



ODISHA DIVAS CELEBRATION: CM Mohan Charan Majhi garlanding the statue of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das at Satyabhamapur in Cuttack, Tuesday

Bulldozer hits SC roadblock

While bulldozers are routinely used to remove encroachments across India, the machine has become a political tool of sorts in Uttar Pradesh following the commencement of Yogi Adityanath's first term as Chief Minister in 2017. This system, rhetorically called 'Bulldozer Justice' in the state, has faced criticism primarily for carrying out excessive demolitions without proper notice, ignoring objections, and selectively targeting certain communities, especially Muslims, thereby violating property rights. The apex court Tuesday came down heavily on the UP government for giving up on the rule of law and adopting 'Bulldozer Justice.' Such actions shock the conscience, as there is something called the Right to shelter and due process of law, a division of the Supreme Court told the government. It also ordered the UP government to pay compensation of ₹10 lakh each to the owners whose houses have been demolished in Prayagraj city, within six weeks



in the city "inhuman and illegal." Observing the demolition action was carried out in a "high handed" manner, a bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said there was "rule of law in the country" and residential structures of citizens couldn't be demolished in such fashion. "This shocks our conscience. There is something called right to shelter, due process of law," the bench said. The top court, therefore, directed the authority to pay within six weeks ₹10 lakh compensation each to the house owners. The apex court had previously slammed the Uttar Pradesh government over the demolition action in Prayagraj without following the due legal procedure and said it sent a "shocking and wrong signal". The petitioners' counsel had said the state government wrongly demolished the houses thinking the land belonged to gangster-politician Atiq Ahmed, who was killed in 2023 in a police encounter. The top court was hearing a plea by advocate Zulfiqar Haider, professor Ali Ahmed and others whose houses were demolished. The Allahabad High Court had rejected their plea challenging the demolition. The petitioners had been reportedly served a notice on March 6, 2021 with respect to certain constructions at Lukerganj in Prayagraj district.

CM outlines three-pillar roadmap

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Taking a pledge to build a prosperous Odisha, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi Tuesday said that 'Odia Asmita' (pride), high ambitions and tireless efforts will be the three pillars of his government to carry forward the state. Majhi said this while addressing the state-level Odisha Divas function

held at Satyabhamapur village in Cuttack district, the birthplace of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, one of the architects behind the formation of a separate Odisha state April 1, 1936. The day is observed to remember the struggle for the formation of a separate state and to save its unique language, culture and tradition. The CM called Satyabhamapur village a "sacred pilgrimage site" for

Odias and announced plans to transform it into a hub of Odia nationalism. "We are celebrating Odisha Day on the birth soil of Utkal Gourav, honouring the transformation brought by people with a focus on Odia Asmita," Majhi said after laying the foundation stone for the "Integrated Development of Madhusudan Das's Birthplace" project, to be developed at an investment of ₹21 crore.

Madhusudan Das's birthplace will be developed with an interpretation centre, a renovated ancestral home (Entudishala), a statue, a guest house, a library, and a light-and-sound system at a nearby water body. "We cannot repay the debt of our great sons of the soil and their sacrifice. But, we can meet their dreams of building a prosperous Odisha. Odia Asmita, high ambitions and tireless efforts to be

the pillars on which the prosperous Odisha will be built," the chief minister said. Earlier on the day, President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar, Odisha Governor Haribabu Kambhampati, Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly Naveen Patnaik and many other dignitaries greeted the people of Odisha on the occasion. P4

4-5% hike in NHAI toll

NEW DELHI: The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has increased toll charges by an average of 4 to 5 per cent on highway sections across the country. The revised toll charges for motorists on national highways across the country have come into effect from Tuesday, a senior highways ministry official told PTI. P9

Row over Yunus' comments

New Delhi, April 1: The recent comments made by Bangladesh Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus on India's northeastern states drew sharp reactions from political leaders across party lines Tuesday, dubbing his remarks as "shameful" and "provocative." Congress leader Pawan Khera Monday shared a video clip on X of Yunus, in which he claimed that Bangladesh was the sole "guardian of the ocean (Bay of Bengal)," as India's northeastern states were "landlocked". He said this opens up a "huge possibility" and urged China to extend its economic influence to his country. These comments were purportedly made during his four-day visit to China. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Priyanka Chaturvedi Tuesday said this was a "very seri-



ous issue" and it concerns the "safety and security" of the nation. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma described Yunus' remarks as "offensive and strongly condemnable" and called for prioritisation of exploring alternative routes connecting the Northeast to the rest of India, bypassing the 'Chicken's Neck'. "The statement made by Md Yunus of Bangladesh, the so-called interim Government referring to the seven sister states of Northeast India as landlocked and positioning Bangladesh as their guardian of ocean access, is offensive and strongly condemnable," Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma posted on X. He called for prioritisation of exploring alternative routes connecting the Northeast to the rest of India, bypassing the 'Chicken's Neck'. Former Manipur CM N Biren Singh also joined in, accusing the neighbouring country's interim government of using the region as a strategic pawn. Last week, Bangladesh's chief adviser met Chinese President Xi Jinping and sought stepped-up investments from China to revive Bangladesh's flagging economy, hit by a political and economic crisis. A former ambassador of India described the comments as "most unfortunate," though he said that New Delhi should not panic over Yunus' statements.



Top tech visionaries see end of smartphone era

Elon Musk, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, and Sam Altman are signaling the end of the smartphone era. The vision: a world dominated by wearable tech, brain interfaces, and augmented reality. But Tim Cook and Apple aren't ready to surrender the smartphone throne just yet. Musk, through his company Neuralink, is pushing to make smartphones obsolete by creating brain-computer interfaces. These implants allow users to interact with technology using only their thoughts. Gates is exploring a different direction, backing Chaotic Moon and its electronic tattoos. These nano-sensor-packed tattoos are capable of collecting, sending, and receiving data. Their



potential ranges from health monitoring to GPS tracking and communication, turning the human body into a tech platform. Zuckerberg, on the other hand, is focused on augmented reality glasses. He predicts these will replace smartphones as the primary computing device by 2030,

with AR handling most of the digital tasks we rely on phones for today. While others push for radical new interfaces, Cook continues to believe in the enduring relevance of smartphones. Cook sees smartphones as central to modern life — not something to discard, but something to continuously refine. His focus remains on quality and usability, positioning Apple to improve its devices incrementally while still incorporating future-forward technologies like AR and AI. This divide reveals a deeper split in philosophy: disruption vs. iteration. Some of the most influential voices in tech are imagining a leap beyond physical devices — replacing them with tools

that are worn, embedded, or even implanted. The question isn't just what comes next — it's whether society will adopt these bold new tools willingly, or prefer the familiar comfort of the smartphone for years to come. While Musk, Gates, Zuckerberg, and Altman promote transformational technologies, real-world challenges still stand in the way — from privacy concerns and ethical implications to market adoption and regulation. Apple is responding with a different strategy: double down on the present. In the end, it may not be a matter of if smartphones disappear, but how — and who leads the transition when they do. AGENCIES

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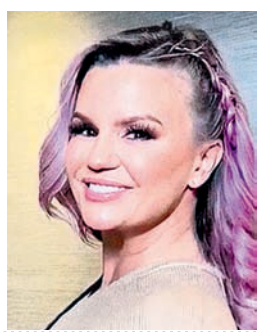
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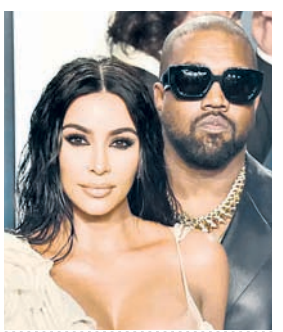


KERRY KATONA NARROWLY AVOIDED BANGKOK QUAKE

English TV personality Kerry Katona has revealed she narrowly avoided being caught up in the earthquake which struck Bangkok, Thailand and killed more than 1,700 people in Myanmar last week. "Blessings were on my side. My thoughts are with everyone who's been affected," she wrote on her Instagram account.

KANYE DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE KIDS WITH KIM

Controversial rapper Kanye West has declared he didn't want to have children with his ex-wife Kim Kardashian but that wasn't God's plan. The rapper married the reality star in 2014 and they became parents to four kids - North, 11, Saint, nine, Chicago, seven, and Psalm, five - before divorcing in 2022.



FORTUNE FORECAST

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ARIES
You are uptight about what is yours and today, you are even less keen on sharing. This possessiveness may have to do with a certain 'someone'. Ganesha says matters regarding love are going forward intensely and your marital life will blossom.

TAURUS
Your vision today will have a hue of green as you will draw to money like a fly to sweets. Taste the power of money with fortune as the monkey on your back. You may buy a pendant or a necklace today and your haggling skills will save you from being swindled, says Ganesha.

GEMINI
Today, you may resume your quest for spirituality which you had aborted some time back. However, that doesn't mean you are on your way to sainthood. You are just trying to get close to your inner self. Though you will be frugal while spending on yourself, your lavish treatment to your beloved will stump everyone, including him/her, predicts Ganesha.

CANCER
You are likely to be a little over-zealous and over-analytical today, foretells Ganesha. You should not be too forceful or severe on others. This will help you save a few friendships and will make sure that your reputation remains intact. It is best to avoid conflicts and differences with your peers and bosses, suggests Ganesha.

LEO
There are chances of conflict on the home front today. However you will be able to solve these problems owing to your understanding nature. However, these conflicts would likely not have cropped up if you would have paid more attention to your family. You appreciate the wonderful things in life today, says Ganesha.

VIRGO
Keep an open mind and give vent to your imagination. You will feel very creative today, and will pursue your innovative ideas. Luck will favour you, and some things on which you took some risk will bear fruits. You will be very energetic and enthusiastic about all the work you do. Ganesha says it is an auspicious day to arrange social gatherings.

LIBRA
Ganesha says that your social status will increase now. Today is an auspicious day for venturing in new business or changing your profession. For those involved in the fields of interior designing, or running beauty parlours, now is an especially bountiful time for making progress in your business.

SCORPIO
A cheerful day lies ahead of you especially for the business community. It's a clincher, as good deals not only come to your door step, but yield good business. Feel, that you are the king of the world; bring out the best in you and you are bound to succeed.

SAGITTARIUS
Murmurs of discontent will reach your ears, especially from those very near. But if you go about pleasing one and all, you may not defuse the bomb completely. Exercise caution, and a lot of patience, says Ganesha. Your tolerance will not only help you overcome the problem, but also help you in addressing dissent in your cadres.

CAPRICORN
Good news for students! If you have been trying your luck for studies abroad, today is an opportune day, says Ganesha. Also, get your priorities straight and see that you achieve them one by one, for only a well-planned move can take you a step closer to your ambition. Those engaged in stock exchange and dealing with shares can expect a fruitful day ahead.

AQUARIUS
Ganesha advises you to make a simple change in your routine and things will work out superbly. You also get recognition and rewards for past achievements. But that does not mean you become complacent, says Ganesha. Get going, as hard work is still the surest way to salvation!

PISCES
Ferdinand the Bull would be the cartoon character that would most aptly describe you today. Calmness will be second nature to you, and wisdom will ooze from your pores. Communal harmony is something dear to your heart, and your amenability will see you achieve it, says Ganesha.

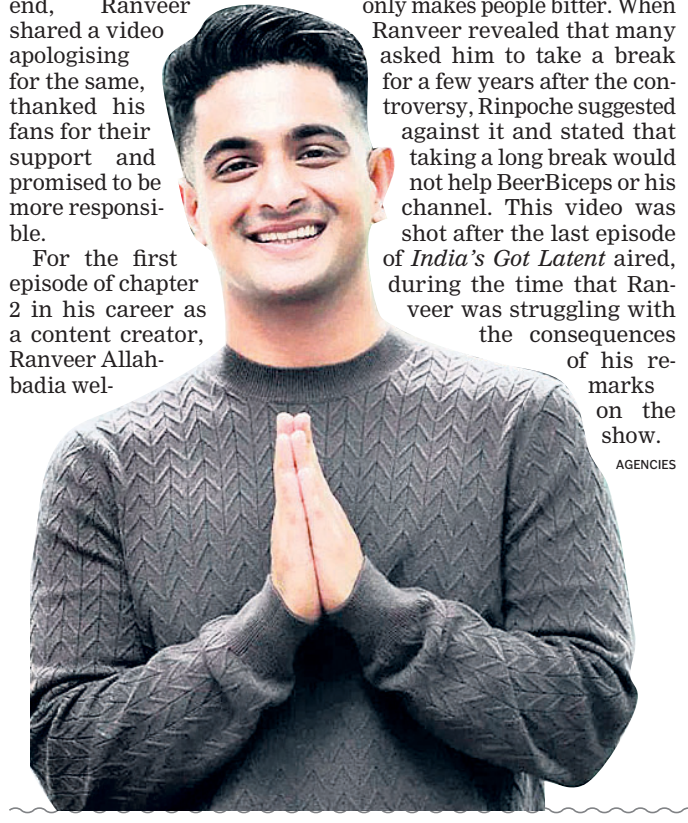
Ranveer Allahbadia makes comeback

MUMBAI: After over a month and a half, YouTuber Ranveer Allahbadia aka BeerBiceps made his comeback on social media announcing his 'rebirth' and the start of a new chapter. He was ordered to take the hiatus by court after his inappropriate remarks as a co-judge on Samay Raina's talent show India's Got Latent. Over the weekend, Ranveer shared a video apologising for the same, thanked his fans for their support and promised to be more responsible.

For the first episode of chapter 2 in his career as a content creator, Ranveer Allahbadia welcomed back Buddhist monk and spiritual leader Palga Rinpoche. The two chatted about the controversy, past karma and punya. In the video, which has taken the internet by storm, Rinpoche explained how important it is to accept and move on instead of regretting over any deed for the rest of your life. He shared that regret only makes people bitter. When Ranveer revealed that many asked him to take a break for a few years after the controversy, Rinpoche suggested against it and stated that taking a long break would not help BeerBiceps or his channel. This video was shot after the last episode of India's Got Latent aired, during the time that Ranveer was struggling with the consequences of his remarks on the show.

He said, "I've been hearing since childhood that the theater is dying - where? It can never. Just the form has changed. Theatre festivals are big, theatre groups are big, theatre spaces are big, audiences are big. As long as you have a story to tell, any art form will survive. And the relevance of live art forms increases further because in today's time we are busy with mobiles. Theatre is a space where you feel the live performance and emotions".

Talking about his character in *Saanp Seedhi*, he said, "Anil Wadhwa is the name of the character. He is also an actor, producer, director and screenwriter, and he makes movies. He's obsessed with himself, and is a bit of a bad guy. This is a completely different character from me, but whatever character you are doing, some part of you goes into the character, which part, I don't know. And some you take from the character".



KUMUD ON RELEVANCE OF ART

MUMBAI: Actor Kumud Mishra, whose theatre play *Saanp Seedhi* has been garnering a lot of positive response, has said that in the age of technology art will never cease to exist.

The actor said that as long as one has a story to tell, any art form will survive. He said, "I've been hearing since childhood that the theater is dying - where? It can never. Just the form has changed. Theatre festivals are big, theatre groups are big, theatre spaces are big, audiences are big. As long as you have a story to tell, any art form will survive. And the relevance of live art forms increases further because in today's time we are busy with mobiles. Theatre is a space where you feel the live performance and emotions".

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Tara's idea of joy

MUMBAI: Actress Tara Sutaria's idea of joy includes lip-syncing your favourite track with your best pal.

The *Tadap* actress shared a fun video on her Instagram handle where she was seen chilling in a black and white striped night suit. The stunner was seen looking absolutely adorable as she lip-synced the 80s synth-pop track.

For the caption, Sutaria penned on her IG, "Nothing like sitting in your PJ's with your oldest pals and playing your favourite songs from the 80's... PURE JOY!!!! (If you don't lip sync the intro we can't be friends!!)"

Actor Arjun Kapoor commented on the post saying, "It's a Pp !!! Parsi prof!!!"

It must be noted here that synth-pop has made a huge comeback in the past few years with singers like Diljit Dosanjh, Badshah, and AP Dhillon using the genre in their tracks.

On the work front, Sutaria was last seen in the romantic track *Pyaar Aata Hai*, alongside Ishaan Khatter.

Director Sneha Shetty Kohli revealed how Sutaria was recovering from a viral fever when she shot for the song. *Pyaar Aata Hai* marked Sutaria's first on-screen pairing with Khatter.

Produced by Anshul Garg under the banner of Play DMF, the track has been voiced by Shreya Ghoshal in association with Rito Riba.

The song was shot in Pahalgam, Kashmir in minus 10 degrees.



When life gives you lemons- Ghiblify & Purify!

With city prices of lemon soaring and this summer essential sort of disappearing even from temple food (banana leaf platter), I began contemplating the myriad usages of the zesty citron- from the cooling *solutions of nimbu-pani* and *pakhala* to tantalizing tequila cocktails, from basic marinade ingredient to microwave cleaning... in fact to cleansing homes of negative energy if placed with salt at strategic points. Fortunately, rubbing lemon juice on skin to reincarnate as *Snow White* is passe; as it is bottled in a myriad whitening and brightening skincare products. Thankfully, the current flock of woke mademoiselles seem to have cut through the deleterious crap and beauty



trap to view 'life as not black and white nor black wanting to turn

white'. Less need of the pricey lemon on one account for Pete's sake!

Like Kerala Chief Secretary Madam Sarada Muraliedharan, I among many dig black, for that matter, brownish, wheatish, olive...I dig colour...err...dig the full range of human skin tones that melanin pigment has to offer. When Madam via a Facebook post called out the gender and colour bias, she was recently subjected to, many wondered why a powerful woman who has

probably broken many a glass ceiling felt the need to counter vile comments emanating from weaklings positioned behind a glass interface. But need there is, to clear the air and clean the aura. Well, next time around (there unfortunately will be, owing to society's fixation with the fair complexion), Madam may simply post Ghibli style portrait of a big, bright yellow lemon placed in a bowl of salt, that shall virtually cleanse the recipient's negative spirit and purify the vile mind. A ghiblified lemon fairy post can do one better and spin deadly magic to turn the unabashed recipient into lime-coloured confetti. (Served not in jest but, with lemony zest).

DR RACHNA RATH

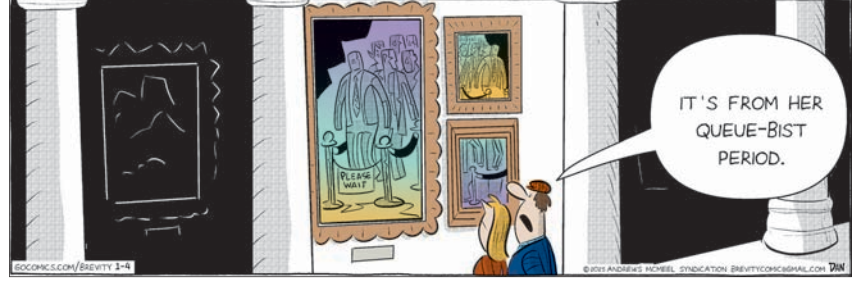
PEANUTS



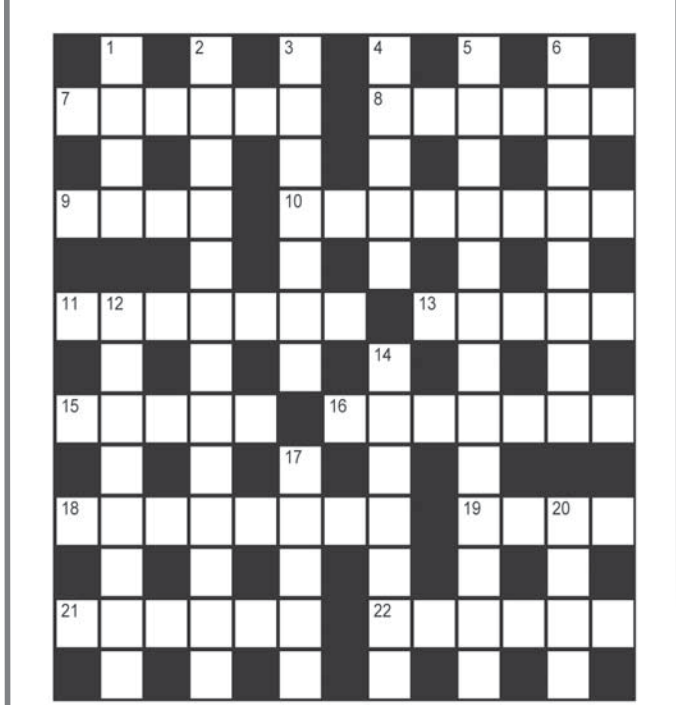
CALVIN AND HOBBS



BREVITY



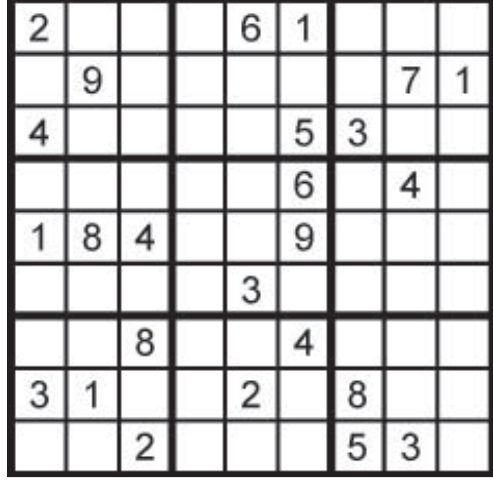
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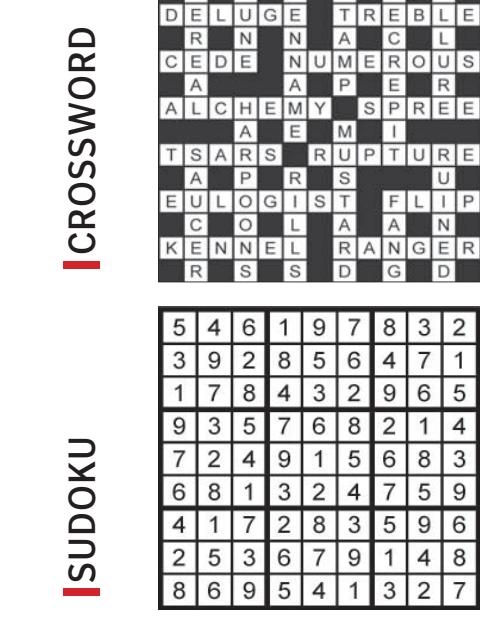
- Across**
- 7 Meat or veggie pie
 - 8 Airport building
 - 9 Novice
 - 10 Table scrap (4,4)
 - 11 Free from maladies
 - 13 Plato's plaza
 - 15 Fright with risk
 - 16 Asphyxiate
 - 18 Baseball activity
 - 19 Charity
 - 21 Even though occasions
 - 22 Sue Lyon role, 1962
- Down**
- 1 Lay to rest
 - 2 Educator
 - 3 Affluent
 - 4 Irritate
 - 5 Like some special occasions
 - 6 Happy-go-lucky
 - 12 Qualified
 - 14 Import, illegally
 - 17 "Likewise"
 - 20 Mongrel

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

Gadamadhupur Palace: A heritage in need of revival

While queen Aparna Singh, the current head of the Gadamadhupur royal family, continues to make every effort to safeguard this architectural marvel, the support of the government and heritage conservationists is crucial to ensure that Gadamadhupur's rich legacy does not fade into obscurity



ARINDAM GANGULY, OP

Tucked away in the Jenapur tehsil of Dharmasala block in Jajpur district, lies Gadamadhupur, a former princely royal state that whispers tales of a bygone era. This historical landmark, with its rich cultural and architectural legacy, represents a unique blend of Rajput and Odisha architectural influences. Gadamadhupur Palace, though not as widely known as other

royal estates in Odisha, holds great value as a testament to the region's regal history.

Spanning over 10 acres, the palace is more than a century old. Its intricate details, including delicately carved rooms and vibrant mosaic flooring, evoke a sense of nostalgia and offer a glimpse into the region's royal past. The palace also houses precious artefacts made of wood, metal, stone, ivory, and clay, many of which date back to 18th century,

showcasing the royal elegance of the past.

Beyond the palace, the area is dotted with temples that add to its spiritual significance. The Jagannath Temple and Radha Krishna Temple, both built in 17th century, stand as silent witnesses to the region's deep-rooted religious heritage. However, these architectural marvels have suffered from neglect over time, with the lack of government support leading to their gradual decay.

The Gadamadhupur Fort, founded in 1847 by Raja Sudarshan Dhir Narendra, once epitomised power and cultural brilliance. Today, it stands as a reminder of the region's royal grandeur. Aparna Dhir Singh Bhadraraj, the current head of Gadamadhupur royal family, continues to uphold its heritage. She assumed the role of queen after the passing of her father, Raja Krushna Prasad Dhir, in 2007. Aparna has been instrumental in preserving the royal traditions and performing important cultural rituals, such as Chhera Pahanra, which she performs during the annual Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath. Notably, Aparna is the first woman in Odisha's history to perform this sacred ritual, a significant departure from centuries of tradition, where only male heirs had carried out such duties.

Despite its historical and cultural significance, Gadamadhupur's invaluable heritage faces the threat of decay. The once vibrant royal estate and its surroundings, including the ancient Jagannath Temple, have been neglected. The temple, an important site of pilgrimage, is now in ruins, further highlighting the urgent need for preservation efforts.

Speaking to Orissa POST queen Aparna Singh emphasised the need for proper conservation efforts. "The place and its temples require urgent attention of the government," she said.

"Individuals alone cannot undertake such large-scale conservation efforts," added Aparna.



She highlighted the cultural richness of Gadamadhupur and the need to promote it as a tourist destination. "Unfortunately, the government has shown little interest in the conservation of this palace and temple," she lamented.

Aparna is currently promoting the culture and history of the palace through a museum run by a trust. However, substantial funding is required to ensure the full restoration of these historical sites. If restored

and preserved, they could provide not only a historical and cultural resource for future generations but also an attractive destination for tourists interested in exploring Odisha's royal heritage.

While the queen continues to make every effort to safeguard this architectural marvel, the support of the government and heritage conservationists is crucial to ensure that Gadamadhupur's rich legacy does not fade into obscurity.



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UTKAL DIVAS

Murmu, Modi extend greetings

Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati lauds Odisha's rich heritage and CM Mohan Charan Majhi calls for a renewed pledge to progress as state celebrates its formation day with pride and unity

highlighted Odisha's role in the freedom struggle and prayed for the state's prosperity.

PM Modi emphasised Odisha's cultural and historical contributions. "Warm wishes on Utkal Divas! This day is a tribute to Odisha's glorious heritage. India takes pride in Odisha's history, literature, and music. Over the past year, the Centre and state governments have worked extensively to advance the state's progress," he posted on X. Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi started the celebrations by garlanding the statue of Madhusudan Das near Raj Bhavan and attending a function. "A humble tribute to the great personalities who sacrificed for Odisha's formation. Let's reaffirm our commitment to a healthy and developed Odisha," he posted on X.

Majhi later visited Satyabhamapur in Cuttack district, the birthplace of Madhusudan Das, for another event. The state government also launched 'Odia Paksha,' a cultural fortnight running until April 14. "Let's embrace Odia in mind, soul,

and heart—incorporating our language, literature, food, clothing, and culture into daily life," Majhi said. BJP state president Manmohan Samal led celebrations, while the opposition BJD organised events in all constituencies. Leader of the Opposition Naveen Patnaik, attending a party event, said, "Odisha is our mother, land, and love. Let us honour our great personalities and strive for development."

Congress also held events, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge praising Odisha's culture and hardworking people. "We hope Odisha continues to play a key role in nation-building," he said.

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati also sent greetings.

Dhankhar lauded Odisha's artistic and spiritual heritage, wishing for its continued prosperity. Shah described Odisha as "a jewel of the country" with rich resources and culture. "Today, Odisha is emerging as Bharat's growth engine," he posted on X.



14 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE: Orissa POST and Dharitri Editor Tathagata Satpathy, Chief Executive Adyasha Satpathy and staffers celebrate 14th anniversary of Odisha's only homegrown English daily on the publications' office premises in Bhubaneswar, Tuesday. The day also marks statehood for Odisha. PHOTO: BIKASH NAYAK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bhubaneswar/New Delhi, April 1: President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday extended their greetings to the people of Odisha on Utkal Divas, celebrating the state's formation day.

Odisha was established as a separate province April 1, 1936, on a linguistic basis, carving out parts of Bihar, Bengal, and Madras. President Murmu, a native of Odisha, said, "This is an occasion to celebrate Odisha's rich cultural heritage and the contributions of its people. The hardworking and hospitable people of Odisha have preserved their glorious traditions while driving progress." She also

KIIT student found dead

PNN & AGENCIES

Bhubaneswar, April 1: A third-year B.Tech student of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) here was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Bhubaneswar's Mancheswar area, police said Tuesday.

In-Charge police Inspector Swain said the deceased was identified as Arnab Mukherjee, a resident of West Bengal's Bankura district. His body was found lying on the ground near an under-construction multi-storey building Monday night, a police officer said.

The deceased student was staying in one of the KIIT hostels, and it was not immediately clear why he had gone to Mancheswar area, he said.

"We are probing into the circumstances leading to the student's death," Biswajit Senapati, ACP, Zone-5 of the Commissionerate of Bhubaneswar-Cuttack Police, said.

The body has been sent to Capital Hospital for post-mortem examination.

The police have registered an unnatural death (UD) case with Mancheswar police station and started an investigation into the incident. The police are examining CCTV footage, questioning hostel mates, and analysing call records to gather more details, sources said.

A spokesperson of KIIT said that the institute's authorities had lodged a missing complaint with Infocity police station to look for Mukherjee.

Fire breaks out in Cuttack shopping mall; no casualties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Cuttack, April 1: A fire broke out at a shopping mall here Tuesday, reducing valuables worth lakhs of rupees to ashes before firefighters controlled it, police said. No injuries or casualties were reported in the incident, they added. Local residents noticed smoke billowing from a showroom dealing with briefcases and trolley bags located inside the mall at Dolamundai and alerted police and fire services.

While the exact cause of the fire was yet to be determined, it is suspected that a short circuit

in the air conditioner may have triggered the blaze. The mall houses several popular brands of clothing, luggage and footwear. A fireman said the intensity of the fire was high due to the plastic materials used in trolley bags, which fueled the flames. "However, our timely intervention helped contain the blaze and prevent it from spreading to other shops," he said.

Six fire tenders and 30 personnel were deployed in the firefighting operation, which lasted over two hours before the inferno was fully brought under control, an official added.

Poetry symposium 'Aabaratan' held

Bhubaneswar: A poetry symposium titled Aabaratan was organised by Parivar E Alfaaz at Mumtaj Ali Park, Surya Nagar, to celebrate Utkal Divas. The event brought together literary enthusiasts and distinguished guests to honour the Odia language and culture. Odisha Sahitya Akademi awardee Shakuntala Mishra attended as the chief guest, along with honorary guests Ipsita Mishra, PhD in English, Odia, and filmmaking, editor of Pustak Publications and Magazine, former Doordarshan anchor, and school teacher, and Abhishek Dash, a doctor by profession and passionate Odia writer and composer. Around 15 young poets recited their compositions, showcasing the richness of contemporary Odia poetry. Speaking at the event, Shakuntala Mishra said, "It is heartening to see the enthusiasm of Odia youth in preserving and promoting our language. We must host more such events to sustain this cultural legacy." The evening concluded with a felicitation ceremony for all participants, in the presence of intellectuals and literary figures, further emphasising the importance of Odia literature.

Utkal Divas at Raghunathjew Degree College in Cuttack

POST NEWS NETWORK

Cuttack, April 1: Raghunathjew Degree College celebrated Utkal Divas with a series of events, including Odissi dance and debate competitions, held on its Deula Sahi campus.

The celebrations began with the hoisting of the Tricolour at 8am. Students Tribolasha, Sushree, Priyanka, and Sibani sang Bande Utkala Janani as a welcome song.

In addition to the dance and debate competitions, various exciting activities were organized for Utkal Divas, also known as Odisha Divas.

The event, held to felicitate the winners of the competitions, was inaugurated by retired Orissa High Court judge Manoranjan Mohanty, noted Odia actor Sritam Das, Raghunathjew Degree College principal Chandra Mohan Swain, senior education officer Dr.



Akhaya Kumar Nayak, administrative officer Dr. Saroj Kumar Das, and History department head Kantirekha Biswal.

As the chief guest, Justice Mohanty spoke about Odisha's literature and culture, urging students to follow the ideals of Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, Utkalgourav Madhusudan Das, and Mahatma Gandhi. He also reflected on Gandhi's Harijan Padyatra and the contributions of Acharya Harihar and Harekrushna Mahtab.

Actor Sritam Das, the chief speaker, emphasized the importance of education in guiding one's path and discussed topics like women empowerment, the Hindu New Year, and Odisha's

handloom industry. Principal Chandra Mohan Swain encouraged students to follow the footsteps of Madhu Babu. Dr. Akhaya Kumar Nayak spoke on "Viksit Bharat, Viksit Odisha," while Dr. Saroj Kumar Das focused on ways to develop the Odia language.

Judges for the Odissi dance and debate competitions included Dr. Akhaya Kumar Nayak, Siddharth Shankar Das, Bharati Sahoo, and Krishna Mohanty. The winners—Sarita, Sweekruti, Monalisa, Pratikhya, Biswajyoti, and Harapriya—along with National Service Scheme volunteers, were awarded and felicitated.

The History department head moderated the event, while lecturer Chandana Mohanty delivered the vote of thanks. Lecturer Amrita Lenka and laboratory assistant Smruti Ranjan Swain helped organise the programme.

125 yrs of Paralakhemundi Light Railway

POST NEWS NETWORK

Paralakhemundi, April 1: The Paralakhemundi Light Railway (PLR), Odisha's first privately managed railway, celebrated its 125th anniversary with a grand event at Paralakhemundi Railway Station. Established by Maharaja Goura Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deb, the narrow-gauge railway transformed regional transport by connecting Naupada and Paralakhemundi.

The event, organized by the Waltair Division of Railways and the Naupada-Paralakhemundi-Gunupur Rail Users Group, featured the unveiling of a 4x6 feet portrait of Maha-



raja Goura Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deb and his son, Maharaja Krushna Chandra Gajapati Narayan Deb, who extended the railway to Gunupur in 1929 and 1931. Rail Users Group member Bishnu Mohan

Adhikari proposed heritage preservation initiatives, while railway officials, including Parmeswar Funkwal (General Manager, ECoR), were thanked for their support. Originally managed by Ben-

gal-Nagpur Railway (BNR) from 1902, the PLR became profitable in 1910 and was later taken over by the Government of India in 1944. After joining the Southeastern Railway in 1955, it saw major changes—diesel engines replaced steam in 1992, and the narrow-gauge service ended in 2004. The broad-gauge line, completed in 2011, restored key connectivity.

Now, the 90-km Naupada-Gunupur railway remains vital. Paralakhemundi station is undergoing a 16.4 crore upgrade under the 'Amrit Station' initiative. The PLR's legacy continues, marking an era of progress in Odisha's railway history.

Nexus Esplanade marks Utkal Divas



POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Nexus Esplanade marked Utkal Divas with a vibrant celebration, paying tribute to Odisha's rich culture and heritage. The day, which commemorates the formation of Odisha as a separate province, was filled with a series of cultural performances and engaging activities aimed at showcasing the state's traditions.

The shopping mall transformed into a cultural hub as

visitors were treated to mesmerising performances of Odissi dance, folk music, and other traditional art forms. The celebrations provided a platform to promote Odisha's artistic legacy and connect with a diverse audience. The event not only entertained but also educated attendees about Odisha's historical significance and artistic excellence.

The grand festivities at the mall left the audience captivated, bringing the true spirit of Utkal Divas to life.

From labourer to RJ: Arata Das finds his voice

Arata Das's journey is a testament to the unexpected paths that passion and persistence can carve, inspiring others to pursue their dreams no matter the odds

RESHMI YADAV, OP

Bhubaneswar, April 1: Life often takes unexpected turns, and for 50-year-old Arata Das, the journey from a construction labourer to a beloved radio jockey has been nothing short of extraordinary. Once struggling to make ends meet by working on construction sites, Das has now become the voice behind one of the most popular storytelling programmes on Radio Outreach, a communi-

ty radio station in Srirampur village in Jagatsinhpur district. His story is a testament to perseverance, passion, and the transformative power of storytelling.

For years, Das toiled under the harsh sun, lifting bricks and mixing cement, enduring gruelling hours of physical labour. Despite the hardships, his love for literature remained unwavering.

Whenever he found a moment of respite, he would immerse himself in books, particularly Odia literary classics by renowned authors like Fakir Mohan Senapati and Gopinath Mohanty. He was also an avid newspaper reader and a regular attendee of local literary gatherings.

Even amid the physical demands of his job, Das often entertained his fellow workers by narrating stories during lunch breaks. His animated storytell-



ing, rich with emotion and detail, soon became a source of joy for his colleagues. "I never thought of it as anything special," Das recalls. "I just loved sharing stories. But the way people listened and reacted made me realise the power of words."

His life changed when the programme executive at Radio Outreach Satyabrata Pati noticed him at a literary event. Struck by his engaging narration, Pati saw potential in Das and offered him an opportunity to bring his storytelling to the radio.

Since joining Radio Outreach (90.8 FM), Das has captivated listeners with his daily storytelling programme at 1pm. Through his show, he revives traditional Odia folktales and literary masterpieces, keeping cultural heritage alive for audiences across the region.

"It feels surreal," Das admits. "To think that the stories I once shared informally are now heard by so many—it's a dream come true."

His journey is an inspiration to many, proving that talent can emerge from the most unexpected places when given the right platform. As Pati puts it, "Arata's story is proof that passion, when nurtured, can lead to incredible transformations."

Das's success highlights the crucial role of community radio in amplifying local voices and preserving cultural heritage—a victory not just for him, but for the entire region.

18th visually challenged chess championship at SAI

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: SAI International Education Group will host the 18th National Chess Championship for the visually challenged, organised by the All India Chess Federation for the Blind (AICFB) and the Odisha Chess Association for the Visually Challenged (OCAVC).

The event will take place at SAI International Residential School, Cuttack, from April 2 to April 6, featuring 54 players (52 men, 2 women) from 15 states and Union Territories. The tournament will follow a 9-round individual format, with Maharashtra fielding the highest number of participants—11 players. Odisha will be represented by four players: Soundarya Kumar Pradhan, Subhendu Kumar Patra, Pracharya Kumar Pradhan, and Deepak Kumar Bhoi.

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A confluence of religious sects

The mysterious tale of Naleshwar temple



SUMAN MOHANTY, OP

The 64 Yogini Temple located at Ranipur-Jharial near Sindhekela under Bongamunda block in Bolangir district boasts of its uniqueness that symbolises the harmonious coexistence of Shaivism, Shaktism, Tantra, Vaishnavism, Buddhism and Jainism.

The circular 64 Yogini temple, dating back to 9th century AD, is built atop a massive rock, with a central square pedestal featuring a striking eight-armed, dancing Shiva idol with the Ling aiming towards the sky. At the feet of Shiva, a dancing Ganesha and a Nandi idol are prominently placed. The temple consists of 65 small chambers arranged in a circular fashion, with 64 of them housing intricately carved statues of Yoginis.

Yoginis are fierce feminine energies or enigmatic forces with untold tantric powers. They are 64 powerful manifestations of Shakti, considered semi-divine beings embodying tantric wisdom and controlling cosmic energies. Yoginis are believed to grant immense spiritual powers, offer protection from black magic, and bestow health and wealth upon devotees. The temple provides a glimpse into the religious and occult practices

from the medieval times.

Adjacent to the unique shrine is the famous Someshwara Shiva Temple. Ranipur-Jharial is also revered as a pilgrimage site, known as Somasthirtha. Devotees believe that bathing in the pond near Someshwara Temple cleanses one of their sins.

Nearby stands the Liahari Khakara temple, dedicated to tantric practices, and Indralath temple, a magnificent 75-ft tall structure made of burnt bricks, adorned with intricate carvings.

Ranipur-Jharial is located approximately 105 km from Bolangir district headquarters and around 427 km from the state capital.

Recognised as a site of national importance, the shrine complex has been entrusted to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for conservation and development. The ASI has included the monuments and the surrounding region in its list of centrally protected monuments. Excavation activities are prohibited in the area due to its archaeological significance.

However, security and upkeep remain

64 YOGINI TEMPLE, RANIPUR-JHARIAL

a concern. A few years ago, illegal excavations were carried out near the heritage structures of Ranipur-Jharial, with pipelines installed in violation of conservation guidelines.

Even near the Chheliya Temple, part of Ranipur-Jharial complex, the ground was dug for pipeline installation, prompting local residents to file complaints with the police. Despite these reports, no visible action has been taken.

During his visit to Bolangir January 15, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced plans for the conservation and development of the monument complex.

Following the announcement, ASI officials held a press conference, revealing that the site had been brought under their jurisdiction. With an investment of Rs 9.6 crore, the restoration and rejuvenation of this heritage cluster commenced.

Ranipur-Jharial is home to several notable monuments, including the 9th-century open-air 64 Yogini temple, the 6th-century Leherigudi, the Someshwar temple, the Rani Gudi or Queen's temple, and the 7th-century Indralath brick temple. In addition to these, there are more than 50 other historic structures in the area.

As part of the development plan, a boundary wall will be constructed around the site to enhance security, the ASI officials had said. Additionally, tourism infrastructure will be developed to provide better amenities for visitors, contributing to the growth of the region's tourism sector, they said.

National Monument Authority (NMA) chairman Kishore Kumar Basa, along with ASI's state chapter superintendent NK Swain, visited Ranipur-Jharial in January. Basa emphasised that among India's prominent ancient heritage sites, Ranipur-Jharial stands out as a remarkable architectural marvel.

He noted that with appropriate development and restoration, the site could become one of the most significant historical monuments and pilgrimage destinations in India, attracting tourists from across the globe.

With inputs from
Birendra Kumar Jhankar

SASHIKANTA MANSINGH, OP

Amongst the numerous Shaiva shrines dotting Odisha across its length and breadth, Naleshwar temple, situated on the northern banks of Kapali river in Bhadrak district, is one of the most revered pilgrimage sites that carries with it a mysterious origin along with a rich cultural and spiritual history.

According to sources, apart from the main Shiva temple, the 200-year-old shrine is also home to Shani, Hanuman, and Lakshmi-Narayana temples, adding to its spiritual significance.

Temple priests say the site where Lord Naleshwar is now worshipped was once a dense forest of Nala and Dhalang trees, with no human settlement. A few centuries ago, a cow from Adampur village (on the southern banks of Kapali river) mysteriously crossed over to Nalanga forest and began spontaneously shedding milk over a particular mound of earth. Intrigued by the phenomenon, villagers excavated the mound to discover a Shiva Linga buried underneath. Despite extensive digging, they could not determine the Linga's full depth,



affirming its divine presence.

Following the revelation, the area was cleared, a thatched-roof structure was built, and priests were appointed to perform rituals. The temple was subsequently named as 'Naleshwar Peetha' by the local Brahmin community, as documented by renowned scholars Ramanarayan Tripathi and Bibhuti Bhushan Pani.

Over the years, many devotees have claimed that Naleshwar shrine acts a great healer for many ailments, if prayers are offered with true devotion, according to temple managing committee chairman Santosh Kumar Jena. With the support of devotees and philan-

thropists, the thatched shrine was gradually replaced by a permanent temple, he added.

The temple hosts Shivratri as its main festival, along with a three-day Rudra Mahayajna and Sheeta Sasthi festival, during which the symbolic marriage of Shiva and Parvati is performed.

The temple committee, headed by Jena along with committee members Ashok Pani, Pradyumna Tripathi, Nirod Jena, Manas Das, Bishwambar Pani, Abhishek Jena, and Sapan Pani, has appealed to local authorities for further development of the shrine. Their plans include renovation of the temple pond, construction of a convention hall and proper drainage system on the temple precincts.

Significantly, Nalanga is also the birthplace of Jagannath Pani, known for his literary works. Devoted to Lord Naleshwar, he began every composition with an invocation to the deity. Former minister Prafulla Samal and scholar Pandit Sangramacharya have emphasised that Naleshwar Peetha has evolved from a modest thatched shrine to a thriving pilgrimage centre.

With inputs from
Sai Shankar Mahakul



Nonagenarian snack master's enduring legacy

In a world where many young people seek shortcuts to comfort, 95-year-old Narana Sahoo from Cuttack stands as a testament to the power of passion and perseverance

MANOJ KUMAR JENA, OP

In the bustling Silver City of Cuttack, a unique aroma wafts through the air every evening, drawing locals and visitors alike to a small food stall. This isn't just any stall—it's the workplace of Narana Sahoo, a 95-year-old culinary icon who has been serving up delicious Vada, Aloo Pakoda, and other fried snacks for over six decades.

Born in Angul in 1930, Narana moved to Cuttack at the age of 17 with three friends, seeking a better life. His journey began as a house help, earning a meager Rs 7 per month. But his dreams were bigger. Determined to open his own food stall, he took a leap of faith in 1960, setting up his first stall on Naya Sarak Road, near Emarti Devi Women's College. Since then, he has been a beacon of dedication and hard work, serving hot, crispy snacks to generations of Cuttack residents.



who prefers to remain anonymous, joined him at the age of 13, inspired by his grandfather's unwavering passion. "My grandfather works with such dedication and energy that it draws many customers to our stall," he said. "Even at this age, he has no serious illnesses. He doesn't need glasses or a walking stick and works hard for nine hours every day," added Narana's grandson.

Every evening, Narana and his grandson set up their stall, meticulously preparing Vadas, Dahi Bara, Aloo Pakodas, and Piajees (fried onion snacks). People of all ages gather around, savoring the timeless flavors that have remained unchanged for decades.

Mohan Das (42), a regular customer, reminisces about his childhood visits to the stall. "I've been coming here since I was a child, and the taste has never changed. Mousa (Narana) is a kind man who serves delicious food at very affordable prices," he said.

When asked about his secret to longevity and hard work, Narana's response is simple yet profound. "I came to Cuttack with three friends, and now I'm the only one left. I arrived here with nothing, and now I have great-grandchildren. I believe that work is worship. I have a large family and a small home, and I am content with what I have. After death, I can't carry my possessions to the afterlife. So I find joy in feeding people and serving them with delicious food."

Narana's story is a poignant reminder that true happiness doesn't come from wealth or possessions but from dedication, hard work, and living in the moment.

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“Timidity is a form of vanity. When you are timid, it means that you attach more importance to the opinions others have of you than to the sincerity of your actions.”



THE MOTHER

Pain For Le Pen

A political earthquake has shaken France and rattled Far-Right parties across the globe after a French court on 31 March convicted Marine Le Pen. Leading France's Far-Right National Rally party, Le Pen has been convicted of embezzlement and has been barred from seeking public office for five years. The verdict came when she and her party had emerged as possible winners of the 2027 presidential election. Millions of people in France backing the party are outraged as their hopes received a great setback with the likely elimination of Le Pen from the contest. The latter has, of course, denounced the verdict terming it as a “political” move aimed at preventing her from running in the presidential election. She also described the ruling as a violation of the rule of law and said she would appeal. She would, however, remain ineligible to be a candidate until the appeal is decided. She was also given four years' imprisonment, with two to be served under house arrest and two suspended - which would not apply pending appeal.

The court ruling has shaken French politics to its depths as everyone expected Le Pen to succeed President Emmanuel Macron at the end of his second and final term. It is such a blow that even some of the opponents of Le Pen fear her party may play the “martyr's” card and brighten the chances of her nominee's victory in the presidential race. However, it is too early to say how the case will influence the voters, even though the possible exclusion of Le Pen from the contest may help mobilise diehard supporters the way Donald Trump's legal problems eventually helped him in his goal of becoming the US President for the second term.

Le Pen's denial of the charges is only to be expected and her characterisation of the verdict as a “political decision” to prevent her from being elected President is itself a political statement intended to convince the electorate about her claimed innocence. But, the whole framing of charges, investigation and trial have only shown politicians of any hue - right, left and central - may not necessarily be immune to the virus of corruption. When Le Pen said the ruling marked a “fateful day for our democracy,” it sounded so familiar as US President Donald Trump, who had instigated a dastardly attack on democracy in his own country, also often swears by democracy. In fact, moments after the French verdict banning Le Pen from contesting elections for five years was pronounced, Trump said: “That sounds very much like this country.” This was an apparent reference to legal cases that he himself had faced before he took office.

Elon Musk, Tesla's billionaire owner, and chief of Trump's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), a known Far-Right supporter, also immediately rallied behind Le Pen and said the court ruling would “backfire like the legal attacks against Trump.” He had also backed the Far-Right in Germany.

However, the judges' decision, backed by more than 150 pages of legal justifications after a nine-week trial, was necessary because nobody was entitled to “immunity in violation of the rule of law,” the head judge, Bénédicte de Perthuis, said. The court convicted Le Pen on charges of embezzlement of public funds over a fake jobs scam at the EU parliament. Nine individuals from her National Rally party, including Le Pen herself, were convicted for a scheme in which they exploited European Parliament expenses to hire “fictitious” parliamentary assistants who were, in reality, performing duties for the party. Additionally, twelve assistants were found guilty of concealing a crime, with the court estimating that the total value of the scheme reached 2.9 million euros.

The verdict, being described as a bombshell, is to be hailed for two reasons. One lesson from it is whatever the rabble-rousing power of Far-Right politicians in the name of so-called nationalism or patriotism, the real intent of many of them to plunder the resources of a country for themselves and their cronies should not be confused. Second, the court is supposed to do its job without caring for the political consequences of its rulings. This is exactly what the French court has done at a time when the judiciary in many countries around the world is often willingly bowing down and accepting a position of being used as an extension of the government.

WISDOM CORNER

“A man can be himself only so long as he is alone, and if he does not love solitude, he will not love freedom, for it is only when he is alone that he is really free.”

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER

“Half the world is composed of people who have something to say and can't, and the other half who have nothing to say and keep on saying it.”

ROBERT FROST

“If you reveal your secrets to the wind, you should not blame the wind for revealing them to the trees.”

KAHLIL GIBRAN

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

■ **1513:** Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León landed on the coast of Florida.

■ **1681:** King Charles II of England officially proclaimed the charter he had granted in March to William Penn for the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania in North America.

■ **1792:** The US dollar is introduced. The Mint Act of 1792 established the Dollar as US currency. About two-thirds of global trade today is based on the US Dollar.

■ **1800:** Ludwig van Beethoven's First Symphony is premiered. The German composer conducted the orchestra himself. The premiere received exceptionally positive reviews.

■ **1968:** Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey receives its world premiere. Upon release, the epic about human evolution, technology, and extraterrestrial life polarized audiences and critics alike. Today, it is considered a classic in its genre.

■ **1982:** Argentina occupies the Falkland Islands. The invasion escalated a long-standing conflict between Argentina and the United Kingdom over the archipelago in the South Atlantic. It triggered the Falklands War, which was won by the U.K.

FOCUS SUSTAINABILITY

THE FUNDING GAP



For COP30 to succeed where COP29 failed, it must move beyond vague pledges to secure clear, enforceable financial commitments

Last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP29) in Baku ended with developed countries agreeing to mobilise \$300 billion annually for climate finance in developing countries. But while this figure is three times higher than the previous \$100 billion target, it falls far short of what's needed to close the climate funding gap.

The challenge today is more complex than when the Paris climate agreement was signed in 2015. Back then, the \$100 billion figure was largely arbitrary, not based on a full analysis of actual investment needs. By contrast, COP29 had to estimate real costs and determine how much external financing would be required.

A report by the Independent High-Level Expert Group on Climate Finance (IHLEG), of which I am a member, finds that developing countries (excluding China) will need \$2.4-3.3 trillion in climate investments by 2035. About 60% of this could be financed domestically through higher savings and reduced public deficits. Even so, after reallocating existing investments toward the green transition, a \$1 trillion shortfall by 2030 - rising to \$1.3 trillion by 2035 - remains. Closing this gap will require external funding.

While COP29 acknowledged the scale of the financing gap, it failed to agree on how to close it. Developing countries pushed for wealthier economies to cover the shortfall with public funds, but developed countries offered only \$300 billion annually - and even that came with a caveat: they would only “take the lead” in mobilising funds rather than guaranteeing direct provision.

The IHLEG report suggests that \$650 billion of the funding gap by 2035 could be met through private investment, including equity and debt. But this exposed a deep divide. Developed countries favored private capital to ease budget pressures, while developing countries, aware of its volatility, insisted on public

funding for accountability and predictability.

Skepticism around private finance is warranted. Many developing countries struggle to attract private investment, relying instead on grants and concessional long-term loans. Shifting these limited public resources to low-income economies means middle-income countries will have to rely even more on private capital - despite investor uncertainty.

Private climate finance will grow from \$40 billion in 2022 to an estimated \$650 billion by 2035, according to the IHLEG. But most investment remains concentrated in a few markets, making access unequal and uncertain. Falling renewable-energy costs could boost green projects over fossil fuels, but the transition's pace remains unclear.

Even when private capital is available, domestic policies often discourage investment. Many governments artificially lower energy prices for political reasons, making electricity providers financially unviable. Foreign investors understandably see this as a fundamental risk and hesitate to invest. If private finance is to play a bigger role, governments must reform energy pricing, strengthen regulations, and cut bureaucratic red tape to attract investment.

Public-sector support remains crucial. Multilateral development banks (MDBs) and bilateral institutions can lower risks for private investors through risk-sharing

mechanisms while helping governments create stable, investment-friendly environments.

COP29's failure to secure a stronger funding deal means a renegotiation is unlikely until the next global stocktake in 2028. However, gaps can still be bridged. Expanding MDB lending - which has lagged behind climate needs - could provide much-needed capital while countries work on long-term policy solutions.

COP29's final statement pointed to an opportunity to make real progress ahead of COP30 in Belém, Brazil. But one key factor will determine success: developed countries' willingness to commit more financial resources.

This has become even more uncertain with Donald Trump's return to the White House. His administration's hostility to global climate efforts, and its push for fossil-fuel expansion, will likely weaken international climate finance. The US is already scaling back existing commitments, further delaying climate negotiations.

Given how slow and bureaucratic these discussions have become, it's worth asking: Are massive annual COP meetings still the right approach? With tens of thousands of government officials, business leaders, and NGOs gathering each year, the urgency of the climate crisis demands more focused, results-driven decision-making.

One alternative is to delegate key financing negotiations to smaller, specialised groups. The G20, for example,

lacks universal representation but includes all major economies - developed and developing - accounting for 80% of global GDP and emissions, and two-thirds of the world's population. More importantly, its members control the world's largest MDBs, making it a natural platform for driving climate finance.

Another option is BRICS, which has positioned itself as a counterweight to Western-led financial institutions. With China, India, Brazil, and other key developing countries playing a central role, the BRICS could mobilise alternative sources of green finance, reducing dependence on Western funding and pushing for fairer access to carbon markets.

If either the G20 or the BRICS were to take the lead in climate finance, the focus would need to be on expanding MDB lending capacity, leveraging private capital, and incentivising large-scale investments in climate adaptation and mitigation.

With COP29 failing to secure an adequate funding framework, developing countries are left with more questions than answers. As the financing gap continues to grow, incremental pledges are no longer enough. The real question now is whether the COP process is still the best place for these negotiations.

If major economies keep delaying real commitments, India, Brazil, and South Africa may have little choice but to push for climate finance talks to shift to platforms like the G20 or BRICS.

For COP30 to succeed where COP29 failed, it must move beyond vague pledges to secure clear, enforceable financial commitments. Otherwise, the world will once again gather, negotiate, and leave with little progress - while the climate crisis continues to escalate.

The writer, former Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of India, is Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress.

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Montek Singh Ahluwalia

COP29'S FAILURE TO SECURE A STRONGER FUNDING DEAL MEANS A RENEGOTIATION IS UNLIKELY UNTIL THE NEXT GLOBAL STOCKTAKE IN 2028

IN JEST THIS

Your approval rating may surprise you

The other day, I saw a Newsweek headline that said: “Elon Musk's Approval Rating Is ‘Falling Through the Floor,’ Polls Show.”

This surprised me. Not the fact that many Americans disapprove of Musk, but the fact that he has an approval rating. I thought only presidents have approval ratings. But apparently co-presidents do, too.

Some presidents have enjoyed very high approval ratings. Former US presidents John F. Kennedy and Dwight Eisenhower enjoyed average approval ratings of 70 and 65% respectively. Those were the days when “Escape to Canada” was only a tourism slogan.

One of the highest approval ratings in the world currently belongs to Narendra Modi (77%). Claudia Sheinbaum of Mexico also enjoys a high approval rating (69%). Donald Tusk, on the other hand, has an approval rating of only 40%. (Tusk is the prime minister of Poland, not the love child of Trump and Musk.)

If Musk has an approval rating, there may come a day,

in the not-too-distant future, when all of us have approval ratings too. A mother of four, for example, might get an approval rating that she's eager to share with her therapist.

Mom of four: “I have some good news! In the latest family poll, my approval rating jumped from 40% to 60%! I'm above water!”

Therapist: “Wonderful! Looks like you've been following my parenting advice.”

Mom: “No, I just gave my husband permission to go to the World Cup next year.”

To get everyone's approval rating, a company would poll as many people as possible, asking them if they approve of (or disapprove of) other people they know. The polling company would then send you an approval rating summary. It would include your overall rating, as well as your rating broken down into various categories:

Neighbourhood rating: This shows you what your neighbours think of you.

Wife: “We need to move. We have terrible neighbours. They gave me an approval rat-

ing of 50%. Half of them hate me!”

Husband: “No, half of them like you! You should be happy. I got a rating of only 15%.”

Wife: “Oh, that explains why my rating is so low. You're pulling me down. Just like my mom said you would.”

Husband: “All I did was put up a fence for privacy.”

Wife: “You tried to annex part of Mr. Johnson's yard. And Mrs. Patel's cat ... the one that liked to wander in our yard ... you ran after it and deported it.”

Husband: “I just scared it back to her yard. That's not deporting. That's returning. I was doing her a favor.”

Wife: “Yeah, I'm sure she appreciates the sign you put on our gate that says: ‘No Cats Beyond This Point Without Valid Visas!’”

Husband: “I was being funny.”

Wife: “Well, 85% of our neighbours didn't find it funny!”

Husband: “But 15% did!”

Work rating: It won't be just your boss giving you a rating. It'll be all your co-workers too.

Anita: “This is crazy. I got a 25% approval rating.”

Reena: “That's because you take too many restroom breaks.”

Anita: “What's wrong with that? It's not my fault that my Instagram posts get so many comments I need to respond to.”

Roommate rating: If you share a home with roommates, you'll be able to find out how they feel about you.

Ron: “Hey, what's with the low rating? Does my food smell?”

Jon: “It's not your food that smells, bro. Have you ever considered taking a ... you know ... bath?”

Ron: “What do you mean? I took one just last month.”

Jon: “Daily baths, bro. If you take daily baths, your approval rating will be through the roof.”

Ron: “Daily baths are not good for the environment. Besides, I spray myself every morning with musk.”

Jon: “Musk is not going to solve your problems, bro. Haven't you learned anything from Twitter?”

Letters

TO THE EDITOR

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

OrissaPOST
 B-15, Rasulgari Industrial Estate,
 Bhubaneswar-751010

Nepal turmoil

Sir, This refers to the editorial “Chaos in Kathmandu,” Orissa POST, April 1. The pro-monarchy protests that rocked Nepal last week left two people dead and more than a hundred others injured, with reports of widespread violence and arson in the capital Kathmandu that targeted media houses and the headquarters of a political party. Supporters of deposed king Gyanendra Shah have demanded the restoration of the constitutional monarchy, which was abolished in 2008, and Nepal's status as a Hindu state. The anger of the protesters could point to a deeper malaise - people's growing disillusionment with political instability in the country over the past two decades. No PM has completed a full term since 1990, and Nepal's politicians have been more focused on grabbing power every few years instead of taking on the real issues that matter to the people. A fifth of Nepal's population of nearly 30 million lives below the poverty line and political instability has stunted both economic growth and investments and fuelled frustration among the people. Stakeholders in India, who too would like to see the restoration of Nepal's monarchy would do well to consider that further protests will only increase instability in the neighbouring country at a time when the Oli government is widely perceived to be closer to the Chinese orbit. New Delhi should instead provide quiet support to Kathmandu's efforts to get out of this imbroglio.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, BANGALORE

Walking for health

Sir, National Walking Day, observed every year on the first Wednesday of April, was introduced by the American Heart Association in 2007 to promote healthy living and encourage people to adopt walking as part of their daily routine. Walking, a natural and effortless physical activity, offers numerous health benefits. It not only aids in weight management, boosts metabolism, and improves heart health, but also enhances mental well-being. Experts recommend at least 30 minutes of walking every day to reduce the risk of high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and heart diseases, while also providing mental clarity and stress relief.

Krishna Kumar Vepakomma, HYDERABAD

Freshwater crisis threatens Bhitarkanika National Park



POST NEWS NETWORK

Kendrapara, April 1: With the Mahanadi River experiencing a water crisis since early February, experts have warned that the ongoing freshwater shortage in the various river water channels in Kendrapara district will soon impact Bhitarkanika National Park, a crucial ecological zone.

At present, the shortage of water in Mahanadi has caused water levels in various rivers and canals across Kendrapara district drop significantly. Major waterways like Khakha Nala, creeks, and canals have dried up.

Environmentalists, including Hemant Kumar Raut, educationist Bhuban Mohan Jena, Professor Kshitish Kumar Singh, social worker Sanjay Behura, and Utkalmani Youth Association president Gautam Kumar Behera, have raised concerns that the lack of freshwater will lead to the destruction of mangrove forests in the national park.

Bhitarkanika's ecosystem thrives on a delicate balance of 60 per cent saline water and 40 per cent freshwater, primar-

ily supplied by the Mahanadi, Baitarani, and Brahmani river systems. A disruption in this balance could result in a decline of mangrove cover, leaving only Casuarina forests along the coastline.

Along the 480 km-long coastline, the state has about 222 sq km of dense mangrove forests, with Kendrapara district alone accounting for 183 sq km along its 48 km shoreline. However, the three river systems that supply freshwater to Bhitarkanika are now under threat. The construction of dams in Chhattisgarh has led to disputes between the Odisha government and Chhattisgarh over water sharing, reducing Mahanadi's water flow. To address water shortages, authorities have begun drawing water from Mahanadi at Mundali barrage.

Additionally, a barrage at Santara under Kujang block in Jagatsinghpur district is being used to divert water to Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur districts for drinking water purposes. Two mega projects are under construction to provide potable water to 200 villages in Mahakalapada and Marshghai

blocks of Kendrapara. Furthermore, Mahanadi's water is also being diverted for industrial and drinking water projects.

As a result, several tributaries, including Birupa, Chitropala, Luna, and Karandia, as well as canals in Kendrapara and Pattamundai, are facing water shortages. This depletion reduces the likelihood of Bhitarkanika receiving freshwater from these sources. Similarly, water from the Baitarani river is being diverted for industrial use in Bhadrak district, limiting its flow to Bhitarkanika.

Historically, Brahmani river had been supplying water to Bhitarkanika during dry seasons. However, recent mega projects have redirected this water for industrial and municipal use outside the district. Consequently, saline water from the sea is getting into rivers and estuaries, endangering the mangrove forests.

Experts stress the need for proper water management, ensuring river water reaches the coast to protect mangrove ecosystems. Despite the urgency, no concrete measures have been implemented. Additionally, no survey has been conducted to assess the available freshwater resources, raising concerns about the national park's sustainability.

Environmentalists are also questioning the delay in the investigation report on the impact of large-scale projects on Bhitarkanika's ecosystem.

Meanwhile, repeated attempt to contact Manas Kumar Das, the Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF), Rajnagar Forest Division did not yield any results.



GYMNASTIC FEAT: Students perform to a patriotic number at a district-level Utkal Diwas celebration, and 32nd anniversary of the district foundation day at Town Hall in Sonepur Tuesday

26 platoon force to be deployed in Bhadrak

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhadrak, April 1: A total of 26 platoons of force will be deployed in Bhadrak town to maintain law and order during the Ram Navami celebrations April 6, Eastern Range DIG Satyajit Nayak said.

Addressing a press conference Tuesday, Nayak said additionally, three companies of Central paramilitary forces, including BSF, CRPF, and Rapid Action Force will be stationed in the area to maintain peace during the festivities.

"Forces will be deployed

RAM NAVAMI CELEBRATIONS



across various streets and localities in the town, with CCTV and drone surveillance to ensure safety," Nayak said, adding that authorities have initiated a crackdown to apprehend individuals with pending warrants.

"Mobile patrolling will be intensified, and social media platforms will be closely monitored. A case related to social

media misuse has already been registered and action will follow soon," he added.

The police preparedness details were finalized during a review meeting conducted by Crime Branch DGP Binaytosh Mishra at the Bhadrak SP's office Tuesday. The review covered the Bhadrak and Balasore districts, focusing on maintaining law and order during the festival.

Bhadrak SP Madkar Sandeep Sampad, Balasore SP Raj Prasad and senior police officials from both the districts participated in the review meeting.

Sex racket busted in Rourkela; 4 held

POST NEWS NETWORK

Rourkela, April 1: Four persons, including two senior citizens, were arrested by the Jhirpani police for allegedly running a sex racket at a house in Jagada area here, Tuesday.

Five women, who were forced into flesh trade by the accused, were rescued during the raid at house number JG/210 in Jagada, IIC Jhirpani police station Pradeep Nayak said.

Nayak said, acting on reliable information, police raided the house along with two witnesses. They found five women, aged between 25-30 years, in disrobed condition. They were immediately rescued.

A search of the house resulted in the recovery of some cash and other incriminating materials. During questioning, the victims allegedly disclosed that they were forced into prostitution by the owner of the house Upendra Biswal, 75, his wife Jyosna Biswal, 66, and their son Umesh Biswal, 36. They were soon taken into custody along with a customer whose name was withheld.

The IIC said the accused have been booked under Sections 3,4,5 and 7 of the ITP Act of 1956. They will be produced before a court Wednesday for remand.

MUJAGADA-PHULBANI-BOUDH RAIL LINE

DPR to be ready in 8 months

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhanjanagar, April 1: Residents have been demanding a new railway line connecting Gopalpur via Bhanjanagar and Redhakhhol since long.

While this demand remains unfulfilled, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led government has shown renewed interest in advancing the project.

In a significant move, the Odisha government has initiated steps to include Phulbani in the rail line despite the area being excluded from the initial phase of the survey.

The proposed rail line will stretch from Mujagada in Bhanjanagar block in Ganjam district, passing through Phulbani, and extending to Boudh. The state government has assigned the task of preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the railway line to Odisha Rail Infrastructure Development Limited (ORIDL).

A tender was floated by ORIDL, and it was officially opened January 6. Subsequently, ORIDL issued a letter of intent to the selected consultancy agency for the survey and DPR preparation February 22. The contract, valued at ₹1.29



crore, mandates the surveyor to finalise the rail route, prepare a comprehensive project report, and draft a land acquisition plan. The consultancy agency is expected to complete the DPR within eight months and submit it to ORIDL, after which the state government will forward it to the Union government.

The project will be implemented in joint collaboration between the state and Union governments. Upon DPR completion, funding approval will be sought from both the Central and state Budgets.

Notably, in 2011, the then

UPA government initiated a survey for the 254-km Gopalpur-Redhakhhol rail line via Phulbani. However, no substantial progress was made in the subsequent years.

Before the last general election, an alternative route excluding Phulbani was surveyed, citing technical reasons. This triggered strong protests in Kandhamal district, further delaying the project's progress.

Now, with the DPR preparation set to commence, locals are hopeful that the longstanding demand for the railway line will finally be addressed.

I-T dept unearths benami assets of 'illegal miner'

POST NEWS NETWORK

Bhubaneswar, April 1: The Benami Prohibition Unit (BPU) - the investigation wing of the Income Tax department - which is conducting a large-scale probe into assets acquired through benami holdings, recently uncovered massive benami assets linked to alleged illegal miner Tapas Ranjan Panda, reports said.

The assets include 10 flats in an apartment complex in Ghatikia and Kalinga Nagar here, the report added.

Additionally, investigators reportedly found that Panda had acquired 11.2 acres of land in Athagarh in Cuttack district under benami holdings. Following a detailed inquiry, these properties have been provisionally attached by BPU.

Sources privy to the investigation indicated that these properties were initially acquired under the names of two benami entities- M/s Truism Infratech Private Limited and M/s True Aid Foundation, both of which were managed and controlled by Panda through his relatives and employees.

The inquiry allegedly revealed that Panda was engaged in illegal and unauthorised

stone mining at Dankari Hill in Chadheidhara under Dharماسala tehsil of Jajpur district. Official sources confirmed that a verification conducted at the Dharماسala tehsil office in Jajpur showed Panda had not been allotted a mining license for a stone quarry since 2014.

However, evidence obtained during an official verification in June 2022 revealed that Panda sold approximately ₹200 crore worth of stone and stone aggregates to various parties. It has now been established that the proceeds from the sale were funneled into his benami companies and firms.

The unaccounted money was then used to purchase land in Bhadrak, Cuttack, and Bhubaneswar, as well as flats in multiple apartments in Bhubaneswar, Goregaon, Ghaziabad and other locations. These benami properties were later transferred in the names of Panda and his wife through a series of layered transactions.

Sources also revealed that Panda filed false Income Tax and GST returns using bogus billing to legitimise the properties acquired under benami names.

The case will now be decided by the adjudicating authority in Kolkata, sources added.

Police detain man for ransacking ATM kiosk

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 1: Police Tuesday detained a man who allegedly ransacked an ATM counter at a bank after finding ₹110 erroneously deducted from his savings account.

The accused was identified as Sanjay Patra, 25, of Talagaon village under Ghasipura police limits in the district. Police said two cash dispensing machines and the glass doors of the ATM kiosk were vandalised by Patra. He is being questioned at present.

According to police, the incident took place at around 9 am Tuesday at the SBI Ghasipura branch, located near the Ghasipura police station. IIC of the police station Manas Barik said Patra had gone to the bank to enquire about the abrupt deduction of ₹110 from his savings account by the bank. However, he found the bank closed on account of holiday.

At this, Patra lost his cool and turned his ire at the ATM kiosk. "He smashed the glass door of the ATM kiosk and smashed two cash dispensing machines inside," Barik said, adding that Patra sustained injuries to his leg in the process.

After being informed by locals, the police reached the spot. Following a review of the bank's CCTV footage, police detained Patra for questioning.

Man dies after tree branch falls on him

Keonjhar: In a freak mishap, a man from Badasahi in Mushakhori village under Patana police limits in Keonjhar district died after a tree branch fell on him while he was collecting firewood in a forest. The deceased was identified as Gobardhan Das. According to reports, Das had gone to the Kasia forest near his home to gather firewood. While cutting a branch, another branch fell on his head, seriously injuring him. Locals rushed Das to the Patana Community Health Center where doctors pronounced him dead on arrival. Das was reportedly employed as a night watchman at the Tribal Development Corporation in Dhenkikote. Patana police ASI Gaurahari Garadia visited the spot and conducted an investigation. The body was sent for post-mortem before police handed it over to the family. A case of unnatural death (no. 9/25) has been registered at the Patana police station and further investigations are underway.

India's smallest railway station in mining hub

Civil society members demand facelift

POST NEWS NETWORK

Keonjhar, April 1: Tucked within the green hills and natural surroundings of Joda region of the district, the Banspani railway station stands as a quaint stop resembling a scenic hill station. This railway station in the picturesque backdrop holds the distinction of being the smallest railway station in India, both in size and infrastructure.

Situated approximately 300 km from the state Capital and 70 km from the district headquarters, the station is located within the Joda municipality area.

Although it is in one of the country's largest mining regions, the station remains underdeveloped and often overlooked, leading locals to demand its modernisation.

Despite being small in size, Banspani station plays a crucial role in connecting the mining belt to other regions. It primarily serves as a transit point for mineral transportation, making it a significant logistical hub.

The station measuring around 210 meters in length consists of a single platform which is not fit enough to accommodate a standard 500-meter-long express train entirely.

After Jurudi railway station, Banspani is recognised as the second-largest iron ore loading station within the Joda mining



area. It sees the frequent movement of freight trains transporting raw materials.

Passenger train services, however, are limited. Currently, a few trains like the Barbil-Puri-Barbil Intercity Express, the Berhampur-Tata

Nagar Vande Bharat Express, the Puri-Anand Vihar Terminal Weekly Express, and the Visakhapatnam-Tata Nagar-Visakhapatnam Weekly Express operate through the station.

With minimal infrastructure, the station offers basic ameni-

ties and no advanced facilities. "Its small stature and limited resources have earned it the title of the country's smallest railway station," Basant Kumar Mohanta, a member of the Barbil Civil Society, said.

According to Mohanta, Banspani station's size and lack of development warrant immediate attention for improved services and infrastructure.

Rasananda Behera of the Barbil Civil Society said the area's environment has been severely affected by dust and water pollution due to loading of mineral stones and movement of a large number of trucks. He noted that the route, which starts from mining areas, has become a key transportation alternative for both government and local residents.

Behera emphasised that if

a connecting route is opened from Banspani to Barbil, linking the place with other mining regions and urban areas, its significance will increase further.

Researcher Dr Bimbhadra Behera stated that the station was established to facilitate the efficient transportation of minerals in line with the region's mining industry growth. "Freight trains passing through Banspani transport iron ore and other minerals to various parts of the country," he said.

Banspani also serves as a vital transportation link for the local population. Behera suggested that with commercial development, pollution-free infrastructure, and improved facilities for residents, the station could be recognised as an independent station within the state despite its smaller size.

of the day **QUOTE**

Security cover will be provided in the extremely remote areas of Gadchiroli to set up towers. If a communication system in remote areas is strong, it will be convenient to connect the local youth with modern technology

JYOTIRADITYA SCINDIA | UNION MINISTER

The government is also sending teachers to prestigious national and international institutes to enhance their skills

BHAGWANT MANN | PUNJAB CM

Withdrawal of the entire Z+ security cover of Bikram Singh Majithia confirms beyond doubt the dangerous and deadly designs of the AAP government against the SAD leadership

SUKHBIER SINGH BADAL | SHIROMANI AKALI DAL LEADER

SHORT TAKES

SC slams Haryana district bar bodies

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Tuesday said bar councils in Punjab and Haryana indulged in "shameful acts" and "malpractices" apart from "massive corruption". A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said if a need arose it would constitute a special investigation team to look into their affairs and check the bank accounts of bar bodies especially in Haryana.

Woman, two kids found dead

Giridih (Jharkhand): A woman and her two children were found dead in Jharkhand's Giridih district Tuesday, police said. The bodies of the woman, identified as Renua Tudu (30) and her son Satish Hembrom (5) were found hanging from a tree, while her eight-year-old daughter Sarita's body was found in a nearby pond, in Bardauni village under the jurisdiction of Nayanpur police station, a police officer said.

India, Chile agree to begin negotiations

New Delhi: India and Chile Tuesday announced starting negotiations on a comprehensive economic partnership pact as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chilean President Gabriel Boric Font held wide-ranging talks focusing on boosting the ties in areas of trade, defence, critical minerals and health. Boric, accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising ministers, members of Parliament, senior officials and business leaders, is on a five-day state visit to India.

21 minors escape from remand home

Chaibasa (Jharkhand): Altogether 21 minor inmates escaped from a remand home in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district Tuesday evening after damaging the entrance gate, a senior police officer said. Four of the inmates were later traced and brought back to the remand home. The boys fled the Chaibasa facility around 6.30 pm, DIG (Kolhan) Manoj Ratan Chothe told PTI. Senior officials started an investigation, he said. According to sources, the inmates had ransacked various items of the remand home, including CCTV cameras, before damaging the main entrance gate to make their way out. A massive manhunt has been launched to trace and bring back the remaining inmates.

Will maintain decency in shows, Allahbadia tells SC

New Delhi, April 1: Podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia Tuesday filed an undertaking in the Supreme Court saying he would maintain decency in his "The Ranveer Show".

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh was informed by senior advocate Abhinav Chandrachud, appearing for Allahbadia, that his client had filed an undertaking in compliance with the direction of the court and joined the case's investigation and recorded his statements. Chandrachud sought a modification of the top court's conditions



asking Allahbadia to deposit his passport and said it affected his livelihood.

The senior counsel said Allahbadia had to travel abroad for interviewing different people which required holding several rounds of meetings. The bench said if Allahbadia went abroad it was bound to affect the investigation and asked solicitor general Tushar

Mehta, representing Maharashtra and Assam governments, about the time-frame to complete the probe.

Mehta said though he did not seek any instruction on the same, the investigation was likely to be over in two weeks. The bench said it would consider Allahbadia's prayer for releasing the passport two weeks later.

In compliance with its March 3 direction, the court said Allahbadia had filed an undertaking saying he will maintain decency in his shows and not mention anything related to the cases against him.



We never imposed any hidden tax when we were in power in the BMC. We strongly oppose any such tax on Mumbaikars

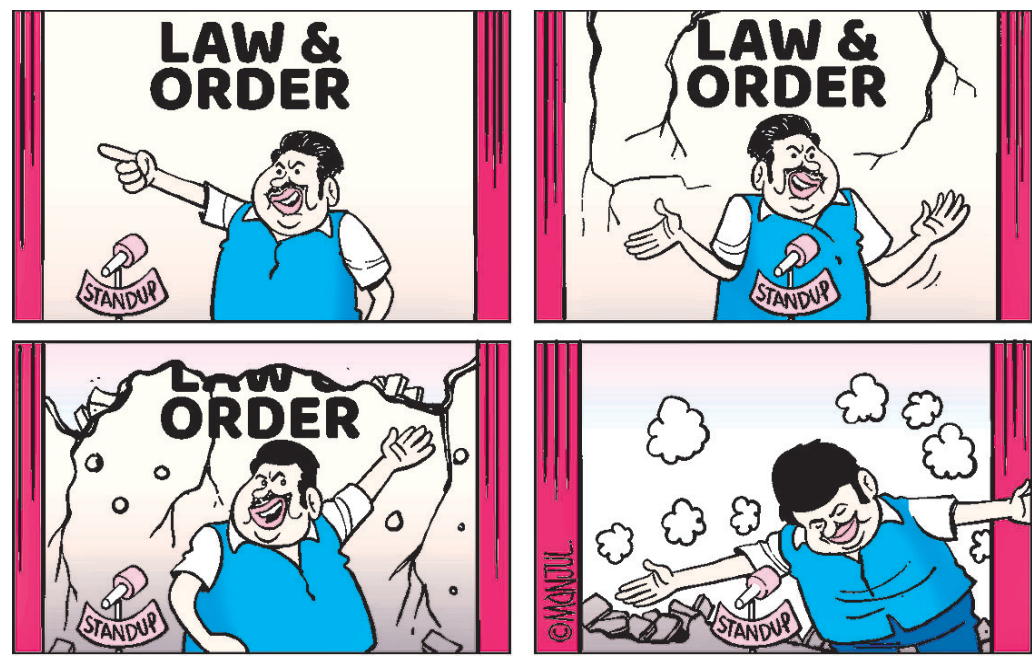
AADITYA THACKERAY | SENA (UBT) LEADER

ASARAM MOVES COURT FOR INTERIM BAIL EXTENSION

Self-styled Godman Asaram, convicted of raping a minor girl, returned to Jodhpur Central Jail Tuesday after his interim bail expired. His lawyers have filed a bail extension petition, which will be taken up for hearing April 2



POLITICKLE by MANJUL



Delhi court orders FIR against Kapil Mishra

New Delhi, April 1: In a major setback to Delhi law minister Kapil Mishra, a court Tuesday ordered an FIR to probe his alleged role in the 2020 riots in the national capital.

Additional chief judicial magistrate Vaibhav Chaurasia found a "prime facie" cognisable offence, requiring a probe against Mishra and others. "It is clear that Mishra was in the area at the time of alleged offence... further probe required," the judge said.



The court directed Delhi Police to file a "compliance report" in the matter by April 16, the next date of hearing. A detailed order is awaited.

Violence broke out in northeast Delhi February 24, 2020, following protests over the citizenship law, leaving 53 dead and several injured. The order came on an application filed by Yamuna Vihar resident Mohammad Ilyas who sought the registration of the FIR. Delhi Police opposed the plea and said Mishra had no role in the riots.

LS to take up Waqf Bill today

New Delhi, April 1: The Lok Sabha will take up the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill for discussion and passage Wednesday, setting the stage for a showdown between a government determined to push it through and an Opposition united in condemning the proposed law as unconstitutional.

Rajya Sabha is expected to take it up Thursday, with the two Houses allocated eight hours each for debating the proposed law. Some BJP allies, sources said, continue to push for more changes in the Bill. A senior member of a BJP ally expressed hope that the saffron party will accommodate their views, stressing that some of their concerns were addressed by the Joint Committee of Parliament which scrutinised the Bill.



INDIA bloc holds meet to oppose Bill

The Opposition INDIA bloc Tuesday presented a united face as they discussed their joint strategy to oppose the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in Parliament which will be taken up for discussion and passage in the Lok Sabha first. The Opposition parties held a meeting in the Parliament House to discuss and formulate their strategy as a showdown over the contentious bill is imminent. Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and KC Venugopal, Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav, NCP leader Supriya Sule, TMC's Kalyan Banerjee, and AAP's Sanjay Singh attended the meeting.

- **Rajya Sabha is expected to take it up Thursday, with the two Houses allocated eight hours each for debating the proposed law**
- **Some BJP allies, sources said, continue to push for more changes in the bill**
- **A senior member of a BJP ally expressed hope that the saffron party will accommodate their views, stressing that some of their concerns were addressed by the Joint Committee of Parliament which scrutinised the bill**

tary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told reporters that the Lok Sabha's business advisory committee (BAC), which includes leaders from all major parties, chaired by Speaker Om Birla agreed on an eight-hour debate, which could be extended after taking the sense of the House.

The early signs of a likely raucous debate between the treasury and Opposition benches over the Bill were visible during the meeting as

that their voices were being ignored and said the Opposition parties wanted more time to debate and the House to take up more issues, including the situation in Manipur and the row over electors' photo identity card. Rijiju said several parties wanted four to six hours of debate, while those from the Opposition demanded 12 hours.

He noted that the allotted period of eight hours can be extended if the House feels so Wednesday. The Rajya Sabha BAC met later where it was decided to have a discussion on the Bill Thursday, by when the Lower House is expected to deliver its verdict. AIM-IM member Asaduddin Owaisi, a sharp critic of the Bill, told reporters that he will put forth his view during the debate to show how "unconstitutional" it is.

Bajinder Singh gets life term in 2018 rape case

Chandigarh, April 1: A Mohali court Tuesday sentenced self-styled preacher Bajinder Singh to life imprisonment in a 2018 rape case, observing that Singh committed a heinous offence by misusing his position as a preacher.

Additional district and sessions judge Vikrant Kumar pronounced the verdict after Singh - often referred to as the "Yeshu

Yesu prophet" - was found guilty March 28. While Singh was convicted under Sections 376 (rape), 323 (punishment for voluntary causing hurt) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the IPC, the court acquitted five others, namely, Akhbar Bhatti, Rajesh Chaudhary, Jatinder Kumar, Sitar Ali and Sandeep Pehlwan. As per Section 376 (2) (n) of the IPC, the convict would undergo rigorous imprisonment for life, which means im-



prisonment for the remainder of his natural life.

Singh has been sentenced to one-year imprisonment each

under Sections 323 and 506 of the IPC, and all the sentences will run concurrently, the order said. His counsel H S Dhanoo said they will challenge the punishment in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Tight security arrangements were in place at the court complex before the verdict's pronouncement as Singh was brought under heavy security cover from Mansa Jail.

The case was registered

on a complaint of a woman at Zirakpur police station in Mohali district in 2018. The survivor's counsel, Anil Kumar Sagar, told reporters, "The court has pronounced an exemplary verdict as any lackadaisical approach in such cases instils confidence in the perpetrators who either assert their social position or act under the garb of religion to exploit the poor and the vulnerable."

Meanwhile, BRS MLC K Kavitha demanded that the Congress government take measures for the safety of women in the state. In a post on 'X', Kavitha said, "A series of crimes, attacks and atrocities against women in Telangana are causing concern. The atrocities committed near a temple in Nagarkurnool district and against a German tourist in Hyderabad have caused concern."

13K sq km of forest area encroached in 25 states, UTs

New Delhi, April 1: Over 13,000 square kilometres of forest area - more than the total geographical area of Delhi, Sikkim and Goa combined - is under encroachment in 25 states and Union territories that have so far submitted data to the Union environment ministry.

Ten states are yet to submit data on forest encroachment. Last year, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) took suo motu cognisance of a PTI report that cited government data showing 7,50,648 hectares (7,50,648 square kilometres) of forest area - more than five times the size of Delhi - was under encroachment.

The NGT had directed the ministry in April last year to compile the details of encroachment of forest areas in

all states and Union Territories in a prescribed format. In a report submitted to the NGT last week, the ministry said that as of March 2024, a total of 13,05,668.1 hectares (or 13,056 square kilometres) of forest area was under encroachment in 25 states and Union territories that had provided data.

These states and Union territories are the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Maharashtra, Odisha, Puducherry, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Manipur.

States and Union territories that are still to submit the data and details on forest encroachment are Bihar, Haryana, Hi-



States and Union territories that are still to submit the data and details on forest encroachment are Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, West Bengal, Nagaland, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh

machal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, West Bengal, Nagaland, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Forest area or The Recorded Forest Area (RFA) includes land officially designated as forest by the government, even

if it does not have tree cover. This is different from forest cover, which refers to the actual area with tree canopy (more than one hectare with tree canopy density of at least 10 per cent), regardless of legal status. Forest cover includes forests inside and outside recorded forest areas, such as plantations, community forests and private lands with tree growth. According to the ministry report, Madhya Pradesh had the highest forest encroachment, with 5,460.9 square kilometres affected, as of March 2024.

Assam has 3,620.9 square kilometres of forest area under encroachment. A total of 863.08 square kilometres of forest land in Karnataka is under encroachment, followed by 575.54 square kilometres in Maharashtra, 534.9 square kilometres in Arunachal Pradesh, 405.07 square kilome-

tres in Odisha, 264.97 square kilometres in Uttar Pradesh, 247.72 square kilometres in Mizoram, 200.40 square kilometres in Jharkhand and 168.91 square kilometres in Chhattisgarh.

Tamil Nadu has 157.68 square kilometres of encroached forest land, Andhra Pradesh 133.18 square kilometres, Gujarat 130.08 square kilometres, Punjab 75.67 square kilometres, Uttarakhand 49.92 square kilometres, Kerala 49.75 square kilometres, Tripura 42.42 square kilometres, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands 37.42 square kilometres and Manipur 32.7 square kilometres.

The ministry's report said encroachment had so far been removed from 409.77 square kilometres of forest land. However, it is unclear if this area was excluded from the total forest land under encroachment as of March 2024.



Law alone will not be sufficient. We need techno-legal approach to address the challenges posed by new-age crimes and investigation
ASHWINI VAISHNAW | UNION RAILWAY MINISTER

UOH STUDENTS PROTEST AGAINST TELANGANA GOVT

Students of the University of Hyderabad (UoH) on Tuesday staged protests against the Telangana government's plans to develop the 400-acre land parcel bordering the varsity land. The students gathered at the main gate of the institution and raised slogans against the Congress government



of the day quote

Thousands of traffickers have been arrested in just one month. These are the same traffickers whose names sent chills down people's spines. Today, they are being arrested and bulldozers are demolishing the homes of drug dealers



ARVIND KEJRIWAL | AAP SUPREMO

Thousands of NCC (National Cadet Corps) and NSS (National Service Scheme) students will take an oath that they will never consume drugs and will encourage people around them to stay away from drugs as well



MANISH SISODIA | AAP PUNJAB IN-CHARGE

However, due to the inaction of the central government, countless genuine claims under the FRA have been arbitrarily rejected without any review



RAHUL GANDHI | CONGRESS LEADER

India evaluates impact of US tariffs: Sources

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The commerce ministry is working on different scenarios to assess the possible fallout of reciprocal tariffs to be imposed by the US administration April 2 on its key trading partners including India, sources said. US President Donald Trump has said that April 2 will be 'Liberation Day' as he plans to announce tariffs or import duties to bring down America's trade deficit, and promote the country's manufacturing. India and the US are also working on a bilateral trade agreement to promote two-way commerce and investments.



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India and the US are also working on a bilateral trade agreement to promote two-way commerce and investments

The domestic industry and exporters have raised concerns over the possible impact of the US' reciprocal tariffs on India's exports as the duties could make the goods uncompetitive in the global markets. The US is the largest trading partner of India. While responding to questions in the Oval Office Monday, Trump said India will be "dropping its tariffs very substantially".

"I heard that India, just a little while ago, is going to be dropping its tariffs very substantially. I said, why didn't somebody do this a long time ago. A lot of countries are going to be dropping their tariffs... If you look at the European Union on cars, the European Union already dropped their tariff to 2.5 per cent. It was announced a couple of days ago. A very small tariff. The United States charged very little," Trump said. Just a few hours before Trump's comments, the White House said India imposes a 100 per cent tariff on American agricultural products. Sources in New Delhi on Tuesday said that the impact

officials are uncertain about the quantum of these duties. It is still unclear how the tariffs will be applied - whether at the product level, sector level, or country level, another source said. Currently, US goods face a weighted average tariff of 7.7 per cent in India, while Indian exports to the US attract only 2.8 per cent, leading to a 4.9 per cent difference. Indian farm exports to the US currently face a 5.3 per cent duty, whereas US farm exports to India face a much higher 37.7 per cent, creating a 32.4 per cent gap. Trade experts said that at the broad sector level, the potential tariff gaps between India and the US vary across the sectors.

The gap is 8.6 per cent for chemicals and pharmaceuticals, 5.6 per cent for plastics, 1.4 per cent for textiles and clothing, 13.3 per cent for diamonds, gold, and jewellery, 2.5 per cent for iron, steel, and base metals, 5.3 per cent for machinery and computers, 7.2 per cent for electronics, and 23.1 per cent for automobiles and auto components.

Gujarat: 21 killed, 6 hurt in cracker blast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Palanpur (Gujarat), April 1: At least 21 persons, including children and women, were killed, while six others injured Tuesday after a powerful blast and blaze ripped through a godown where firecrackers were allegedly stored and manufactured illegally in Banaskantha district, officials said.



The explosion, which occurred at approximately 9:45 AM, flattened the godown in an industrial area near Deesa town, around 30km from the Banaskantha district headquarters in north Gujarat, they said. "All the deceased persons were originally from Harda and Dewas districts of Madhya Pradesh," said district collector Mihir Patel. He said 21 people were killed and six injured in the tragedy. "The identity of 19 persons has been established, while DNA samples are being taken to identify two others," he said. The blast was so intense that it sent body parts of workers flying 200-300 metres away.

Patel told reporters that seven fire teams, eight ambulances, a State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) team and four bulldozers were rushed to the site for rescue operations. Superintendent of Police Akshayraj Makwana said the casualties occurred after the slab of the godown collapsed following a blast.

The impact brought down the RCC slab of the structure. Even family members of workers staying on the same premises were crushed to death after blocks of slabs fell on them, the collector said.

He said forensic teams are trying to ascertain the cause of the explosion. Makwana said the warehouse - Deepak Traders - was owned by father-son duo Deepak Mohnani and Khubchand Mohnani.

Among the deceased were five children aged between three and 12 years, and also as many women, said police. The children who perished in the incident were identified by police as Abhishek (3), Kiran (5), Rukma (6), Radha (10), and Krishna (12).

"Prima facie, they were stocking firecrackers illegally. Police have registered an FIR, and formed five teams for investigation. A special investigation team (SIT) headed by a deputy SP-level officer has also been formed," he said, adding some persons have been rounded up for questioning. Deesa Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Neha Panchal said the godown had initially obtained a licence for storing firecrackers, but it was not renewed after it expired December 31, 2024, due to lapses.

Among the women who were killed are labour contractor Laxmi Nayak (50), Daliben Nayak (25), Kesarben Nayak (40), Sunitaben Nayak (19), and Guddiben Nayak (30). A three-year-old girl, Naina, is among six persons who have suffered injuries, police said. Gujarat Minister Rushikesh

"They had applied for renewal of the license after it expired. After authorities found that the unit lacked proper facilities, the renewal process was put on hold," Panchal said.

The SDM stressed that the licence was only meant to store firecrackers.

NDRF retrieves 16 bodies from building debris

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: A 'pancake' collapse of multiple buildings and houses leading to floors falling one over the other has become a challenge for rescue workers in quake-hit Myanmar with India's NDRF retrieving 16 bodies so far from the rubble, officials said Tuesday.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) specialists have spread across 13 buildings as part of the 'Sector D' disaster response plan in Mandalay city and they are still "looking for lives" despite all odds, the officials monitoring the rescue operations from here told PTI. The teams are conducting search and rescue operations in Mandalay in coordination with fire services of Myanmar, focusing on sites, where victims have been reported missing due to building collapse, the NDRF said in a statement. "As of April 1, 2025, 16 dead bodies have been retrieved and rescue operation is ongoing," it added.

Officials said the rescuers were still hopeful to find signs of life. Miracles do happen as during the Turkiye quake rescue operation in 2023 a life was found on the 17th day after the temblor struck.

Majority of buildings have collapsed like a 'pancake' and it is making the task difficult for the rescuers as they have to cut through heavy slabs for hours and lift mounds of rubble through earth movers to look for people who could be alive, the officials said. Had it been a tilted collapse, the ray of hope is much brighter and the 'golden hours' for rescuers to save lives is more, according to quake rescue experts. The NDRF is also using its four canines who could sniff vital signs of a fainted or unconscious human being, the officials said.

SHORT TAKES

Free bus service for women in J&K

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah Tuesday fulfilled a key budget announcement with the launch of a free bus service for women. The chief minister flagged off the Zero-Ticket Travel Initiative for women from the SKICC. A government spokesperson described the move as a landmark towards gender-inclusive mobility. The launch was attended by ministers Sakina Itoo and Satish Sharma. Before the official flag-off, Abdullah inaugurated zero-ticket travel for schoolgirls, underscoring the Union Territory government's commitment to accessible and safe transportation for young students.

MBA student dies by suicide

Ghaziabad: A 25-year-old MBA student died by suicide Tuesday after jumping from the ninth floor of his flat at a high-rise in Indirapuram, police said. The deceased has been identified as Harshit Tyagi, who is said to have been battling drug addiction and depression, they said. According to police, Tyagi left his room on the pretext of going to the bathroom but instead made his way to the balcony of his Angel Jupiter Society flat and jumped. His mother, Poonam Tyagi, and cousin, Himanshu Vats, rushed him to a private hospital in Noida, where doctors declared him dead on arrival. ACP Indirapuram Abhishek Srivastav said that the case is under investigation.

Maha govt clears road for e-bike taxis in cities

Mumbai: The Maharashtra cabinet Tuesday approved introduction of electric-bike taxis for cities with at least one lakh population, a move which will benefit single passengers travelling up to 15 km and cover Mumbai besides several other urban centres in the state. The measure will create more than 10,000 jobs in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and another 10,000 in the rest of the state, state Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik said.

Man dies in police custody

Dhantari: A 41-year-old man died in police custody within hours of his arrest in a cheating case in Chhattisgarh's Dhantari district with his family alleging that policemen had assaulted him. The station house officer (SHO) of Arjuni police station, where the deceased, Durgesh Katholia, was kept in police remand, has been suspended, police said.

Pathar Pratima blast toll rises to 8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Kolkata, April 1: The death toll from the gas cylinder blast at a house at Dholahat in West Bengal's Pathar Pratima has risen to eight after one more person succumbed to injuries Tuesday morning, police said.

initially claimed the lives of seven people, including four children. They are Prabhathi Banik (80), Arabinda Banik (65), Swantana Banik (28), Arnab Banik (9), Anushka Banik (6), and six-month-old twins Asmita and Ankit Banik. Chandrakanta Banik, his brother Tushar Banik and two other members of the family have been accused of being involved in manufacturing firecrackers illegally.

The explosion triggered a massive fire, which was intensified by the alleged presence of stacked firecrackers inside the house, they added. The West Bengal government sought a detailed report from the district magistrate in connection.

ADG (South Bengal) Supratim Sarkar said the investigation was still underway. "We are finding out whether Chandrakanta and Tushar had license for manufacturing or storing firecrackers. We have filed cases," he said. Sarkar emphasised the need for greater awareness among those involved in firecracker manufacturing industry.

The incident sparked a war of words, with the BJP demanding an NIA probe, while the ruling TMC said the police are already investigating it and the state government has a "zero-tolerance" policy towards such incidents. Sutapa Jana, who had suffered 75 per cent burns, died at the SSKM Hospital here on Tuesday morning. The blast, which took place Monday night,

"We will hold a meeting with those involved in the industry and ask them not to keep firecrackers piled up in residential areas," he said.



Devotees take part in 'Gangaur puja' celebrations, in Bikaner, Rajasthan

ISRO achieves breakthrough in predicting lightning events

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Bangalore, April 1: ISRO Tuesday said it has achieved a breakthrough in the now-casting (weather forecasting) of lightning events over India using data from Indian geostationary satellites.

include surface radiation, temperature, and wind.

"NRSC/ISRO researchers observed lightning signatures in the Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) data from the INSAT-3D satellite," the space agency said in a statement. The reduction in OLR strength is an indicator for potential lightning occurrences. The near real-time observations from the INSAT series satellites were utilised to detect and identify signatures indicative of lightning occurrences, it explained.

The milestone has been achieved by ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC). According to ISRO, atmospheric lightning occurs due to the complex interactions of meteorological parameters under the influence of convective processes in the troposphere. Key drivers of these convective phenomena

To further enhance the detection of lightning activity, additional parameters such as Land



- The milestone has been achieved by ISRO's National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)
- According to ISRO, atmospheric lightning occurs due to the complex interactions of meteorological parameters under the influence of convective processes in the troposphere
- Key drivers of these convective phenomena include surface radiation, temperature, and wind

Surface Temperature (LST) and wind were incorporated in the development of a composite variable to improve predictive accuracy, the space agency said. "The developed composite variable effectively captures the variations in lightning activity observed by ground-based measurements. It provides a reliable indication of when lightning activity is likely to peak or subside, allowing for improved prediction of lightning occurrence and intensity. This composite variable enables the prediction of lightning occurrences with a lead time of approximately 2.5 hours," ISRO said.

international



All of this is progress that corresponds first and foremost to our French values, we are proud of this and we don't want to compromise on it
LAURENT SAINT-MARTIN | FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER, FRANCE

VOLCANO ERUPTS IN ICELAND

A volcano erupted to the south of Iceland's capital Tuesday, spewing lava and smoke in a fiery display of orange and red that triggered the evacuation of tourists and residents, although air traffic continued as normal



of the day quote

Harvard can right these wrongs and restore itself to a campus dedicated to academic excellence and truth-seeking, where all students feel safe on its campus
LINDA MCMAHON | EDUCATION SECRETARY, US

These criminals will no longer terrorize our communities and citizens. Once again, we extend our gratitude to President Bukele and the government of El Salvador for their unparalleled partnership
MARCOS RUBIO | SECRETARY OF STATE

Our government is making last ditch efforts to get US President Donald Trump to exclude his country from an increase in auto tariffs due to take effect from Wednesday
SHIGERU ISHIBA | PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF INDIA, CHINA TIES

Xi Jinping calls for 'elephant-dragon tango'

The development comes amid the efforts to reset the ties after over four years of freeze due to the eastern Ladakh military standoff

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Beijing, April 1: In a message marking 75th anniversary of their bilateral relations, Chinese President Xi Jinping Tuesday stressed on partnership between India and China for "mutual achievement" and the need to do the "dragon-elephant tango" to serve their fundamental interests.

Apart from President Xi's

message to his counterpart Droupadi Murmu, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Prime Minister Narendra Modi too exchanged congratulatory messages to mark the occasion, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced here.

In her message, Murmu said a stable, predictable and friendly bilateral relationship will benefit both countries and the world, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The development comes amid the efforts to reset the ties after over four years of freeze due to the eastern Ladakh military standoff.

President Xi, in his message to Murmu, said China and India, both ancient civilisations, major developing countries and important members of the Global South, are at a critical stage of their respective modernisation efforts.



The development of China-India relations demonstrates that it is the right choice for China and India to be partners of mutual achievement and realise the 'dragon elephant tango,' which fully serves the fundamental interests of both countries and their peoples
XI JINPING | PRESIDENT, CHINA

"The development of China-India relations demonstrates that it is the right choice for China and India to be partners of mutual achievement and realise the 'dragon elephant tango,' which fully serves the fundamental interests of both countries and their peoples," Xinhua said quoting Xi.

He also said he stands ready to work with Murmu to take the anniversary of ties as an opportunity to enhance strategic mutual trust, strengthen

term perspective, seek a way, which features peaceful coexistence, mutual trust, mutual benefit and common development, for neighbouring major countries to get along with each other, and jointly promote a multi-polar world and greater democracy in international relations.

A fireball from burst gas pipeline hurts 145: Malaysia

No deaths were reported and the health minister said those admitted to hospital were all in a stable condition

REUTERS

Kuala Lumpur, April 1: Scores of people in Malaysia were being treated in hospitals Tuesday after a huge fire broke out at a gas pipeline operated by state energy giant Petronas, showering flaming debris from the sky and shattering windows.

Authorities said the blaze in the town of Puchong on the outskirts of the capital Kuala Lumpur had been extinguished by mid-afternoon. They said at least 305 people were affected, including those left homeless after some 190 homes were damaged.

No deaths were reported and the health minister said those admitted to hospital were all in a stable condition.

State news agency Bernama said 145 people had received hospital treatment and 41 had since been discharged, citing health ministry data. They were treated for burns, other injuries and respiratory problems, state authorities said.

The fire started early Tuesday with a towering orange flame and billowing smoke that could be seen on the horizon from far away, according to early images on news outlets and footage shared on social media.

Witnesses in evacuation centres described scenes of chaos that started with an explosion. "The fire is really raging high. And then once you can



- Huge blaze rages for hours on outskirts of capital
- Witnesses describe flaming debris, doors and windows shaking
- PM says investigation underway, Petronas and government to restore area

see debris - you're talking about debris which is still on fire - started to fall all over the place, that's (when) we know something bad has happened," said Raja Hilmy Bin Raja Idris, 59, whose house was 1 km (0.6 miles) from the fire.

'RED GLOW MOVING AROUND'

Glewin Wee, 50, said she initially thought a tornado or

earthquake had struck. "I saw a red glow moving around... I kept hearing things falling - glass, stones, all crashing in. All the windows were shattered," she said.

"It started off with the explosion, then the windows started shaking violently. That's when we realised it was an explosion that led to the fire." Petronas said earlier it had isolated the pipeline and was working closely with all relevant parties to ensure the safety of the surrounding community, environment and security of gas supply to the country.

Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the state government and Petronas would take full responsibility for restoring the area, adding that the process could take a year.

China launches military drills around Taiwan

REUTERS

Beijing/Taipei, April 1: China staged military drills off Taiwan's north, south and east coasts Tuesday as a "stern warning" against separatism and called Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te a "parasite," as Taiwan sent warships to respond to China's navy approaching its shores.

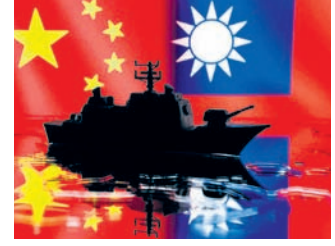
The exercises, which China has not formally named unlike war games last year, are happening after a rise in Chinese rhetoric against Lai and follow on the heels of US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth's Asia visit, during which he repeatedly criticised Beijing.

China's military deployed ships, aircraft and artillery to practise blockading the island, strikes on ground and maritime targets, and air interception to "test forces' coordination in combat," Beijing's Eastern Theatre Command said in a statement.

Last May, three days after Lai's inauguration, Chinese forces staged war games to simulate seizing full control of areas west of the so-called first island chain and conducted live-fire missile exercises.

China considers democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and calls Lai a "separatist." In a video accompanying its announcement, the Eastern Theatre Command called him a "parasite" in English and depicted him as a green bug held by chopsticks over a burning Taiwan.

Taiwan's government condemned the drills, with the presidential office saying China was "widely recognised by the international community as a troublemaker" and that the



- China's military says drills are a warning against Taiwan independence
- China's military video calls Taiwan president a 'parasite'
- Lai depiction 'not conducive to peace', says Taiwan
- Taiwan dispatches military aircraft, ships in response
- De facto US embassy in Taipei pledges support for Taiwan

government has the confidence and ability to defend itself.

Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

Two senior Taiwan officials told Reuters that more than 10 Chinese military ships had approached close to Taiwan's 24 nautical mile (44 km) contiguous zone and Taiwan sent its own warships to respond.

Taiwan's defence ministry said it had not detected any live fire by the Chinese military, but that at least 71 Chinese military aircraft and 13 navy ships were involved. It added it did not know when the drills would end.

Ministry spokesperson Sun Li-fang said Taiwan's armed forces had elevated their readiness level to ensure that China does not "turn drills into combat" and "launch a sudden attack on us".

SHORT TAKES

UN agency closes rest of Gaza bakeries

Deir Al-Balah: The UN food agency is closing all of its bakeries in the Gaza Strip, officials said Tuesday, as food supplies dwindle after Israel sealed the territory off from all imports nearly a month ago. Israel, which tightened its blockade and later resumed its offensive in order to pressure Hamas into accepting changes to their ceasefire agreement, said that enough food entered Gaza during the six-week truce to sustain the territory's roughly 2 million Palestinians. Markets largely emptied weeks ago, and UN agencies say the supplies they built up during the truce are running out. Gaza is heavily reliant on international aid, because the war has destroyed almost all of its food production capability.

Layoffs begin at US health agencies

Washington: Employees across the massive US Department of Health and Human Services began receiving notices of dismissal Tuesday in a major overhaul expected to ultimately lay off up to 10,000 people. The notices just days after President Donald Trump moved to strip workers of their collective bargaining rights at HHS and other agencies throughout the government. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr's announced a plan last week to remake HHS, which, through its agencies, is responsible for tracking health trends and disease outbreaks, conducting and funding medical research, monitoring the safety of food and medicine, and administering health insurance programs for nearly half of the country.

US issues fresh Iran-related sanctions

Washington: The US Tuesday imposed sanctions on entities and individuals in Iran, the United Arab Emirates and China whom it accused of being part of an Iranian weapons procurement network, as President Donald Trump seeks to ramp up pressure on Tehran. The US Treasury Department announced sanctions on six entities and two individuals in action taken in coordination with the Department of Justice, accusing them of responsibility for procurement of unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) components on behalf of a leading manufacturer for Iran's drone program. "Iran's proliferation of UAVs and missiles - both to its terrorist proxies in the region and to Russia for its use against Ukraine - continues to threaten civilians, US personnel, and our allies and partners," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in a statement.

India is amazing from space: Sunita Williams

The 59-year-old NASA astronaut and fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore addressed reporters at their first joint press conference days after they returned to Earth as part of the SpaceX Crew-9 mission, having been stranded in space for over nine months

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, April 1: India is amazing from space, NASA astronaut Sunita Williams said and voiced optimism that she will visit her "father's home country" and share experiences about space exploration with people there.

Sunita made these remarks during a press conference Monday. She was responding to a question on how India looked from space when she was in the International Space Station and on possibility of her collaborat-

ing with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on space exploration.

"India is amazing. Every time we went over the Himalayas, and I'll tell you, Butch got some incredible pictures of the Himalayas. Just amazing," Sunita said.

The 59-year-old NASA astronaut and fellow astronaut Butch Wilmore addressed reporters at their first joint press conference days after they returned to Earth as part of the SpaceX Crew-9 mission, having been stranded in space for over nine months.

"And you can see, like I've described it before, just like this ripple that happened, obviously when the plates collided, and then as it flows down into India. It's many, many colours," she said.

"I think, when you come from the east, going into like Gujarat and Mumbai, the fishing fleet that's off the coast there gives you a little bit of a beacon that here we come, and then all throughout India, I think the impression I had was it was just like this network of lights from the bigger cities going down through the smaller



cities. Just incredible to look at at night as well as during the day, highlighted, of course, by the Himalayas, which is just incredible as a forefront going down into India," she said. Sunita added that "I hope, and I think for sure, I'm gonna be going back to my father's home country and visiting with people and getting excited about the first, or not the first,

but the Indian national who's going up on the Axiom Mission coming up, pretty awesome," she said.

She made those remarks while referring to the Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) commercial astronaut mission to the International Space Station that will include Mission Pilot Shubhan-shu Shukla of India.

Lucknow-born Shukla will be

I hope, and I think for sure, I'm gonna be going back to my father's home country and visiting with people and getting excited about the first, or not the first, but the Indian national who's going up on the Axiom Mission coming up, pretty awesome

SUNITA WILLIAMS | NASA ASTRONAUT

India's second astronaut after former Indian Air Force officer Rakesh Sharma to go to space since 1984.

"They'll have a hometown hero there of their own that will be able to talk about how wonderful the International Space Station is from his perspective. But I hope I can meet up at some point in time, and we can share our experiences with as many people in India as possible, because it's a great country, another wonderful democracy that's trying to put its foot in the space countries, and we'd love to be part of that and help them along," she said.

Sunita's father Deepak Pandya hailed from Gujarat and came to the US in 1958 where he did his internship and residency training in Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio.

US court rejects Pannun's claim that complaint served on NSA Doval



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New York, April 1: A US court has said that no complaint was delivered to National Security Advisor Ajit Doval during his visit to Washington in February, dismissing a claim by Khalistani separatist Gurbat Singh Pannun that court documents, including a summons, had been served on the top Indian official.

"The Court has reviewed the above letter and attached exhibits and finds that service was not completed. The Complaint was not delivered to a member of the hotel management or staff or any officers or agents providing security for Defendant, as required by the Court's Order," US District Judge Katherine Polk Failla said in the recent order.

Pannun has filed a civil lawsuit against Doval and another Indian national Nikhil Gupta. Gupta has been accused by federal prosecutors of working with an Indian government employee in a foiled plot to kill Pannun on American soil.

Pannun claimed in court papers that when Doval was in Washington, accompanying Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the visit to meet US President Donald Trump February 12-13, he had "hired two process servers and one investigator" to serve the complaint on the National Security Advisor (NSA).

In the first instance, attempt was made February 12 to deliver the complaint to Doval at Blair House, the President's Guest House where Modi and his delegation were staying during the DC visit.

Israel kills Hezbollah official in deadly Beirut airstrike

REUTERS

Beirut/Jerusalem, April 1: An Israeli airstrike killed four people including a Hezbollah official in Beirut's southern suburbs Tuesday, a Lebanese security source said, further testing a shaky ceasefire between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah.

The Israeli military said the official - Hassan Bdeir - was a member of a Hezbollah unit and Iran's Quds Force, and he had assisted the Palestinian group Hamas in planning a "significant and imminent terror attack against Israeli civilians".

Hezbollah confirmed that Bdeir had been killed along with his son, who was also a member of the group. The Lebanese security source said Bdeir was a mid-ranking commander whose responsibilities included the Palestinian file.

The Lebanese health ministry said the strike killed four people - including a woman - and wounded seven others.

It marked Israel's second airstrike in the Hezbollah-controlled suburb of Beirut in five days, adding to strains on the US-brokered ceasefire that ended last year's devastating conflict.

The attacks on Beirut's southern suburbs have resumed at a time of broader escalation in the region, with Israel having restarted Gaza strikes after a two-month truce and the United States hitting the Iran-aligned Houthis of Yemen in a bid to get them to stop attacking Red Sea shipping.





I want to assure you that total foreign exchange reserves as of March 25, 2025, is USD 658.8 billion. We are the fourth largest in terms of foreign exchange reserves that any country holds. Which means the amount that we hold in foreign exchange reserve is good enough to take care of 11 months of our imports.

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN | FINANCE MINISTER

98.21% OF ₹2000 NOTES RETURNED: RBI

The Reserve Bank of India Tuesday said 98.21 per cent of the ₹2000 banknotes have been returned to the banking system, and only ₹6,366 crore worth of such notes are still with the public. On May 19, 2023, the RBI announced the withdrawal of ₹2000 denomination banknotes from circulation.



Business

of the day quote

Aligned with the Government of India's Make in India vision, we attained record exports of 3,32,585 units. This achievement once again cemented our position as India's number passenger vehicle exporter

HISASHI TAKEUCHI | MSI MD & CEO



While demand creation may still present challenges in the new fiscal year, we remain optimistic and believe our commitment to customer satisfaction will enable us to navigate the market effectively and continue driving positive results

KUNAL BEHL | HONDA CARS INDIA VICE PRESIDENT



Looking ahead, overall demand growth will be shaped by macroeconomic factors such as consumption growth, inflation, infrastructure spending and global geopolitics

SHAILESH CHANDRA | TATA MOTORS PASSENGER VEHICLES MD



Sensex tanks 1,390 pts on tariff jitters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Mumbai, April 1: Stock markets went into a tailspin Tuesday with benchmark Sensex plunging by 1,390 points due to selling in IT and private banking shares amid heightened uncertainty ahead of the anticipated rollout of US reciprocal tariffs April 2—termed as 'Liberation Day' by President Donald Trump.

Starting the new financial year on a losing note, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,390.41 points or 1.80 per cent to settle at 76,024.51 as 28 of its components ended lower and only two advanced. During the day, the index plummeted 1,502.74 points or 1.94 per cent to 75,912.18.

The NSE Nifty dropped 353.65 points or 1.50 per cent to 23,165.70. The key indices logged their steepest single-day losses in a month.

From the Sensex pack, HCL Tech, Bajaj Finserv, HDFC Bank, Bajaj Finance, Infosys, Titan, ICICI Bank, Sun Pharma, Reliance Industries, Larsen &



Toubro, Tech Mahindra and NTPC were among the biggest laggards.

Among gainers, IndusInd Bank jumped over 5 per cent while Zomato ended marginally higher.

"Amid heightened global volatility ahead of the anticipated US reciprocal tariff announcement tomorrow, the domestic market witnessed a significant sell-off today. The IT sector was

among the hardest hit due to its substantial exposure to the US market, and real estate stocks fell following Maharashtra's upward revision of ready reckoner rates, which affect property valuations," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge tanked 1.04 per cent while smallcap index went up marginally by 0.07 per cent.

GST kitty grows 10% in March to ₹1.96L-cr

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Gross GST collection grew 9.9 per cent in March to over ₹1.96 lakh crore - the second-highest mop-up ever, government data showed Tuesday.

GST revenue from domestic transactions rose 8.8 per cent to ₹1.49 lakh crore, while revenue from imported goods was higher 13.56 per cent to ₹46,919 crore.

The gross collection includes Central GST mop-up of ₹38,145 crore, State GST collection of ₹49,891 crore and Integrated GST (IGST) of ₹95,853 crore. Cess collection during March stood at ₹12,253 crore.

Total refunds during March rose 41 per cent to ₹19,615 crore. After adjusting refunds, net GST revenue stood at over ₹1.76 lakh crore in March 2025, a 7.3 per cent growth over the year-ago period.

GST collection had hit a record high of ₹2.10 lakh crore in April 2024.

Deloitte India Partner MS Mani said the 9.9 per cent in-

crease in gross GST collection for the month reflects the impact of year-end sales push by businesses.

"It is very encouraging to see that this is not an isolated instance as GST collections have shown a steady increase every month reflected by the 9.4 per cent increase in annual Gross GST collections," Mani said.

Gross GST collection during April-March stood at ₹22.08 lakh crore, a 9.4 per cent Y-o-Y growth.

"There continues to be a wide variation in the growth rates of GST collections across key manufacturing and consuming states. While states like Maharashtra, Haryana, UP, Rajasthan have shown a growth exceeding 10 per cent, other states like Gujarat, Karnataka, Telangana, AP, Tamil Nadu have been in the range of -1 per cent to 7 per cent, which is very unusual for the month of March. There is a need to understand the reasons for the same by evaluating the sectoral growth and compliance rates in these states," Mani said.

Gold surges ₹2,000 to hit record high of ₹ 94,150

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: Gold prices surged ₹2,000, the steepest in nearly two months, to hit a fresh peak of ₹94,150 per 10 grams in the national capital Tuesday amid persistent buying by stockists and jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

On Friday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity settled at ₹92,150 per 10 grams.

Analysts said the trading sentiment remained firm as gold climbed in the overseas markets on stronger demand for the alternative investment with equity markets sliding.

Staying firm for the fourth straight day, gold of 99.5 per cent purity also surged by ₹2,000 to reach a lifetime high of ₹93,700 per 10 grams against the previous close of ₹91,700 per 10 grams.

The previous record one-day jump in gold price was recorded on February 10 when it gained ₹2,400 per 10 grams.

So far this year, the yellow metal price has jumped ₹14,760 or 18.6 per cent from ₹79,390 per 10 grams on January 1.

Do it with passion, or not at all: Dash

Yuvodaya Institutions is one of the premier educational destinations in the state based in Bolangir. The institution was started with an objective to align the level of education in the state with that of international standards. The man behind this is Ambarish Dash, Director of Yuvodaya Institutions who has taken the institution to new heights with dedication and resilience. Initially, he worked for a company in Delhi, but eventually decided to return to his home state. With a vision to contribute to Odisha's growth, he entered the education sector. In an interaction with Orissa POST, Dash shares his journey and entrepreneurial experience. Excerpts...



■ Being a major player in the education industry, what do you think are the challenges that the sector is facing in the country?

■ One of the main challenges that the education sector in India is facing is the gap between government and private sector mentalities. Government institutions lack accountability, while private institutions are more answerable for their actions. The government sector has the potential but lacks a proper accountability system, which is why it often underperforms. On the other hand, private institutions ensure accountability and performance. Additionally, corruption in the education sector, such as the leaking of question papers, is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The introduction of the National Education Policy aims to address employability, but for it to be effective, accountability is the key.

■ The digital revolution is here. What implications will AI have in the education sector?

■ The digital revolution, especially AI, can have profound implications for the education sector. Just like atomic energy, if used correctly, it can benefit society, but if misused, it could turn harmful. AI can play a crucial role in tracking students' progress, but we need to be cautious about over-reliance on it. For example, if students use AI like ChatGPT as a crutch for learning, they might lose their ability to think critically and independently. This issue was seen in Sweden, where everything was digitised, including education. In 2024, they reversed this decision, realising that over-digitisation was harming students' creativity and independent learning. I am not against digitalisation, but it

should be limited and used in moderation. There should be mechanisms in place to ensure that digital tools are used in a way that benefits students.

■ The Indian education system has often been criticised for its emphasis on rote memorisation and test scores, rather than fostering a culture of critical thinking, creativity, and practical skills. What measures should be taken to prepare students accordingly?

■ To address this, we need to shift the focus towards holistic learning. Teachers must be trained to encourage students to think critically and creatively. The focus should be on developing problem-solving abilities and practical knowledge, not just memorising the course for exams. The education system needs to evolve to produce well-rounded individuals.

■ As a successful entrepreneur, what advice will you give to newcomers who want to start off their journey in this industry?

■ My journey has been driven by the pursuit of quality education. When we started our institution, there were two objectives: commercial and service-oriented. If the focus is purely commercial, you would prioritise infrastructure. However, our primary goal is service—especially reaching out to rural areas and empowering students from those communities. If someone wants to enter the education sector, the most important thing is to have a passion for teaching and empowering others. Secondly, focus on what you enjoy and where your strengths lie. Do it with passion, or not at all. This is the approach I have taken, and it's why we are now producing state toppers.

India's defence exports surge to record ₹23,622cr in 2024-25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: India's defence exports have surged to a record high of ₹23,622 crore (approx. USD 2.76 billion) in 2024-25, registering a 12.04 per cent growth over the previous fiscal, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the achievement as a 'proud milestone' in India's progress in the defence manufacturing sector.

"This is indeed a proud milestone in our journey towards self-reliance and global leadership in defence manufacturing!" Modi said on X.

Singh also said the country is poised to achieve the target of ₹50,000 crore in defence exports by 2029.

India's defence exports in 2023-24 were ₹21,083 crore.

"India's defence exports have surged to a record high of ₹23,622 crore in the FY 2024-25," the defence minister said on X.

"An impressive growth of ₹2,539 crore or 12.04% has been registered in the just-concluded FY over the defence exports figures of FY 2023-24, which



were ₹21,083 crore," he added. Singh also congratulated all the stakeholders on this 'significant achievement'.

"Under PM Shri @narendramodi's leadership India is marching towards achieving the target of increasing defence exports to ₹50,000 crore by 2029," Singh said.

The Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) have

achieved a significant increase of 42.85 per cent in their exports in 2024-25, according to an official readout.

It said the surge in the DPSU's exports reflected the growing acceptability of Indian products in the global market and the ability of the country's defence industry to be a part of the global supply chain. The private sector and

DPSUs have contributed ₹ 15,233 crore and ₹8,389 crore respectively in defence exports of 2024-25, the defence ministry said in the readout.

The corresponding figures for 2023-24 were ₹15,209 crore and ₹5,874 crore respectively, it added.

"India has evolved from a largely import-dependent military force to one increasingly focused on self-reliance and indigenous production," the ministry said.

"In a major boost to defence exports, a wide range of items from ammunition, arms, sub-systems/systems and parts & components have been exported to around 80 countries in the just-concluded financial year," it said.

The ministry said the Department of Defence Production has a dedicated portal for application and processing of export authorisation requests, and 1,762 export authorisations were issued in 2024-25 compared to 1,507 in the preceding year.

The total number of exporters also grew by 17.4 per cent in the same period, it said.

Govt issues 67 tranches of SGBs till 2024-25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 1: The government has issued a total of 67 tranches of Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs) amounting to 146.96 tonnes of gold till 2024-25, Parliament was informed Tuesday.

The outstanding value as March 20, 2025, on issue price is ₹67,322 crore for 130 tonnes of gold, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply.

Redemption of SGBs is based on the prevailing market price, he said.

The government has maintained a Gold Reserve Fund (GRF) in the Public Account where the price and interest differential amount is credited in time, he said.

The SGBs, in addition to other borrowing instruments, have been an instrument for raising resources for financing fiscal deficit, it said. However, in addition to these, SGBs also

served the purpose of savings/ financial instruments as an alternative to physical gold, he said. Due to the recent gold price volatility and global economic headwinds, this form of borrowing has become relatively expensive.

"Therefore, based on maturing and deepening of Indian G-Sec market, which helped in mobilising relatively low-cost borrowing, resources were not raised through SGBs in FY 2024-25," he said.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said, more than 52.07 crore loans have been sanctioned, as on February 28, 2025, under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), since the launch of the Scheme.

The average non-performing assets (NPAs) for amount disbursed is 2.21 per cent (as on December 2024) as per data uploaded by Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) on the Mudra portal, he said.



