty dropped 181.80 points or 0.77 per cent to 23,486.85.

Wrestlers continue to shine



NITESH TRIUMPHS AS INDIA WINS SECOND BRONZE MEDAL AT SENIOR ASIAN WRESTLING CHAMPIONSHIP 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Amman (Jordan), March 27: Indian wrestlers continued their good run on the second day of the Senior Asian Wrestling Championship 2025, with Nitesh clinching the second bronze medal for the country in Amman, Jordan, Wednesday. Nitesh showcased remarkable skill and determination in the Greco-Roman category as he added another bronze medal to the one that Sunil Kumar had won in the men's 87kg.

Nitesh handed Amanberdi Agamammedov of Turkmenistan a dominant 9-0 defeat, winning the game with Victory by Suppression (VSU) Wednesday.

The 22-year-old Nitesh began his campaign with a dominant 9-0 victory over Kazakhstan's Ilyas Guchigov. However, he faced a tough challenge in the semifinals, where he was defeated by Iranian wrestler Mohammadhadi Abdollah Saravi.

Undeterred, Nitesh bounced back strongly in the bronze medal bout, defeating Turkmenistan's Agamammedov to secure a podium finish. With this victory, the Indian Greco-Roman team has now won two bronze medals in the championship, marking a strong performance on the international stage, the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) President, Sanjay Singh, informed in a message from Amman Wednesday.

Earlier Tuesday, Greco-Roman grappler Sunil Kumar put up a commendable perfor-

Earlier Tuesday, Greco-Roman grappler Sunil Kumar put up a commendable performance in the men's 87 kg division, securing a bronze medal

mance in the men's 87 kg division, securing a bronze medal for the country by defeating Chinese wrestler Jiaxin Huang via Victory by Points (5-1) in the bronze medal match. In other bouts, in the men's 55kg division, India's Nitin crashed out with a defeat to Yu Choi Ro of North Korea, 9-0 in the qualification round while in the men's 77kg division, India's Sagar Thakran lost via Victory by Superiority to Amro Abed Alfattah Jamal Sadeh of Jordan in the quarterfinals.

Silver for Reetika, Mansi and Muskan win bronze

Young Indian wrestler Reetika Hooda blew away a 6-2 lead, conceding four points in the last 10 seconds of the women's 76kg final, to settle for a silver medal at the Asian Championship, while Mansi Lather and Muskan won bronze, here Thursday. The 22-year-old Reetika, who became first Indian female wrestler to be crowned U23 World Champion and youngest to qualify for Olympics, outclassed Japan's Nodoka Yamamoto and Korea's Seoyeon Jeong on her way to the gold medal bout. The summit clash was a repeat of Paris Olympics quarterfinal against Kyrgyzstan's Aiperi Medet Kyzy. Reetika employed an aggressive strategy, going for double leg attacks. She lost initial points on counter attack but made it 2-2 with a take-down. In the second period, she made a move at the edge of the circle to take a 4-2 lead and consolidated it with another two-pointer. In 68kg, Mansi Lather made a strong start, winning her opening bout against Korea's Sheng Feng Cai by technical superiority and got a walk over from Japanese Ami Ishii. She lost her semifinal 1-10 to eventual gold medalist China's Zelu Li. Muskan (59kg) easily beat Philippines' Arian G Carpio in her qualification bout but lost her quarterfinal to Japan's Sakura Onishi. Up against Mongolia's Altjin Togtokh in the bronze play-off, Muskan gradually got a grip over the contest, winning 4-0.



The focus now shifts to women's wrestling, which is set to begin Thursday, featuring competition in five weight categories. In contention for India in various weight categories will be World Championship medallist Antim Panghal, Neha, Muskan,

Monika, Mansi Lathar, Jyoti Berwal and Reetika. The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has picked a strong squad for the Asian Championship after successfully conducting selection trials at the Indira Gandhi Sports Complex in New Delhi.

Shardul, Pooran script LSG's win over SRH



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Hyderabad, March 27: Shardul Thakur's four-wicket haul and a sensational display of power-hitting from Nicholas Pooran set up a five-wicket win for Lucknow Super Giants over Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match here Thursday.

Shardul continued his dream comeback returning with figures of 4/34 to help LSG restrict a power-packed SRH to 190 for nine before Pooran (70 off 26; 6x4s, 6x6s) displayed his 360 degree hitting skills.

Pooran shared quick-fire match-winning 116 runs for the second wicket with Marsh (52 off 31) to help LSG chase down the target in 16.1 overs. LSG didn't have the best start to their chase as they lost Aiden Markram early. But thereafter, it was the effortless hitting from Mitchell Marsh and Nicholas Pooran that helped LSG surge ahead.

Pooran in particular was at his attacking best as he mostly dealt in sixes, clobbering Simarjeet and Abhishek Sharma for huge sixes during

his knock, mostly towards the square boundary.

SRH just found it difficult to stop Pooran as he didn't even spare Cummins, hitting him for two fours in his first over to reach 77 for 1 in the powerplay.

Pooran brought up the fastest fifty of this season in just 18 balls with another huge six over square leg of Adam Zampa. Pooran's magnificent knock was cut short by Cummins, trapped in front of the wickets in the ninth over.

After Pooran's dismissal, Marsh took the onus on him and brought up his half-century of just 29 balls. LSG skipper Rishabh Pant (15 off 15) could not do much but Abdul Samad played an entertaining cameo to get his side home.

Earlier opening bowl, Shardul (4/34) gave LSG a fiery start, removing Abhishek Sharma and last match centurion Ishan Kishan in consecutive balls in the third over. Shardul sent packing Sharma with a short delivery before getting Ishan Kishan caught behind off an innocuous delivery down the leg side.

SHORT TAKES

Eala stuns Swiatek

Miami Gardens: Teenager Alexandra Eala pulled off another upset at the Miami Open when she knocked off five-time Grand Slam champion and second-seeded Iga Swiatek 6-2, 7-5 in the quarterfinals. The 19-year-old left-hander, who received a wild card into the WTA 1000 event, is the only player representing the Philippines on the women's professional tour and entered the tournament ranked 140th. During her history-making run, Eala reached her first WTA semifinals by beating her third major champion, this time in 1 hour, 37 minutes. "I'm in complete disbelief right now, I'm on cloud nine," Eala said in her on-court interview.

Russian wrestler banned

Lausanne: Russian wrestler Dmitry Baboryko was banned for two years Thursday after taking a breast cancer drug that counters the effects of using steroids. Baboryko tested positive for tamoxifen at the under-23 world championships last October in Albania, the International Testing Agency said on announcing the ban on behalf of the United World Wrestling governing body. He accepted the two-year sanction including being disqualified and stripped of the silver medal from the heavyweight 130-kilogram class in Greco-Roman wrestling, the ITA said. Russian wrestlers can compete in UWW events as approved neutral athletes who have not directly taken part in or publicly supported the war against Ukraine. None competed at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Anti-racism messages

Paris: Players and referees in French soccer will wear a special badge with an anti-racism message on their jersey sleeves at this weekend's Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 games. The distinctive patch displays the words "Racism" and "Football" with the word "racism" crossed out by a thick red line, the French soccer league (LFP) said Thursday. "Racism and antisemitism have no place on the pitch or in society," LFP president Vincent Labrune said. "Together we are standing up for a fair, respectful and united football." A giant tarpaulin will cover the center circle with the same message, which will be displayed on advertising boards around the pitch and on giant screens at each stadium.

DEFYING ODDS



Gautam Singh wins Odisha's first-ever Para Table Tennis medal at the Khelo India Para Games 2025 Thursday. He was competing in the men's Class-2 category and bagged the bronze medal

PHOTO CREDIT: X

Karmakar's suspension will be discussed: NRAI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, March 27: The suspension of Arjuna award recipient Joydeep Karmakar from all shooting activities in West Bengal by the state body will be "discussed at the appropriate level", the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) said Thursday.

The West Bengal Rifle Association's (WBRA) move to bar Karmakar, currently a rifle coach, from activities related to shooting in the state came after the Olympian questioned selections for the 2025 National Games held in Uttarakhand early this year.

"That will be discussed at appropriate level. It (Karmakar's letter) came yesterday. It will go to the NRAI president," said NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia.

The WBRA said, before going ahead with its decision to suspend him, it had show caused Karmakar for an objectionable post on social networking site



Facebook.

Karmakar alleged that some WBRA officials were involved in corrupt practices and the selection of the state team for the National Games was not fair.

"National Games Shooting Team is rigged! onus goes to West Bengal Rifle Association - WBRA! They are even bogged down to a few!," he had posted January 18.

"Corruption in a different level! West Bengal selecting

Shooters who are 250th ranking or more neglecting 20th National Ranked shooter!.

"There's no pride in selecting 200+ ranking athlete in National Games by West Bengal Rifle Association - WBRA neglecting a National Rank 20th."

The WBRA, in an official communication, issued him a show cause notice and suspended him from all shooting activities February 12.

Now, Karmakar has requested the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) to step in the matter in the hope of a resolution.

"We have show caused him (on February 12) for the objectionable post on Facebook and based on the showcase he has been barred from any activity in the state till he gives a reply to it. "He (Karmakar) has asked for some time and we are waiting for his reply. I cannot comment further on this," said Debkumar Samanta, the secretary general at WBRA.

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NATIONAL WOMEN'S HOCKEY LEAGUE

Odisha, Haryana to clash in final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Ranchi, March 27: Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand registered wins in the final phase of the National Women's Hockey League here Thursday.

Haryana finished as the table toppers and will play against Odisha in the final Friday.

Also, Jharkhand finished the league stage on third position and will fight against Mizoram for the podium finish Friday.

In the first match of Pool A, Bengal defeated Hockey 2-1, while Madhya Pradesh won 2-1 against Haryana.

In the other match, Maharashtra defeated Mizoram 2-1.

After the final league game Mizoram ended the campaign in fourth position and will vie for the podium finish against Jharkhand, while Maharashtra secured the sixth position.

In the last match of day, Jharkhand edged past Odisha with a 2-0 scoreline.

National camps to start soon: BFI Prez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Greater Noida, March 27: Boxing Federation of India president Ajay Singh Thursday asserted that boxers will not miss any more tournaments, with national camps set to resume soon and a new coaching setup also to be announced.

Indian boxing was in a state of inexplicable slumber post the Paris Olympics with boxers missing several international competitions, including the Asian Championships, Strandja Memorial and the recent Women's World Championships.

While the men's team is in Brazil for the first stage of the World Boxing Cup starting Sunday, the women boxers missed out due to repeated delays in the National Championships, which concluded only Thursday.

"Indian boxers will not miss anything at all. The national camps will start very soon.



Women are not going to miss any more championships. We are also going to conduct the junior and sub-junior championships," Singh told reporters on sideline of the final day of the women's National Championship's here.

Previously, the only way to enter the national camps was by finishing on the podium at

the National Championships. However, BFI will now have a new system which will now include boxers from 2 other competitions, including the REC Open Talent Hunt Program, as well.

"Four boxers from National Championships, the 2 REC finalists and in addition to that we are having the Chief of Army Staff Championship for men and yet unnamed championship for women and from those championships also we will pick two boxers.

"We will create a pool from these eight boxers and from that pool we will pick four boxers to represent us in the national camps," Singh said.

Despite delays in the BFI's elections, which are currently stalled due to ongoing court cases, Singh confirmed that the federation will proceed with appointing the new coaching staff to ensure that boxers are not impacted.

"We will continue with our

work, continue hosting championships, continue with the process of camps and recruiting people. Whenever there is an election if there is a new team they we are free to take their calls."

Singh also addressed criticism of the federation's previous selection policy, which replaced trials with an assessment system, saying the federation "will debate it again in a fresh setup".

Infighting within the BFI overshadowed the women's National Championship. State units opposed to Singh's re-election boycotted the event. But Singh asserted that the boxers would not suffer due to this political turmoil. "We will do our very best because it's not their fault the fact that they became victim of this politics. I will do everything in my power to ensure that they get an opportunity in other championships that they have a chance to come back," he said.

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

Eves to compete with Thailand, Mongolia, Timor Leste, and Iraq

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

Kuala Lumpur, March 27: The India senior women's team were drawn alongside Thailand, Mongolia, Timor Leste and Iraq in Group B of the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 Qualifiers, following the draw conducted at the AFC House in Kuala Lumpur Thursday.

Thailand will host Group B of the Qualifiers between June 23 to July 5 in a centralised single round-robin format. The group winners will qualify for the final tournament, scheduled to be staged across three host cities in Australia from March 1 to 26, 2026.

Teams were divided into five pots as per seedings based on the FIFA Women's World Ranking published March 6, 2025.

Eight tickets to the 21st



edition of the Continental showpiece are up for grabs as 34 teams will compete to join hosts Australia and the top three sides from the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 — defending champions China, runners-up Korea Republic, and third-placed Japan.

The top six teams at the AFC Women's Asian Cup Australia 2026 will qualify for the FIFA Women's World Cup Brazil 2027.